



United Independent School District District of Innovation Meeting January 4, 2017

1:30 Call Meeting to Order

1:30 Welcome by Mr. Santos

1:35 Mr. Montemayor, United School Board Member, welcomes and addresses the District Advisory Committee. (DAC).

1:45- What do you know about DOI? What Concerns do you have about DOI? What concerns have you heard that others have?

Chairperson Rendon began: Before beginning the presentation. I want to share a bit of background information regarding District of Innovation. Read over TASB information, listed benefits (flexibility, first day of school, minimum minutes of instruction, class size, designation of campus behavior coordinators, local appraisal systems. Probationary contract exemption, and any other ways we feel would be beneficial for our students and teachers), areas we cannot seek exemptions (state requirements, EOC, accountability rating, academic and financial responsibility, bilingual, special education, criminal background checks, nepotism). It has been determined that there would be no significant impact of funding for our school district.

It has been determined that United ISD meets the requirements to begin the process for designation as district of innovation. When we realized how the calendar would be affected, we took the information and shared it with C&I and began speaking about District of Innovation. The presentation will go into detail, please feel free to ask questions as we go along. We will discuss our proposed overview, exemptions, and benefits. As a district, we selected five areas that we would like to be considered for exemptions from the education code to apply to our innovation plan.

What is District of Innovation- Read slide

Eligibility & Duration of Eligibility- Read slide Emphasized accountability rating to remain academically acceptable.

Process to Become, Amend, Renew, or Rescind DOI- Discussed the importance of board approved members to attend committee meetings.

Question-

Teacher- TEA will review how?

Teacher- If one school does not meet the requirements by the state?

Follow up Response-

Then the commissioner of Education will terminate the district's plan

Proposed Exemptions- Read slide

District of Innovation Timeline- Read slide

Process of DOI

Question-

Does DOI take immediate effect?

Did you say it ends in 2022, what happens then?

Are we voting individual exemptions or by plan?

Follow up Response-

DOI becomes effective the moment it is approved by the Board. The plan can continue in effect for up to five years. After 2022, then we go through same process if we want to continue with exemptions. We will be voting on exemptions on an Individual basis and we'll do it by ballot. We'll tally and present information.

DAC- Read slide

Exemption 1- Calendar—A school district cannot begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August.

Reviewed proposed calendars with the starting day of August 28, 2017 (not as a District of Innovation) or August 21, 2017 (as a District of Innovation). The District could potentially lose 5 days in August and as a result will have to complete the school year (76,500 minutes of

instruction) within August 28 – May 31. It will be a compressed calendar and a full week of thanksgiving holidays cannot be included nor the full two week period during the winter break.

This past Tuesday the district recorded 2,400 absences when we returned from winter break.

In new rating scale attendance is now a critical factor.

Show calendar options with and without DOI

Question-

Would finals also be in December?—Yes, we would prefer that the semester end in December so that we can have more balance of instructional days before assessments.

Mr. Rodriguez, Teacher (HS)

You said you wanted to finish the semester in December, so the District would not wait for STAAR scores results to make new schedules?

Follow up Response-

Scores have historically been coming in later and later. With the ELA assessment administered earlier in the spring semester, we need to start the second semester as soon as we can. 45 days of instruction prior to the exam gives them little time to prepare for the first test which is ELA. Regardless of scores, we'll have to have some shifts in student schedules.

Follow-Up Question- I'm worried about the scheduling. You're talking about two weeks of kids not getting their remedial or instruction.

Follow up Response-

Teachers will be critical in identifying students who are at risk. You all have a good gauge as to who will master the assessments.

Question-

How do you explain to your student that you placed him in the remedial course and then they pass?

Follow up Response-

We're going to have to look at the student history and performance for the semester--taking student data, benchmarks, et, and making a determination on what that particular student needs.

Follow up Response-

I still think it'll get chaotic.

Response- We'll discuss and evaluate the information. Nothing is set in stone. We can still have a dialogue to discuss and tweak it to fit our needs.

Question-

Spring break is so close to testing?

Response- yes we have two weeks after spring break. It's never perfect. We're adapting to what the state is requiring.

Exemption 2- Minimum Attendance for Students Read slide

Chronic absences will now affect school rating.

Example of student who is on level, passes STAAR, but has the unfortunate incident of breaking their arm and doesn't qualify for Homebound, yet this student because of absences will be retained or lose credit.

