

Snyder ISD

Districts of Innovation Plan for Exemptions from Provisions of the Texas Education Code under House Bill 1842

House Bill 1842, passed in the 84th Texas Legislative Session, provides Texas public school districts the opportunity to amend certain state requirements at the local level to better meet the needs of their unique student populations. Snyder ISD (SISD) intends to follow the Texas Education Code (TEC) in all other areas. SISD's local Innovation Plan is comprehensive and touches numerous areas in the TEC, and because SISD seeks to maximize local control of educational decisions for students, SISD seeks exemption from the permissible provisions of the TEC included and explained in this Local Innovation Plan. SISD's Local Innovation Plan will begin with the 2023-2024 school year and conclude at the end of the 2027-2028 school year unless the plan is terminated or amended by the SISD Board of Trustees in accordance with HB1842. Any future amendments will adhere to the same term of the original plan.

**SISD DISTRICT EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT
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Snyder ISD Proposed Local Innovation Plan

I. Uniform School Start Date

(EB LEGAL) (Ed. Code 25.0811)

Currently

Students may not begin school before the 4th Monday of August. However, for many years districts had the option of applying for a waiver to adopt an earlier start date. The vast majority of districts applied for the waiver and would begin the 3rd Monday, some even going as early as the 2nd Monday. The Texas tourism groups lobbied to have this stopped because they believed it was hurting their tourism business. Therefore, several years ago the legislature took away all waivers and dictated that districts may not begin until the 4th Monday, with no exceptions.

Proposed

This exemption will allow SISD the flexibility to make a local decision on each school year start date to best meet the needs of the students and local community. This empowers us to personalize learning, increase college and career readiness, and balance the amount of instructional time per semester. In addition, by having the flexibility in the start and end of the school year, students will be able to enroll in college courses that start in early June, thereby increasing college and career readiness. Removing the uniform start date could also let the SISD start classes as a short week, easing the transition for students entering kindergarten, middle school, and high school. This will also allow for more flexible professional development opportunities throughout the school year for our staff.

II. Probationary Contracts

(DCA LEGAL) (Ed. Code Subchapter C Sec. 21.102)

Currently

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 exemption from probationary contracts being limited to one year for a person who has been employed as a teacher or administrator in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment by the district will allow SISD extended time for the evaluation and training of new personnel. SISD is committed to effectively managing teacher contracts and this exemption will provide the district with the flexibility to keep all professional employees new to the district on probationary contracts for a maximum permissible period of three school years.

III. 90 Percent Attendance Rule *(FEC LOCAL) (Ed. Code 25.092)*

Currently

State law currently requires students attend class 90 percent of the school days in order to earn credit. The law currently requires students to be awarded credit based on "seat time" rather than based on content mastery.

Proposed

The exemption from the 90 percent attendance rule will allow the district to establish local criteria regarding student attendance requirements. SISD will not have to penalize students who miss class due to extra/co-curricular activities, academic activities, or other extenuating circumstances. It will also allow SISD administrators to award credit to students because they can show they understand the concepts. The proposal would allow counselors and administrators to refocus efforts on students who are truly at risk, while simultaneously providing rigor and relevance in the curriculum.

The requested exemption from Section 25.092 does not in any way impact or change 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.

IV. Minimum Minutes of Instruction *(EC LEGAL & EB LEGAL) (Ed. Code 25.081)*

Currently

House Bill (HB) 2610, passed by the 84th Texas Legislature, amends the Texas Education Code (TEC), §25.081, by striking language requiring 180 days of instruction and replacing this language with language requiring districts and charter schools to provide at least 75,600 minutes of instruction (including intermissions and recess). The bill also allows school districts and charter 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.

Proposed

This exemption will provide SISD the flexibility to adjust minutes of instruction and will assist with personalizing learning to better meet individual student needs. It also 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 to accommodate additional professional development/collaboration opportunities professional and support staff in our district.

V. Teacher Certification

(DK LEGAL, DK LOCAL, DK EXHIBIT) (Ed. Code 21.003)

Currently

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. There is a lot of bureaucracy and unnecessary paperwork involved in the process.

Proposed

This exemption from the current state teacher certification requirements that inhibit the ability of SISD to hire teachers for hard-to-fill teaching positions will allow the district to establish local qualification and training requirements. This exemption directly supports the move from “highly qualified” requirements in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). SISD will have the flexibility to hire external or internal applicants that do not have traditional state certifications. This will enrich applicant pools in specific content areas if certified teachers are not available to teach those courses. In addition, this exemption will afford the District the flexibility to hire professionals in certain trades or vocations to teach the crafts of those trades or vocations (such as welding, fine arts, health sciences, law, etc.) if certified teachers are not available to teach those courses. The district understands that special education and bilingual teachers must continue to be SBEC certified.

VI. Class Size Ratio

(EEB LEGAL) (Ed. Code 25.111) (Ed. Code 25.112) (Ed. Code 25.113)

Currently

Kindergarten – 4th Grade classes are to be kept at a 22 student to 1 teacher ratio and when exceeding the 22:1 ratio the district is required to notify respective parents. When a class exceeds this limit, the district must complete a waiver with the Texas Education Agency. These waivers are rarely rejected by TEA. This is a bureaucratic step that serves little or no purpose. Along with the waiver, it is required that a letter is sent home to each parent in the section that exceeds the 22:1 ratio, informing them the waiver has been submitted. Many times soon after the waiver is submitted, students move out of the district and we are below the 22:1 ratio.

Proposed

This exemption allows SISD the time to staff district and campuses with effective teachers by granting local control over district student:teacher ratio and Kindergarten thru 4th Grade class size ratios. Small class sizes enable effective teachers to provide more individualized attention to each student. Having the latitude and time to seek and hire teachers enables us to best serve students with an effective student-teacher ratio. Our vision is to have the timing and latitude to hire the “right teacher” for kids and not “any teacher” to fulfill a mandate. The district will continue to keep parents informed regarding district and campus issues; however the district will be exempted from the formal notification process when a Kindergarten thru 4th Grade classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio.

VII. Student Discipline Provisions

(FO LEGAL & LOCAL) (Ed. Code 37.0012)

Currently

Senate Bill 107 requires the designation of a campus behavior coordinator on each campus. This designee is responsible for maintaining student discipline and the implementation of Chapter 37, Subchapter A.

Proposed

This exemption allowing SISD to abstain from the state requirement that each school have a designated campus behavior coordinator will free the district from this particular legislative requirement that was put into place as solution to a non-existent problem in SISD. Campus principals and assistant principals already serve in this capacity and a bureaucratic requirement to designate someone for this position is not necessary.

VIII. Long Range Energy Plan

(CL LEGAL) (Ed. Code Sec. 44.902)

Currently

The board of trustees of a school district shall establish a long-range energy plan to reduce the district's annual electric consumption by five percent beginning with the 2008 state fiscal year and consume electricity in subsequent fiscal years in accordance with the district's energy plan.

Proposed

This exemption will allow SISD to avoid unnecessary redundancies. There is no research-based evidence supporting the arbitrary number of five percent and SISD has already embraced an aggressive energy management plan.