

## Skidmore-Tynan ISD District of Innovation Plan

**Originally Approved by Board of Trustees on April 10, 2017**

**Amended by the Board of Trustees on January 13, 2020**

House Bill 1842, passed by the 84<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature, provides an opportunity for Texas public school districts to modify state requirements at the local level to better meet the needs of their unique student populations. Under House Bill 1842, school districts may identify certain requirements imposed by the Texas Education Code which “inhibit the goals of the plan and from which the district should be exempted on adoption of the plan.”

Skidmore-Tynan ISD seeks to create flexibility and opportunities for students in order to personalize and maximize learning at all levels of the district. The selection of exemptions contained within this plan were carefully chosen based on the needs of the local school district. S-T ISD seeks exemptions from the following provisions of the Texas Education Code:

- Uniform Start Date
- Minimum Minutes of Instruction
- Teacher Certification
- Probationary Contracts
- Teacher Mentors
- Preclusion from Providing Alternative Uniform Group Coverage Program
- Elimination of One Year Commitment in Accepting Transfer Applicants

### Uniform School Start Date

**Exemption** – TEC 25.0811 and 25.0812

Under current statute, students in Texas public schools may not begin school before the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday in August. The start and end date for the school year prevents school districts from building school calendars that meet the needs of all students. In addition, with a flexible start and end date to the school year, S-TISD could offer greater opportunities for professional development for teachers, increased opportunities to provide remediation and/or enrichment for students, and a way to balance instructional time within semesters.

### Minimum Minutes of Instruction – 75,600 Minutes Each School Year/420 Minutes Each School Day

**Exemption** – TEC 25.081

Current statute eliminated the required 180 days of instruction, replacing the number of days with 75,600 minutes of instruction for the school year and no less than 420 minutes of instruction during the school day. With an exemption from the 420 minute day, the District would be able to create flexible schedules within the school year and the instructional day in order to personalize student learning, further meet student needs, and create opportunities for teachers to collaborate on student work.

### Teacher Certification and Field-Based Experience Requirement

#### **Exemption** – TEC 21.003 and 21.051

Under current statute, teacher certification requirements inhibit S-T ISD's ability to hire highly-skilled individuals to teach career and technical education courses, course taught in languages other than English, and high-demand dual credit courses. The limited number of teachers available for these courses restricts course offerings in the district. The District seeks to establish its own local qualification requirements to teach such courses in lieu of the certification requirements set forth in law.

### Probationary Contracts

#### **Exemption** – TEC 21.102

Currently, probationary contract periods for newly hired teachers who have worked in public education for at least five of the last eight years cannot exceed one year. In certain situations, this limitation prevents the school district from fully determining a teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. The preferred option for probationary contracts for experienced teachers, counselors, or nurses new to the school district is up to two years.

### Teacher Mentors

#### **Exemption** – TEC 21.458

Current statute requires mentor teachers assigned to new teachers to have three or more years of experience. This statute limits the number of teachers who are allowed to serve as mentors and potentially restricts teachers with exceptional skill or experience in the subject matter, who have less than three years of experience, from working with beginning teachers in a mentor capacity.

### Preclusion from Providing Alternative Uniform Group Coverage Program

#### **Exemption** – TEC 22.004(i)

Preclusion from providing alternative Uniform Group Coverage Program once the program of coverages under Chapter 1579, Insurance Code is implemented. Related Board Policies: CRD (LEGAL) and CRD (LOCAL)

TEC §22.004 (j) states that a school district may not make group health coverage available to its employees pursuant to TEC 22.004(b) after the date a District implements the program of coverages provided under Chapter 1579 of the Texas Insurance Code. The current process allows no flexibility in the design of group health insurance benefits to fit the needs of all Skidmore-Tynan ISD employees. This provision also prohibits the District from procuring group health insurance benefits that may provide better coverages for its employees and at a lower cost. This provision is in direct contradiction to the wishes of the Skidmore-Tynan ISD Board of Trustees who represent community interests in this matter.

Texas Education Code 22.004 is not in any of the prohibited exemptions that can be included in a District's local innovation plan pursuant to Texas Education Code 12A.004 and the list of the Commissioner's prohibited exemptions in Texas Administrative Code Title 19, Chapter 102, subchapter JJ, Section 102.1309.

## Elimination of One Year Commitment in Accepting Transfer Applicants

### Exemption – TEC 25.036

A district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district. Under Texas Education Code 25.036, a transfer is interpreted to be for a period of one school year. Skidmore-Tynan 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, the student's disciplinary history records, 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 exempting from the provision of a one year commitment in accepting transfer applicants. If a student commits an egregious offense or has a pattern of misbehavior over time, the campus Principal may recommend to the Superintendent that the student's transfer be revoked. In addition, student attendance may fall below the TEA truancy standard. In these rare cases, Skidmore-Tynan ISD seeks exemption from the one year transfer commitment. Nonresident students who have been accepted as an 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.

Texas Education Code 25.036 is not in any of the prohibited exemptions that can be included in a District's local innovation plan pursuant to Texas Education Code 12A.004 and the list of the Commissioner's prohibited exemptions in Texas Administrative Code Title 19, Chapter 102, subchapter JJ, Section 102.1309