Comment by Jose Almazan:

One of the things mentioned right now by exempting we're establishing flexibility within our district. Students who are out for extracurricular activities this would assist us with that or even with tutorials. This allows us to be flexible with accountability. This enables us the flexibility to be able to invest in the needs of our students. It allows the teacher and administration to develop a dialogue and determine what is best for their students.

Question-

One of the concerns teachers have aren't our athletes. We know they're responsible, but we're worried about this being a blanket for students who are cutting class, skipping and doing nothing.

Response- This is for students with extenuating circumstances.

Exemption 3-Teacher Certification for CTE and Dual Credit for hard to staff CTE areas and only when there are no other certified applicants. Read slide

This by no means is to take away from teacher preparation programs nor to water down the preparation of our teachers but , it's for hard to staff areas in CTE and Dual Credit.

As a district we are having difficulty filling positions as a FFA, Building Trades, consumer science or homemaking positions, but the demand for these types of teachers is increasing. Another example is Dual Credit teachers who teach college level courses. For example, Mr. Bustos an employee at one of our campuses is fully certified to teach the Spanish at an ECHS program. The district can have him serve as an adjunct professor and teacher the course to our students for college credit. The District alleviates having to pay costs (up to \$1,000) to LCC for these courses and utilize what we have within our district. Our student s benefit because they receive the college credit and parents don't have to pay college tuition for this class later in the future.

Comment from Member:

So, I worked for a school district and with TEA. I went back and learned there are state waivers designations that the district can use to fill those hard to fill positions. On Sept, 15 HB 2205 the state gave the districts the ability to apply for waivers. So you really don't need that stuff.

Comment from Member: From a teacher's standpoint I had to go through alternative certification an incur the expense for getting certified to assist with this particular need at my campus. If we can utilize our expertise within the district why not while not being certified. I'm already certified to teach, I know the curriculum and am capable, but I'm not certified to teach this specific content area. Why not?

Response Career Technology Director-One of the issues we had. At the high school level. When working on the master schedule, it is determined that I need 28 sections of a given class but can only get 24 sections from the assigned teachers to my campus yet there are teachers who have less students who may have the skills and knowledge to teach one of the needed sections. Currently, this cannot be done

because of certification issues. With this exemption, this could be facilitated. This exemption allows us to utilize teachers who have experience, but not certified, to teach the course. I can apply for a waiver. They'll give it to us, but he can never do it again unless he gets certified. We have teachers on campuses that have the expertise to provide courses for these students who have a desire to take these sections.

Exemption 4- Campus Behavior Coordinator Read slide

Current law requires one campus behavior coordinator to be assigned at each campus. This individual must contact the parent anytime there is an ISS, OSS, JJAEP or DAEP placement within 24 hours. In addition, if the coordinator doesn't reach the parent by phone then a letter has to be sent via postal service.

It's important to also mention that the administrator who is processing the referral is already contacting the parents. So to have one person notify parents because they're assigned as Campus Behavior Coordinator sometimes duplicates work at the campus level.

Question-

What are the numbers, how many phone calls being made per day?

Response Annette Perez- About 20-25 a day. We're having people trying to make contact by taking into consideration the amount of phone numbers and still to no avail.

We have the requirement we just want to broaden how many individuals can take on the task of informing parents.

Exemption 5- Instructional Minutes for PK and PASS Program -

Currently, the state requires that our student attend school for 75,600 minutes each school year. The PASS Program was initiated this school year at LBJ High School to assist students who have hardship issues attend school on a part time basis (4 hours a day). The District applied for the Flexible School Day Program for this school. With this exemption, the district would not have to apply for the Flexible school day program and meet the requirements. In addition the District has 20 campuses that offer a half day program which is a three hour program. The district does not meet the 37,800 minutes per year required; therefore, waivers have to be submitted to the state. Read slide

Overall benefits for the District- Read slide

Question-

Comment from Committee Member: Before we break, I am not trying to stand between the district and the waiver for CTE and Dual Credit, but based on the information on the website the exemptions that are advised. We might have even more of an exemption but going some other route.

Response: that is good to hear, this is why individuals who are knowledgeable in their areas are serving on the committee so that we can see what type of plan can be developed.

Break- 2:45

Reconvene- 3:00

Resolution: When District officials met with representatives from the various teacher organizations, they wanted assurances that several areas would never be affected under DOI. We heard their concerns and modified the resolution to include those assurances.

