

# **Plemons-Stinnett-Phillips Consolidated Independent School District**

## **DISTRICT OF INNOVATION PLAN**

2017 – 2022

### **Introduction**

House Bill 1842, passed in the 84<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislative Session, provides an opportunity for Texas public school districts to become Districts of Innovation allowing modification of state requirements found in the Texas Education Codes. The adoption of this plan seeks to increase the District's flexibility to improve educational outcomes for the benefit of the students and the community.

### **Term**

The term of the plan is for five years, beginning June 01, 2017 and ending on May 31, 2022, unless terminated or amended by the Plemons-Stinnett-Phillips CISD 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 nominate a new committee to consider and propose additional exemptions in the form of an amendment. Any amendment adopted by the Board will adhere to the same term as the original plan. The District may not implement two separate plans at any one time.

### **PSPCISD District of Innovation Committee**

Bill Wiggins, Superintendent  
Jimmy Amaro, Deputy Superintendent  
Kent Torbert, High School Principal  
Matt Tucker, Middle School Principal  
Jeff Quisenberry, Elementary School Principal  
Kendra Franklin, High School Teacher  
Autumn Whatley, High School Teacher  
Elaine Amaro, Middle School Teacher  
Tammy White, Middle School Teacher  
Debbie Davis, Elementary Teacher  
Jo Ann VanHuss, Elementary Teacher  
Lori Williams, School Nurse

## Plemons-Stinnett-Phillips CISD Proposed Innovations

I. **Uniform School Calendar** (TEC 25.0811) (TEC 25.0812) (EB Legal) (EB Local)  
Texas Education Code Section 25.0811 states that a school district may not begin instruction before the fourth Monday in August. Texas Education Code Section 25.0812 states that a school district may not schedule the last day of school before May 15. Local control of the instructional calendar affords the District the following advantages:

- Balanced Six Week and Semester grading periods.
- Alignment of Calendar with Community College Calendar and STAAR/EOC timelines.
- Creates flexibility for the District to provide remediation and accelerated instruction during the summer months.

II. **Minimum Minutes of Instruction** (TEC 25.082) (EB Legal)

TEC 25.082 requires that a school day be at least seven hours each day, including intermissions and recesses. Exemption from the 420 minutes per day requirement would allow the Plemons-Stinnett-Phillips CISD the flexibility needed to alter the school day schedule whenever it was locally determined as beneficial to the district and its stakeholders to accommodate the unique needs of our students. The district would not be tied to 6 early release days which is the maximum that can be requested under the existing early release waiver process. Exempting the district from the 7 hour school day requirement would afford the district the following advantages:

- Give the district a significant amount of local control over scheduling without fear of a loss of funding or losing credit for instructional time that might cause the district to fall out of compliance with the daily minute requirements.
- Allow the district the flexibility to schedule non-instructional days into the schedule to allow for teachers to analyze student data and engage in targeted, and relevant professional development.

III. **Certification Required** (TEC 21.003) (DBA Legal) (DBA Local)

TEC 21.003 states that “a person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern, or teacher trainee, librarian, educational aide, administrator, educational diagnostician, or school counselor by a school

district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued as provided by Subchapter b.” The current certification requirements inhibit the District from hiring professionals with industry experience to teach Career and Technology Education (CATE) and Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) and foreign language courses. In order to provide more students the opportunity to take such courses and obtain possible professional certifications, the District seeks to establish its own local qualification requirements for such courses in lieu of the requirements set forth in law. The District does not wish to be exempted from any existing laws relating to teacher contracts or teacher benefits. Flexibility to establish its own teacher certification requirements affords the District the following advantages:

- Industry certified and/or trade professionals to teach specialized certification courses.
- Greater number of CATE courses offerings resulting in more opportunity for students
- Ability to employ part-time professionals to teach specialty courses
- Allows the school district to utilize technology to implement on-line courses (CTE, foreign languages, general courses)
- Allows a Certified Teacher who has credentials in a subject outside of their certified field to teach those courses providing for more opportunities for students.

#### IV. **Term of Depository Contract** (TEC 45.205)

TEC 45.205 requires that depository bank contracts not exceed a two-year term. Currently only one financial institution exists in the district. This section of the plan would allow for the district the ability to extend the depository contract for an additional two year term. The current statute requiring a Request for Proposal promotes disruption to campus and district operations.

- At least once every two years, the district will evaluate the performance of the current depository bank. Should the district determine that the contracted services are provided effectively and the quality of service is acceptable, the district will seek to negotiate terms to extend the contract for one additional two-year period.

- Relief from TEC 45.205 allows the district to ensure that its resources are concentrated on student achievement and campus operations are not disrupted.

The implementation process will be as follows:

- No later than 60 days prior to the current contract expiration, the PSPCISD Business Manager and Superintendent will formally evaluate services provided by the current depository bank. Items to be evaluated will include:
  - Bank's compliance with the terms of the current contract
  - Customer Service
  - Timeliness responding to district inquiries
  - Earned interest credit
  - Reasonableness of bank fees
  - Quality of electronic banking systems
  - Fraud prevention and notification services
  - Additional services offered
  - Access to bank branches
- Upon satisfactory evaluation, district finance staff will formally request that the depository bank agree to fees and services for the following two-year period.
- Administration will recommend approval of a contract extension to the Board of Trustees.
- Upon board approval, the contract extension will be executed by the board president and appropriate bank officer.
- PSPCISD Business Manager will file the depository contract with the Texas Education Agency.
- Should district administration or the Board determine that an extension of the current depository contract is not in the district's best interest, the district will initiate a Request for Proposal (RFP) process as prescribed in TEC 45.206-45.209.

V. **Teacher Contract Days** (TEC 21.401 b) (DC Legal)

Current education law in chapter 21 defines a teacher contract as a 10 month contract equivalent to 187 days. Exemption from this would allow the Plemons-Stinnett-Phillips CISD to determination of how many days are required to fulfill an employee's contract should be a local decision. Determination by the district to reduce the number of teacher contract

days from 187 days of service will have no effect on teacher salaries. The exemption from this requirement would benefit the district as follows:

- Reducing teacher contract days from 187 with no effect on teacher salaries would essentially increase the daily rate of pay for teachers. This will enhance teacher recruitment and improve teacher morale.
- This reduction in days would better align the teacher days to the 75,600 minutes required of students.

**VI. Probationary Contracts (TEC 21.002) (TEC 21.102) (DCA Legal)**

For experienced teachers new to the district, the probationary period may not exceed one year if the person has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the previous eight years. A one year probationary period is not a sufficient amount of time to evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. Currently, contracts for employees occur in March or April which demands that employment decisions be made with very little time for evaluating teacher effectiveness as well as prior to state assessment results. Exemption from this requirement would allow the district to issue a probationary contract to all experienced teachers, counselors, librarians, or nurses new to the district that have been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, a probationary contract for up to two years from the first day of employment.

**VII. INTER-DISTRICT TRANSFERS (TEC 25.036) (FDA Local)**

Currently, under Texas Education Code 25.036, a district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district, but TEC 25.036, has been interpreted to require a transfer to be for a period of one school year. Plemons-Stinnett-Phillips CISD 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. In addition, student attendance may fall below the TEA truancy standard. In these rare cases, Plemons-Stinnett-Phillips CISD seeks exemption from the one year transfer commitment. Nonresident students who have been accepted as inter-district transfer students 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.