

Mullin Independent School District

District of Innovation Plan 2017-2018 through 2021-2022

HB 1842 of the 84th Legislative Session allows Texas districts to qualify as a District of Innovation.

Districts of innovation are able to gain local control of certain operations that are currently under the control of the Texas Education Agency.

Introduction:

“The mission of the Mullin Independent School District is to provide customer service at the highest level. As a culturally diverse community, we will provide equitable opportunities for scholarship, leadership, and individual citizenship for our students. With the cooperation of faculty, staff, parents, and community, we will encourage and assist students in acquiring the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for them to become productive members of a culturally diverse society.” In order to facilitate the overall goal and mission of Mullin ISD, the district is seeking flexibility in areas allowed to Districts of Innovation. These areas would include flexibility with the school calendar, the district transfer policy, attendance and course credit policies, teacher certification and minutes/hour requirements. This flexibility will allow Mullin ISD to meet rigorous curriculum standards that need to be present for our students to be successful at a postsecondary level.

District of Innovation Committee Members:

Kristi Mickelson – Superintendent
Sarah McDowell – Principal - Mullin Main, Pecan Ridge, Cedar Mountain
Tom Grady – Master Teacher
Catherine Watts - Teacher
Marged Dudek – Teacher/Learning Design Specialist – High School
Regina Elliott – Teacher – Elementary/High School
Jennifer Flanagan – Teacher – Elementary
Becky Nelson – Teacher - Elementary
Dena Peters – Teacher – High School
Jennifer Walzel – Teacher
Randy Sims - Athletics/Technology/Safety
Crystal Whitley – Test Coordinator/Teacher
Lyn Callan – Special Education Teacher
Brenda Burrus – Parent
Jean Smith – Community Member
Gayla Locks – Business Owner

Term:

The term of the Plan is for five years, beginning in the school year 2017-2018 and ending at the end of the 2021-2022 school year, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. The Committee will continually monitor the effectiveness of the Plan and recommend to the Board any suggested modifications to the plan.

Timeline:

May 9, 2017 - Board Resolution signed by District Advisory Committee
May 15, 2017 - Public hearing by school board
May 15, 2017 - Board appoints committee to develop plan
May 16, 2017 - DOI Committee Meeting to begin/create DOI
Plan
May 16, 2017 - District Advisory Committee holds public meeting and votes on plan
May 17, 2017 - Post Plan online/Notify Commissioner of intent to vote on proposed plan
June 19, 2017 - Board Approval of Plan by 2/3 majority
Implement Plan

Beginning of School Year:

EB Legal, Texas Education Code 25.0811, Texas Education Code 25.0812

Current Law: State law currently prohibits school districts from starting class before the fourth Monday in August, unless they are year-round districts.

Proposed

It is the intent of Mullin ISD to build and operate a calendar that best serves the instructional needs of our students and meets the needs of our community. The flexibility of a start date allows the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets these needs. This plan will allow a more balanced number of instructional days per semester and more instructional days prior to the state assessments given in early May. Benefits to this exemption include, but are not limited to:

- a. Better balance the days in the fall and spring semesters.
- b. Provide more educational days prior to scheduled state assessments.
- c. Better align with dual-credit college courses in the Fall, Spring and Summer semesters.
- d. Create greater flexibility in the District Calendar are to improve the overall district attendance rate.
- e. Improve student success on state and local assessments.
- f. Allow for innovative options with scheduling currently unavailable.
- g. Allow for greater opportunity for meaningful staff development throughout the school year.

Certifications:

DK Legal, DK Local, Texas Education Code 21.044, 21.003

Current Law: 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 submit a request to the Texas Education Agency. TEA then approves or denies this request.

Proposed

In order to best serve Mullin ISD students, decisions on certification will be handled locally.

- a. The campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request to allow a teacher to instruct and supervise students out of their certified field. The principal will document qualifications that would allow the teacher to teach this subject.
- b. An individual with experience in a CTE field could be eligible to teach a vocational skill or course through a local teaching certificate. The principal will submit the request to the superintendent with all the individual's credentials. The superintendent will then approve or deny the request based on if they feel the individual could be an asset to students. The superintendent will report this action to the Board of Trustees prior to the individuals' employment. Local certificates will be valid for one year and the employee will be at-will.
- c. This proposal will provide more flexibility in scheduling and more options for students in class offerings.

The flexibility in allowing Mullin ISD to make local decisions about teacher certification would provide a better opportunity to offer innovation in course selections for CTE courses as well as hard to fill, high-demand dual credit courses. By obtaining exemption from existing teacher certification requirements, the District will have the flexibility to hire professionals from diverse academic or vocational fields that qualify the candidate to teach a particular course they may not be certified to teach, internal applicants seeking assignments outside their traditional certification area, as well as enrich applicant pools in specific content areas in order to afford more students the opportunity to take dual credit courses if certified teachers are not available to teach those courses. At the same time, when best for the curriculum for our students, Mullin ISD will continue to seek and employ fully certified teachers. However, the exemption, when needed, will allow more flexibility and innovations in our scheduling and more options and innovative offerings for our students in class offerings.

