District of Innovation Plan

TERM
The term of the plan is for five years, beginning on February 20, 2017 and ending February 18, 2022, unless amended or rescinded by the BISD Board of Trustees in accordance with statute. If within the term of this plan additional innovations are to be considered, the Board of Trustees will appoint a committee and replicate the process used for initial adoption. Any additional exemptions that are approved will adhere to the same term as the original plan.

PROPOSED INNOVATIONS

1. First Day of Instruction
Current Provision:
TEC 25.0811 states that a school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August.

Benefit of Exemption for BISD:
* District Advisory Committee will have the flexibility to start school one week early, the third Monday in August or a mid-week start during the third week of August.
* Starting one week earlier will better balance the two semesters with a natural Winter Break, set exams prior to the Winter Break, and create more instructional time before STAAR/EOC exams.
* The balanced semesters will align with college semesters as well, allowing more opportunities for summer school, internships, and certification opportunities.

Local Guidelines:
The district Improvement Committee will receive parent and staff input, then decide, subject to school Board approval, the school start date.

2. Teacher Certification
Current Provision:
TEC 21.003 requires that a person may not be employed as a teacher by a district unless the person holds an appropriate certification or permit issued by the appropriate state agency.

Benefits of the Exemption for BISD:
* The statutory certification requirements inhibit the District’s ability to hire professionals with industry experience to teach Career and Technical Education (CTE), STEM Courses and no-core electives.
* Local qualifications will allow the district to:
  - allow experienced teachers to pick up an elective in an area they are qualified but not certified
  - hire community college instructors
Bells Independent School District

- offer dual opportunities in dual enrollment CTE courses
- recruit teachers from the field, including individuals from certain trades and/or vocations with industry knowledge and real world experiences.

Local Guidelines:
* The District will establish local criteria, such as years of experience, qualifications, and industry certification, to qualify for a local (district) teaching certificate.
* Principals will submit candidates to the Superintendent with credentials. The Superintendent will determine whether it is in the best interest of the district to certify the individual. The Superintendent will notify the Board of Trustees prior to the candidate beginning assignment.
* At the present time, BISD will focus on elective and courses, including CTE courses. However, in the future, the district may have a need to exercise this option in other courses. Our local Board would be able to issue the school district teaching permit for an individual teaching these courses based on qualifications certified by the Superintendent.
* All candidates will be carefully considered to ensure the individual has sufficient education and expertise to provide instruction necessary to meet the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for the courses to be taught.
* A clean criminal background check will be required of any candidate in compliance with the State Board of Education rules. In addition, the individual will be required to attain training and staff development to enhance his/her quality of instruction delivery. The individual will be employed on an at will basis with the district.

3. Probationary Contracts
Current Provision
TEC 21.102 states that a person who is employed as a teacher by a school district for the first time, or who has not been employed by a district for two consecutive school years; previously employed as a teacher by a district and, after a two year lapse in a district employment returns to district employment, the probationary contract offered to the employee may not be for a term exceeding one school year. The probationary contract may be renewed for two additional one year periods, for a maximum contract period of three school years, except for a person who has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment by the district.

Benefits of Exemption:
* Because sufficient data may not be available to effectively evaluate a teacher over a one year period, Bells ISD is seeking to issue a probationary contract for up to two years for an experienced teacher that has been employed in public education for at least five of the previous eight years but is new to the district.
4. Kindergarten-Grade 4 Class Size

Current Provision:
TEC 25.112 requires districts to maintain a class size of 22 students or less for K – 4th grade classes per teacher. When any class exceeds this limit, the district must complete and file a waiver with the Texas Education Agency.
TEC 25.113 requires districts to notify parents of waivers or exceptions to class size limits.

Benefits of Exemption:
* At the beginning of each school year, Bells ISD will meet the suggested student to teacher ratio of 22:1 per k-4th class room. In the event any class size exceeds this ration during the school year, the superintendent will report this information the Board of Trustees; the determination of whether to add an additional teacher to meet the 22:1 ratio will be made by the campus principal and make the recommendation to the Superintendent and Board of Trustees.
* Availability of quality teachers exact number of students in the classes in question will be the determining factors in the decision to waive the 22:1 or hire an additional teacher.
* A TEA waiver will not be filed when a k-4th grade classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio.