

**SUNRAY
COLLEGIATE
ISD**

District of Innovation Plan

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INTRODUCTION

House Bill 1842, passed by the 84th Texas Legislature, during Regular Session 2015, permits eligible Texas public school districts to become Districts of Innovation and to obtain exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code.

The adoption of this plan seeks to increase Sunray's flexibility in order to improve educational outcomes for the benefit of students and the community by making educational decisions at the local level, which is the most effective way to support the innovation plan in our district.

TERM

The renewal of the amended plan is for five years, beginning April 26, 2022, and ending April 26, 2027, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board in accordance with TEC §12A.006 and §12A.008. The Committee will annually monitor the effectiveness of the Plan and recommend to the Board any suggested modification to the Plan on or before August 1 of each year of implementation. Following adoption by the Board of Trustees, the Sunray Collegiate ISD District of Innovation Plan for District of Innovation designation will be reported to the Texas Education Agency.

LOCAL GUIDELINES

The District of Innovation Committee created this plan to provide the increased flexibility needed to enact the District Improvement Plan. Careful consideration was given to the selection of the exemptions contained within this plan. All innovations were chosen to provide opportunities for Sunray Collegiate ISD to personalize and enhance learning for students.

This plan outlines specific areas of the Texas Education Code in which Sunray Collegiate ISD is requesting exemptions. The district intends to follow the Texas Education Code (TEC) in all other areas. Any revisions or changes to the innovation plan that may arise will be brought before the District of Innovation Committee to explore the request. If the committee determines that a revision is appropriate, the innovation plan will be presented to the School Board for review and approval.

TIMELINE

Board Resolution	February 13, 2017
Public Hearing	March 9, 2017
Appoint Innovative Plan Committee	March 9, 2017
Develop Innovation Plan	March 20 & 21 2017
District Improvement Committee Approval-Public Hearing	March 23, 2017
30 Day Public Review (Website Posting)	March 24-April 27, 2017
Board Action to Notify TEA Commissioner of Board Vote	March 24, 2017
Board Action for Final Approval	April 27, 2017
Notification of Approval to TEA Commissioner, Publish	April 28, 2017
Board Notification of pending Amendments	February 7, 2022
District Improvement Amendment Committee Meeting	March 9, 2022
30-Day Public Review (Website Posting)	March 11-April 9, 2022
Board Action for Final Approval	April 25, 2022

INNOVATIONS

Calendar (TEC §25.0811 and TEC §25.0812)

Texas Education Code §25.0811 states that a school district may not begin student instruction before the 4th Monday of August. Texas Education Code §25.0812 states that a school district may not schedule the last day of school for students for a school year before May 15.

Our Proposal

Sunray Collegiate ISD believes it should be a local decision to determine what is best for its students in setting the first and last days of instruction. By claiming exemption from Sec. 25.0811 and Sec 25.0812, the district shall determine the first day and last day of instruction for its students on an annual basis with input from stakeholders. Regardless of whether any adjustments or changes are made to the current start date and end date laws, Sunray Collegiate ISD believes this issue to be a local decision as opposed to a state mandate.

We anticipate the following benefits:

- Provides the option to begin the school year on an abbreviated week, easing the transition for students.
- Creates more balanced instructional time in each semester.
- Aligning course schedules with community colleges and the district for students enrolled in dual-credit classes.
- Flexibility in managing issues such as COVID, weather, power outages, and any additional unexpected issues.

Contract Service Days (TEC §21.401)

TEC §21.401 (b) states that an educator under a 10-month contract must provide 187 days of service.

Our Proposal

With the passage of §25.081, which changed the required days of instruction to minutes, the law did not address contract days for 10-month contract employees. The determination of how many days are required to fulfill an employee's contract should be a local decision. The plan would reduce teacher contract days from 187 to a decreased length with no effect on teacher salaries, allowing flexibility in the contractual days for certified personnel and to attempt to better align the teacher days to the 75,600 minutes required of the students. The district will maintain the current salary schedule for all certified employees. Annually, the Board will consider the certified salary schedules as part of the regular budgeting process. Annually, the administrative staff will evaluate the number of contract days needed for certified staff in that school year, and shall set the number of calendar work days prior to September 1st of the contract year. Any changes to the number of calendar work days after September 1st must be approved by the School Board. The district is not seeking exemption from TEC § 21.4021.

