

# MEXIA ISD

## District Of Innovation Plan

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2017-2022

**Board Approved:  
3/27/2017**

## **INTRODUCTION**

House Bill (HB) 1842 passed during the 84th Legislative Session, permits Texas public school districts to become Districts of Innovation and to obtain exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code.

- Potential benefits of becoming a District of Innovation include:
- Flexibility: Districts will have the flexibility to implement practices similar to charter schools, including exemptions from certain mandates including the uniform school start date and required minutes of instruction.
- Local control: Districts decide which flexibilities best suit their local needs.
- Autonomy: Districts must submit a district of innovation plan to the commissioner of education, but approval is not required.

Districts are not exempt from statutes including curriculum and graduation requirements, and academic and financial accountability.

## **TERM**

The term of the Plan is for five years, beginning with the 2017-2018 school year and ending with the 2022-2023 school year unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. If, within the term of this Plan, other areas of operations are to be considered for flexibility as part of HB 1842, the Board will appoint a new committee to consider and propose additional exemptions in the form of an amendment to the Plan. Any amendment adopted by the Board will not extend the term of this Plan. The District may not implement two separate plans at any one time.

## **Uniform School Start Date-(TEC 25.0811) (TEC 25.0812) (EB Legal) (EB Local)**

### **Current Law**

A district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August unless the district operates a year-round system. A district may not receive a waiver for this requirement.

### **Proposed**

This flexibility of start date allows the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of the students and local community. It also offers the below opportunities:

- An improved balanced instructional calendar.
- Students participating in Dual Enrollment opportunities will work with balanced semesters, which align with our local colleges.
- An early start date permits students an additional week of instruction prior to state assessments.
- Students will be afforded opportunities to enroll in summer college sessions with finalized official transcripts due to the school year ending prior to June.
- Students and staff who are attending summer school classes will be afforded additional flexibility in reporting date to allow completion of course work.
- Creates Flexibility for District to pursue other calendar options for identified populations.

### **Local Guidelines**

The district will determine, on an annual basis, when each school year will begin.

### **Inter-district Transfers- (TEC 25.036)**

#### **Current Law**

Under Texas Education Code 25.001, a district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district. Under TEC 25.036, a transfer is interpreted to be for a period of one school year.

#### **Proposed**

Mexia ISD maintains a transfer policy under FDA (Local) requiring nonresident students wishing to transfer to file a transfer application each school year. In approving transfer requests, the availability of space and instructional staff, availability of programs and services, the student's disciplinary history records, work habits, and attendance records are also evaluated. Transfer students are expected to follow the attendance requirements, rules and regulations of the District. TEC 25.036 has been interpreted to establish the acceptance of a transfer as a one year commitment by the District. The District is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one year commitment in accepting transfer applicants. On rare occasions, student behavior warrants suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion which would be just cause to revoke the student transfer. In addition, student attendance may fall below the TEA truancy standard, in these rare cases, Mexia ISD seeks exemption from the one year transfer commitment.

### **Local Guidelines**

Nonresident students who have been accepted as inter-district transfer may have such transfer status revoked by the Superintendent at any time during the year if the student is assigned discipline consequences of suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion. In addition, students not meeting the State's 90% attendance standard may also be subject to immediate revocation of the transfer status.

### **Behavior Coordinator (TEC 37.0012)**

#### **Current Law**

TEC§37.0012 requires that a person be designated to serve as the campus behavior coordinator (CBC), who is primarily responsible for maintaining student discipline and implementation of Chapter 37. This provision also allows duties imposed on a campus principal or other campus administrator to be performed by the campus behavior coordinator.

#### **Proposed**

By eliminating the behavior coordinator designation, MISD can focus on building a Premiere District that fosters the development of social-emotional learning. In addition to exempting the district from the application of TEC§37.0012, any authority, responsibility, or duty granted to a CBC by law or MISD Board Policy shall be exercised by other appropriate school officials.

## **Probationary Contracts (TEC 21.102(b))**

### **Current Law**

TEC §21.102(b) states that a probationary contract may not exceed one year for a person who has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment with the district.

### **Proposed**

Due to the unique nature of MISD, including our initiatives and processes, this period of time may not be sufficient to evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom since teacher contract timelines demand that employment decisions must be made prior to the availability of end-of-year classroom and student data. Upon exemption from TEC §21.102(b), all new contract employees will be subject to the probationary period set out in TEC §21.102(c), in order to allow more time for the district to fairly and thoroughly assess an employee's performance.