Transfer Policy:

Texas Education Code 25.036

Current Law: A district may choose to accept students as transfers, even if they are not entitled to admission in the district. TEC 25.036, however, has been interpreted to require a student transfer to be for a period of one school year.

Proposed

Mullin ISD student transfer policy FDA (local) requires that all nonresident students who wish to transfer must 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. On the application, transfer students are informed that they are expected to follow the attendance requirements, rules, and regulations of the district. In past years, the form also informed nonresident students who had been accepted as inter- districts transfer students that they might have their transfer status revoked by the Superintendent at any time during the year if the student is assigned discipline consequences or suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program or expulsion. In addition, students who do not attend the state's minimum attendance standards or 90% of all classes in a semester/school year were subject to possible revocation of the transfer status.

TEC 25.036 has been interpreted by TEA to establish the acceptance of a transfer as a one-year commitment by the district. Mullin ISD is seeking to be exempt from any one-year commitment that might be interpreted or implied by the provisions of TEC 25.036 when accepting transfer applicants. On rare occasions, student behavior warrants the kind of revocation consequences contemplated in the traditional Mullin ISD transfer agreement. Students who engage in the kind of misbehavior listed in the agreement and students who do not attend school for 90% of all classes interfere with our school district's ability to educate our student body in a way that is effective, tailored to students who are consistently at school, and ready to learn. Mullin ISD needs to be able to focus time and attention on developing creative and innovative instruction to prepare students for eventual success in the workplace and to prepare them for achievement on state assessments in the present. When students are disruptive and/or excessively absent, our teachers must take time correcting the behavior, catching those students up, and cannot adequately prepare the students who are behaving and want to learn. These teachers are hampered in their ability to have the time they need to implement any kind of truly innovative strategies, because they are spending their time disciplining students and catching up students that are falling behind the 90% state requirement. For these cases, Mullin ISD seeks exemption from the one-year transfer commitment.

Attendance:

FEC Local, Texas Education Code 25.092

Current Law: The state of Texas mandates a student may not be given credit or a final grade for a class unless the student is in attendance for at least 90% of the days the class is offered. In addition, if a student is in attendance greater than 75% and less than 90% they may be given credit or a final grade for the class if the student completes a plan approved the campus administrator and meets the instructional requirements for the class.

Proposed

The 90% rule is an arbitrary percentage, which means school districts award credit based on attendance rather than mastery of content. This exemption will allow the students to not be penalized for missing class due to extra/co-curricular activities, academic activities, or other extenuating circumstances. It will allow the district to award credit to students when they show an understanding of the concepts regardless of their attendance rate. Mullin ISD will have the flexibility to set attendance requirements which reflect a student's specific situation and expectations.

This exemption does not impact or alter existing compulsory attendance requirements or UIL rules. All students will still be held accountable to all compulsory attendance requirements. Further, 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, (0)214, nor does it restrict or alter a teacher's right to assign grades in accordance with Texas Education Code Section 28.0216.

Instructional Days/Minutes for 10-month Employees:

DCB Legal, DCB Local, Texas Education Code 21.401

Current Law: The passage of HB 2610 and TEC 25.081 changed the required instructional days to minutes for students. However, the law did not address the contract days for 10-month employees.

Proposed

Mullin ISD proposes that the number of days required for teachers for staff development be a local decision. MISD will address areas of staff development and how many days it will take for that training. 10-month employees will meet or exceed the 75,600 minutes required of students with no decrease in teacher salaries.

420 Minutes/Day:

EB Legal, Texas Education Code 25.082

Current Law: State Law requires an educational day to be no fewer than 420 minutes.

Proposed

Exemption from this will allow Mullin ISD the flexibility needed to alter the school day schedule whenever it is locally determined as beneficial to the district. The district would not be tied to 6 early release days, which is the maximum that can be requested when filing an early release waiver. Exempting the district from the 7 hour school day requirement would give the district local control over scheduling without fear of losing state funding or credit for instructional time. MISD will meet or exceed the 75,600 minutes/year of instruction. "Early release days" will be planned ahead of time and noted on the school calendar to the greatest extent possible.

The flexibility to adjust minutes of instruction within a designated school day will assist with personalizing learning to better meet student needs and accommodate professional learning/collaboration opportunities for teachers. Modification to the length of certain dates will be recommended when there is a clearly identified purpose, such as professional learning, or similar focus on meeting the needs of students and employees.

Probationary Contracts:

(TEC 21.102 (b)) (DCA Legal) TEC 21.102 (b)

Current Law: states that a probationary contract 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 permissible probationary contract period of three school years, except that the probationary period 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 by the district.

Proposed: This limited time is not always 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. For experienced teachers, counselors, librarians, or nurses new to Mullin ISD that have been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, the probationary period when becoming employed by Mullin ISD shall be for a period of up to two years with probationary contracts issued for each of the possible two years.