Teacher Certification (§21.003)

TEC §21.003 states that a person may not be employed as a teacher 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's ability to hire professionals with industry experience to teach Career and Technical Education (CATE) and Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics (STEAM), Foreign Language, History, and English Language Arts courses. The district would also like to honor candidates with Bachelor's and Master's degrees and certifications from bordering states as fully certified teachers eligible for a Texas Probationary teaching contract in our district.

Our Proposal

To allow flexibility for hiring certified personnel, Sunray Collegiate ISD will:

- Make all decisions on teacher certification and assignments locally.
- Notifications of district teaching permits (local certification) shall not be necessary.
- A local teaching permit and/or certification will be issued by Sunray Collegiate ISD to fill classroom vacancies. Teachers operating under a local permit/certificate must adhere to the standards set forth by the Sunray Collegiate ISD Teacher Academy and the district's personnel handbook.
- An individual with experience in a CTE field could be eligible to teach a vocational skill or course through a local teaching certificate.
- Any employee hired under this local district teaching permit must comply with the same professional standards, ethics, and requirements outlined in the Sunray Collegiate ISD School Board policy for personnel.
- Any employee hired under the local district teaching permit must be appraised according to the same teacher appraisal system outlined in district policies.
- A plan and timeline may be established for full State of Texas certification to be achieved.
- This local district teaching permit will be an at-will employment agreement with noncertified individuals.
- Principals will submit candidates to the Superintendent with credentials. The School Board and Superintendent will determine whether it is in the best interest of the district to certify the individual locally.

Teacher Employment Contracts (§21.102)

Currently, experienced teachers new to the district have a probationary period that 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. The district is not seeking exemption from TEC § 21.202.

Our Proposal

For experienced teachers and counselors new to SCISD that have been employed in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, a probationary contract may be issued for up to three years from the last date of district employment. This will allow the district sufficient time to evaluate a staff member's effectiveness.

Class Size (§25.112)

TEC 25.112 limits the class size for K-4 to a maximum of 22:1. The district has the option to apply for a waiver in the event one of our classes exceeds this ratio.

Our Proposal

An exemption from class size would eliminate the time and paperwork required to file the waiver with TEA. The district does not intend to consistently exceed the 22:1 ratio. If the student/teacher ratio for all sections of a grade level exceed the ratio of 22:1, the district will start the process to add a teacher and/or a paraprofessional to support students.

Counselor Duties (§33.006)

Texas Education Code 33.006 requires a school counselor to spend at least 80 percent of the school counselor's total work time on duties that are components of a counseling program, requires the Board to adopt a related policy, and requires the district to provide documentation relating to compliance to the Commissioner of Education. To comply with this new expectation and ensure the ability to provide requested documentation to the Commissioner, district counselors track their daily time in 15-minute increments.

Our Proposal

Relief from this statute will allow the following opportunities:

- Allow the district to utilize counselors in a manner that best meets student and district needs.
- Eliminate the administrative burden of requiring counselors to track their time daily.
- Eliminate the administrative burden of responding to requests from the State regarding compliance.

Inter-District Transfer Students (§25.036)

Under Texas Education Code 25.036, a district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not enrolled in the district. Under TEC 25.036, a transfer is interpreted to be for a period of one school year.

Our Proposal

Sunray Collegiate ISD maintains a transfer policy requiring non-resident 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. 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. Sunray Collegiate ISD seeks exemption from the requirement that a transfer must be a commitment for one year, and allow the district to rescind a transfer at any time upon review of the entire circumstances.

DISTRICT OF INNOVATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Marshall Harrison, Superintendent

Cody McDowell, High School Principal

Chuck Graves, High School Teacher/Coach

Mary Beth Jones, High School Counselor

Hartlyn Smith, High School Teacher Academy Candidate

Brandy Hollaway, Interim Middle School Principal

Ruben Guerrero, Middle School Teacher/Coach

Haley Nelson, Middle School Teacher

Lidia Rodriguez, Middle School Teacher

Kayla DeHerrera, Elementary Principal

Taylor Kennedy, Elementary School Teacher

Ramonda Raymond, Elementary School Teacher

Ivana Sonen, Elementary School Teacher

Annie Swinford, Elementary School Teacher

Sharon Trahern, Elementary School Teacher

Erin Boatmun, Assistant Superintendent

Christy Pae, Teacher Academy Assistant