

DISTRICT OF INNOVATION

Background

During the 84th Texas Legislative Session in Spring 2015, House Bill 1842 was passed. House Bill 1842 provided the opportunity for Texas public school districts to pursue the designation of District of Innovation. This allows local school districts to obtain exemptions from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code to afford more flexibility and local control for innovative programming. This legislature afforded school districts the opportunity to seek the designation: District of Innovation.

Districts of Innovation may be exempt from a myriad of state statutes and will have:

- Greater local control as the decision maker over the educational and instructional model for students;
- Increased freedom and flexibility, with accountability, relative to state mandates that govern educational programming; and
- Empowerment to innovate and think differently

Districts are not exempt from statutes including curriculum, graduation requirements, academic and financial accountability.

In order to be qualified for the designation as a District of Innovation, a school district's most recent academic performance rating must at least be acceptable.

Should the board of trustees choose to pursue the designation and ultimately approve a Local District of Innovation plan, the plan will begin in the fall of 2017 and continue until the spring of 2022.

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An Overview

The process is initiated by either:

- A resolution of the board of trustees; or
- A petition signed by a majority of the members of the district-level advisory committee

After the resolution a board of trustees must hold a public hearing to consider developing a local innovation plan within 30 days.

At the conclusion of the hearing, the board may appoint a committee to begin developing a plan in pursuit of becoming a District of Innovation or simply decline to pursue the designation.

The plan may be for up to five years in length and can address:

- Site based decision making processes
- Uniform start date
- Minimum minutes of instruction
- Class size ratio
- The 90% attendance rule
- Student discipline provisions
- Teacher certifications
- Teacher contracts
- Teacher benefits
- Teacher appraisal system

This plan may be amended, rescinded, or renewed.

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TIMELINE

April 12, 2017 - Board of Trustees approve resolution to hold a public hearing to discuss the possibility of using HB 1842 to become a District of Innovation

May 19, 2017 – Hold public hearing to explain and discuss the possibility of becoming a District of Innovation.

June 7, 2017 – Approve a motion to pursue local “District of Innovation” plan. Then the Board of Trustees approve the members of the District of Innovation Committee.

June 8, 2017 – Meeting of the District of Innovation Committee

June 9, 2017 – Post the District of Innovation Plan on the district website for 30 days

June 12, 2017 – Meeting with MISD Staff

July 27, 2017 – Notify Commissioner of Education of the board’s intention to vote on adoption of proposed plan

August 8, 2017 – Public Hearing District Improvement Committee – Consider and possible approval of the Local District of Innovation Plan

August 9, 2017 Board Meeting – Consider and possible approval of the Local District of Innovation Plan

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The Committee

The Local Innovation Committee was comprised of various individuals representing a variety mix of perspectives.

Brenda Kram, MISD Parent

Donna Perez, MISD Trustee

Daniel Beyer, MISD Trustee

Quinton Raab, MISD Community Member

Anita Drabek, MISD Teacher

Jackie Mitchon, MISD Teacher

Heather Olivarez, MISD Teacher

Randy Stevenson, MISD Teacher

Jamie Dornak, MISD Principal

David Hayward, MISD Principal

Todd Grandjean, MISD Superintendent

The Local Innovation Committee met on during April, May, and June 2017 and explored the potential designation as a District of Innovation. The following pages are the culmination of their efforts.

Moulton Independent School District of Innovation Plan

§21.003 Certification - *TEC 21.003(a) states 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. TEC21.057 requires districts to provide written notice to parents when an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher is assigned to the same classroom for more than 30 consecutive instructional days during the same school year.*

Proposed

The current state teacher certification requirements inhibit the District's ability to hire teachers to teach hard-to-fill, high demand, dual credit, as well as career and technical courses. Moulton ISD is located in a rural area which limits course offerings and utilize creative instructional methods district wide. MISD seeks to establish its own local qualification requirements and its own requirements for training professionals and experts to teach such courses in lieu of the requirements set forth in law. All non-certified individuals seeking certified positions must have board approval and meet all other certified criteria before working with students.