Specifically, in red: Whereas, the Board of Trustees will not seek under DOI exemptions from any existing laws relating to teacher contracts including salary or days of employment; teacher schedules, specifically: planning periods, duty free lunches; employee complaint procedures (grievance policies); or any other existing laws except as proposed which are the five proposed exemptions. Read slide line item by line item-

Question-

We know what happens if not going with DOI there's no way that this is 100% benefits. What are some of the negatives?

Response Rendon- Class size is one of them. Other districts have proposed larger class sizes. Other plans I have seen are moving the cut off day for kinder enrollment from September 1 to December 1. So they will have younger kindergarten students eligible to enroll.

There are other negatives but our Board has made the assurances. The commitment from the Board is there.

Question- Will the district consider applying for more exemptions?

You could add more exemptions?

Response Rendon- Exemptions cannot be added. We are limited to the five were presented to the Board. Should others be added, it would have to start at the resolution process again. The entire procedure would have to start. We don't plan to add any other exemptions.

Question: Any indication by region 1?

Brownsville, Harlingen, etc.

Question: What is the status for LISD?

Response Rendon- A community calendar is something we place a great deal of importance on for the simple reason that we have many students whose parents work at LISD. They've presented and are modifying their timeline. I understand that they are looking at moving forward.

In addition, the chairperson shared the TASB link noting that over 100 districts across the state have been designated as DOI Districts and the areas which they submitted for exemptions.

Summary of Concerns

Rendon read over cards submitted by committee members prior to presentation.

- Invading teacher's planning-
- Longer work/extended hours-
- Fire teachers by having at will contracts-
- Lower salaries and change to different salaries-
- Modify school calendar & add teacher work days w/o compensation
- Lunch period removed
- Teacher work duties
- Contracts will be altered
- Some campuses will not follow the plan?

- Response-We are doing this as a district. We are all united. CTE, PK, PASS will be the campuses to
- Grievance Process
- School District may become a charter school
- Not having the same calendar as LCC, TAMIU, and LISD
- Teacher certification- Only hard to staff positions
- Placing non qualified teachers in core areas
- Attendance and students- we share this concern.
- Instructional time will be impacted
- Teacher years will not be taken into consideration in contracts
- Intimated
- District will have too much power.
- For ballots and voting we can modify and will ballots be counted in the open?

It is hard to compete with social media because there was a lot of misinformation that was published.

UISD did send out an email and published information in the employee newsletter. We are also looking at presenting at the different campuses.

Responses from Committee Members:

- These concerns were dispelled –
- I think that some people are afraid for those “hard to staff” positions since it is still not clear.
- One of the challenges universities are facing is that the state has made the teacher certification requirements to meet. It’s not that we’re not wanting to produce more teachers, we don’t have an elitest mentality, but the admission requirements at the state level, for especially elementary bilingual certified teachers. We graduated 30 teachers in the Fall. In 2006 we were graduating 300-400 cohorts. Now we’re graduating 40 teachers. ELA teachers are hard to find. Elementary bilingual teachers. We just graduated 7. Things are changing at the state level and we’re facing challenges.
- From some people I spoke with they saw the possible exemptions and then assumed the worst.

- Speaking from having attended the board meeting I felt so much better after because I understood what the intentions of the board are.
- So 2/3's of us have to approve? Yes, we are using that criteria even though the state says majority.

Question: Which are the areas where we are having a hard time producing teachers:.

Response from Committee Member- The biggest area we're having, we're having these conversations about what the school districts, For example, LISD won't hire a teacher without that bilingual certification. The slippery slope we've experienced is that when students aren't able to meet the requirements we create these alternative degree routes. Elementary Bilingual areas and ELA teachers. Years ago the science teachers were in demand, the state responded and we give out scholarships for that. Now we have enough candidates.

One last concern, our two largest graduating in educations are programs that don't need certification. We don't want to graduate people without a certification.

Evaluation and Index Choice Card

members chose what exemption committee they'd like to participate in

Closing

Suggestion-

Do we have plans for district employees to come in and maybe ask questions?

That's a good idea, we can certainly plan something.

Question-

Can we present this information with my staff? Can we get the powerpoint? Yes, information will be sent to all committee members and we can schedule presentation at the campuses.

How will the committee know that there aren't any additional addendums attached to the plan? None will be added. Only approved DAC exemptions will be presented.

Will we sign off on the plan? Yes, DAC members can sign off on plan

Additional Facts presented by members-
House Bill 2205 Information-

<http://www.tasanet.org/site/Default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=4&PageID=1&ViewID=047e6be3-6d87-4130-8424-d8e4e9ed6c2a&FlexDataID=1973>