## **Teacher Certification- (TEC 21.003) (TEC 21.057) (DK LEGAL) (DK LOCAL) (DK EXHIBIT) (DBA LEGAL) (DBA LOCAL)**

### **Current Law**

TEC §21.003(a) states that a person may not be employed as a teacher by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued by the appropriate state agency. In the event a district cannot locate a certified teacher for a position or a teacher is teaching a subject outside of their certification, the district must request emergency certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or State Board of Educator Certification. This system is burdensome and does not take into account the unique financial and/or instructional needs of the district.

TEC §21.055 A school district may issue a school district teaching permit and employ as a teacher a person who does not hold a teaching certificate issued by the SBOE. To be eligible for a school district teaching permit under this section, a person must hold a baccalaureate degree. Promptly after employing a person under this section, a school district shall send to the commissioner a written statement identifying the person, the person's qualifications as a teacher, and the subject or class the person will teach. The person may teach the subject or class pending action by the commissioner.

TEC§ 21.057 requires that a school district provide parental notification if the district assigns an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher to the same classroom for more than 30 consecutive instructional days during the same school year.

Rural, high poverty districts have the hardest time filling positions with quality instructors, especially in subjects where state-wide shortages exist. In the event a district cannot locate a certified teacher for a position or a teacher is teaching a subject outside of their certification, the district must request emergency/local certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or State Board of Educator Certification. TEA then approves or denies this request. This system is burdensome and does not take into account the unique financial and/or instructional needs of the district. Furthermore, there have been instances when persons meeting the criteria outlined in TEC§21.057 have been denied local certification because they were actively, yet

unnecessarily, pursuing an alternative certification. Additionally, highly qualified standards/notifications have been removed from federal requirements under repeal of the NCLB Act.

### **Proposed**

Mexia ISD will continue its quest for highly effective educators.

- a. In order to best serve Mexia ISD students, all decisions on teacher certification and assignments will be handled locally.
- b. Notification of District Teaching Permits (local certification) shall not be necessary.
- c. The campus principal may submit to the Superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach one subject in a related field for which he/she is not certified.
  - a) The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials the certified teacher possesses that would qualify this individual to teach the subject/field of study.
  - b) Emergency or financial situations creating the need for this assignment should also be noted.
- d. When possible, lesson plans for the uncertified teacher will be created in partnership with certified teachers in the same field
- e. Mexia ISD will allow District Teaching Permits (local certification) based on skills and experiences outside the traditional teacher certification pathway.
  - a) An individual with certain qualifications who is not certified as a teacher can be eligible to teach in hard to fill positions including, but not limited to, TEA approved shortage areas such as special education, mathematics, science, Languages Other than English (LOTE), Career & Technical Education (CTE), etc.
  - b) A person seeking District Teaching Permit (local certification) should have the abilities and related knowledge/experience to fulfill the requirements of the position.
  - c) The principal may submit to the superintendent and/or the superintendent's designee, a request for District Teaching Permit (local certification) outlining all the individual's credentials/qualifications. Special Education Teachers and Bilingual Education Teachers will not be granted District Teacher Permit due to federal regulations.
  - d) Qualifications that may be considered include but are not limited to
    - i. Professional work experience
    - ii. Formal training and education
    - iii. Active professional relevant industry certification or registration
    - iv. Combination of work experience, training, and education
    - v. Demonstration of successful experience working with students.
  - e) The superintendent or his/her designee will then approve the request if they believe the individual possesses the knowledge, skills and experience required of the position and feel the individual could be an asset to students.
  - f) An employee working under a District Teaching Permit (local certification) will not receive a contract but will work on an at-will basis and have a separate pay scale from state certified teachers.
  - g) Determinations shall be made on a case-by-case basis.
- f. A teacher certification waiver, state permit applications, notifications, or other paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency or other district stakeholders.

- g. An employee working under a District Teaching Permit (local certification) will adhere to the same professional standards, ethics, and requirements of all certified teachers.
- h. An employee working under a District Teaching Permit (local certification) will be appraised under the same teacher appraisal system as required of all certified teachers.

### **Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Final Grade-(TEC 25.092)**

#### **Current Law**

In order to provide engaging and challenging learning to all students, the District needs relief from Texas Education Code Section 25.092, which inhibits the goals of the DOI Plan by not allowing the District to issue class credit or a final grade for a class if a student is not in attendance an arbitrary percentage of the time that a class is offered. In other words, the law currently requires the District to award class credit to students based on “seat time” rather than based on content mastery.

#### **Proposed**

Exemption from this requirement will provide educational advantages to students of the District by promoting active learning through innovation in the methods, locations, and times instruction may be delivered to students, thereby accommodating students with legitimate scheduling conflicts, and reducing the number of dropouts/increasing the number of qualifying graduates.

One of the overarching goals in the Strategic Plan within the focus area is providing students with the curriculum, tools, resources, and pedagogy to achieve their full potential by taking ownership of their learning and setting high academic goals. This will be accomplished by designing and implementing more responsive learning environments, where blended and personalized learning opportunities are available. Blended learning, where instruction is delivered through a combination of time in class and time spent learning online, is only one example where exemption from Section 25.092 will likely foster greater innovation to promote active learning and improve student outcomes. In addition, exemption from this requirement will allow the District to not penalize students who miss class due to legitimate school activities and/or family issues that may prevent students from meeting the 90% class attendance rule, as long as mastery of content can be documented. This will address the social and emotional issues that the District often encounters when serving students who find themselves in situations that place them in alternative school.

Relief from Section 25.092 does not in any way impact or alter existing compulsory attendance requirements or University Interscholastic League (UIL) rules. Moreover, opting out of Section 25.092 in no way limits or modifies a teacher’s right to determine the finality of a grade in accordance with Texas Education Code Section 28.0214, nor does it restrict or alter a teacher’s right to assign grades in accordance with Texas Education Code Section 28.0216.

### **Minimum Minutes of Instruction, School Day- (TEC §25.081) (TEC§25.082(a))**

#### **Current Law**

House Bill (HB) 2610, passed by the 84th Texas Legislature, amended the Texas Education Code (TEC), §25.081, by eliminating the required 180 days of instruction and replacing this language with the requirement that schools provide at least 75,600 minutes of instruction annually and

420 minutes of instruction daily. While the bill allowed schools to add minutes as necessary to compensate for minutes of instruction lost due to school closures caused by disaster, flood, extreme weather conditions, fuel curtailment, or another calamity; it eliminated any options to pursue state waivers to reduce the minimum number of minutes per day to provide teachers with professional learning time beyond an early release waiver currently used by the elementary schools and intermediate schools. Additionally, Texas Education Code §25.082(a) requires that each school day be at least seven hours long including intermissions.

### **Proposed**

The flexibility to adjust minutes of instruction within a designated school day will assist with personalizing learning to better meet student needs. This flexibility has the added benefit of allowing the possibility of an altered length of a school day, which may include, for example, a later start/early release time which will accommodate professional learning/collaboration opportunities for teachers.

### **Removal of Student Achievement from T-TESS-(TEC§21.353 (a) (2))**

### **Current Law**

The commissioner shall adopt a recommended appraisal process and criteria on which to appraise the performance of teachers. The criteria must be based on observable, job-related behavior, including: the performance of teachers' students

### **Proposed**

We feel that the T-TESS instrument is robust enough without the addition of student achievement to the teacher evaluation. Administrators already take into account student achievement whether it is retention rates, passing rates, STAAR, CBAs, or other test measures. We feel that with state assessment, which can only be used with approximately 30-40% of our staff, should be removed from the teacher evaluation. Using performance objectives to determine student performance appears to be subjective and/or arbitrary depending on what subject(s) we were looking at to incorporate student achievement into the T-TESS instrument.

### **Teacher Mentors-(TEC 21.458)**

### **Current Law**

This statute requires that mentors have three or more years of experience. This limits the number of teachers who are allowed to serve as mentors and restricts teachers with exceptional skill or experience in the subject matter from sharing their knowledge with novice teachers.

### **Proposed**

Allow the selection of teacher mentors based on the skill level of the individual mentor without regard to the number of years of service.

## **Contract Service Days (TEC §21.401)**

### **Current Law**

State law currently requires educators employed on a 10 month contract to provide a minimum of 187 days of service.

### **Proposed**

With the passage of §25.081 which changed the required days of instruction to minutes the law did not address contract days for 10 month contract employees. The determination of how many days not to exceed 187 are required to fulfill an employee's contract should be a local decision. Changes in the number of days required to fulfill the contract will not alter the teacher pay scale. Teacher daily rate will be adjusted to maintain current salary.

## **Timeline of Events**

### **Monday, January 9, 2017**

Initial meeting with administrative staff to discuss preliminary thoughts and discuss possible members of the District of Innovation Team

### **Tuesday, January 17, 2017**

#### **Board Resolution**

Board of Trustees approve resolution to hold a public hearing to discuss the possibility of using HB 1842 to become a District of Innovation

#### **Public Hearing**

Public hearing to explain and discuss the possibility of becoming a District of Innovation

#### **Board Motion**

Approve a motion to pursue local "District of Innovation" plan

Board of Trustees approve the members of the District of Innovation Committee

### **Monday, January 23, 2017**

Notify Commissioner of Education of the Board's intention to vote on adoption of proposed plan.

### **Wednesday, January 25, 2017 – 4 pm Admin Training Room**

Initial meeting of the District of Innovation Committee

### **Wednesday, February 8, 2017 – 4 pm Admin Training Room**

2nd meeting of the District of Innovation Committee

District Improvement Committee Public Hearing

District Improvement Committee approved Local Innovation Plan

### **Thursday, February 9, 2017**

Plan Posted on District Website for Community Review and Public Comment for 30 Days

### **Monday, March 20, 2017, Regular Board Meeting**

Approve the District of Innovation plan

### **Tuesday, March 21, 2017**

Begin update on all policy changes with TASB

Notify Commissioner of Education of Approval of Local Innovation Plan

## District of Innovation Committee Meeting

- |                         |                                    |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Dr. Lyle DuBus       | Superintendent                     |
| 2. Dr. Sharon Young     | Assistant Superintendent           |
| 3. Shelli Killingsworth | Director of District Services      |
| 4. Val Sunday           | Mexia High School Principal        |
| 5. Thurman Brown        | Mexia Junior High School Principal |
| 6. Lisa Lauderdale      | Mexia Intermediate Principal       |
| 7. Brenda Sellers       | Mexia Elementary Principal         |
| 8. John Schaefer        | Director of Developmental Center   |
| 9. Dr. Bill Lowry       | Mexia ISD Board Member             |
| 10. Amy Kay Shaw        | Elementary Teacher                 |
| 11. Dana Larabee        | Elementary Teacher                 |
| 12. Donna Scott         | Elementary Counselor               |
| 13. Beth Weaver         | Intermediate Teacher               |
| 14. Holly Clark         | Intermediate Teacher               |
| 15. Danny Feuge         | Intermediate Teacher               |
| 16. Lori York           | Junior High School Teacher         |
| 17. Michael Goldberg    | Junior High School Teacher         |
| 18. D'Ann Klosterman    | Junior High School Teacher         |
| 19. Evan Simpson        | High School Teacher                |
| 20. Tiffany Adair       | High School Teacher                |
| 21. Dr. Jodie Maki      | High School Teacher                |
| 22. John West           | Developmental Center Teacher       |
| 23. Jennifer Samford    | Developmental Center Teacher       |
| 24. Melissa Maas        | Developmental Center Counselor     |
| 25. Joyce Johnson       | Parent/Community Representative    |
| 26. Blanca Rivera       | Parent                             |
| 27. Lana Ingram-Gore    | Parent                             |
| 28. Mitzi Eves          | Parent/Community Representative    |
| 29. Wallace High        | Parent                             |
| 30. Charles Watley      | Parent                             |
| 31. Jeff Gipson         | Business Representative            |
| 32. Nancy Contreras     | Community Representative           |
| 33. Jeff Proctor        | Parent/Community Representative    |
| 34. Brian Hullum        | Parent/Community Representative    |

Committee Vote: February 8, 2017

For

Dr. Lyle DuBus	Superintendent
Dr. Sharon Young	Assistant Superintendent
Shelli Killingsworth	Director of District Services
Val Sunday	Mexia High School Principal
Thurman Brown	Mexia Junior High School Principal
Lisa Lauderdale	Mexia Intermediate Principal
Brenda Sellers	Mexia Elementary Principal
John Schaefer	Director of Developmental Center
Dr. Bill Lowry	Mexia ISD Board Member
Donna Scott	Elementary Counselor
Beth Weaver	Intermediate Teacher
Holly Clark	Intermediate Teacher
Danny Feuge	Intermediate Teacher
Lori York	Junior High School Teacher
Michael Goldberg	Junior High School Teacher
D'Ann Klosterman	Junior High School Teacher
Evan Simpson	High School Teacher
Tiffany Adair	High School Teacher
Melissa Maas	Developmental Center Counselor
John West	Developmental Center Teacher
Jennifer Samford	Developmental Center Teacher

Charles Watley	Parent
Wallace High	Parent

Against

Amy Kay Shaw	Elementary Teacher
Dana Larabee	Elementary Teacher
Dr. Jodie Maki	High School Teacher

Absent:

Joyce Johnson	Parent/Community Representative
Blanca Rivera	Parent
Lana Ingram-Gore	Parent
Mitzi Eves	Parent/Community Representative
Jeff Gipson	Business Representative
Nancy Contreras	Community Representative
Jeff Proctor	Parent/Community Representative
Brian Hullum	Parent/Community Representative