§21.102 Probationary Contracts - *TEC 21.102(b) 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

One year is not sufficient to evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom since the teacher contract timelines demand that employment decisions must be made prior to state assessment dates. Moulton ISD seeks flexibility from this mandate in order to ensure its teachers meet the needs of all students.

§21.401 Minimum Service Required - *TEC 21.401 (a) A contract between a school district and an educator must be for a minimum of 10 months' service. (b) An educator employed under a 10-month contract must provide a minimum of 187 days of service.*

Proposed

Moulton ISD seeks flexibility in the number of contractual days for certified personnel. In determining the number of days necessary for certified personnel each year, the administrative staff will evaluate the needs of the students, needs of the staff, and the overall school calendar, annually. Moulton ISD will not reduce the annual salary of certified staff, except in accordance with TEC§21.4021 (Furloughs) which the district is not seeking an exemption.

§25.0811 Uniform School Start Date - *TEC 25.0811(a) Except as provided by this section, a school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August.*

Proposed

This flexibility of start date allows the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of the students and local community. Having school start 5 to 10 days earlier, our instructional calendar would be split more evenly between the spring and fall semesters. Students participating in Dual Enrollment opportunities will work with balanced semesters, which align more closely with our local colleges. An early start date permits students an additional instruction prior to state assessments. The district will determine, on an annual basis, when each school year will begin.

§25.082 Length of School Day - *TEC 25.082 (a) A school day shall be at least seven hours each day, including intermissions and recesses.*

Proposed

Exempting from the 420-minute day requirement would allow Moulton ISD the flexibility needed to alter the school day schedule whenever it was locally determined as necessary or beneficial to the district and its stakeholders. Exempting completely from the 420-minute requirement would give the district a significant amount of local control over scheduling without the fear of diminishing state funding or losing credit for instructional time that might cause the district to fall out of compliance with annual minute requirements.

§28.004 Local School Health Advisory Council – *TEC 28.004 (a) The board of trustees of each school district shall establish a local school health advisory council to assist the district in ensuring that local community values are reflected in the district's health education instruction. (d) The board of trustees shall appoint at least five members to the local school health advisory council. A majority of the members must be persons who are parents of students enrolled in the district and who are not employed by the district. One of those members shall serve as chair or co-chair of the council. (d-1) The local school health advisory council shall meet at least four times each year.*

Proposed

Moulton ISD seeks exemption from the minimum size and minimum number of required meetings of the School Health Advisory Council. Moulton ISD is a small community with individuals that serve in numerous capacities making it difficult to organize and schedule multiple meetings. Moulton ISD will convene the council at least twice per year to evaluate the district's policies relevant to the council's statutory scope.

§37.0012 Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator - TEC 37.0012(a) *A person at each campus must be designated to serve as the campus behavior coordinator. The person designated may be the principal of the campus or any other campus administrator selected by the principal. (b) The campus behavior coordinator is primarily responsible for maintaining student discipline and the implementation of this subchapter. (c) Except as provided by this chapter, the specific duties of the campus behavior coordinator may be established by campus or district policy. Unless otherwise provided by campus or district policy: (1) a duty imposed on a campus principal or other campus administrator under this subchapter shall be performed by the campus behavior coordinator; and (2) a power granted to a campus principal or other campus administrator under this subchapter may be exercised by the campus behavior coordinator. (d) The campus behavior coordinator shall promptly notify a student's parent or guardian as provided by this subsection if under this subchapter the student is placed into in-school or out-of-school suspension, placed in a disciplinary alternative education program, expelled, or placed in a juvenile justice alternative education program or is taken into custody by a law enforcement officer. A campus behavior coordinator must comply with this subsection by: (1) promptly contacting the parent or guardian by telephone or in person; and (2) making a good faith effort to provide written notice of the disciplinary action to the student, on the day the action is taken, for delivery to the student's parent or guardian.*

Proposed

Delete the requirements in this section, as they are redundant. This recent legislative requirement to designate someone on each campus is a political solution to a non-existent problem. Obviously, the Principals already serve in this capacity and it is unnecessary to “designate” one of them as such.

§44.902 Long Range Energy Plan to Reduce Consumption - TEC 44.902(a) *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. (b) The plan required under Subsection (a) must include: (1) strategies for achieving energy efficiency that: (A) result in net savings for the district; or (B) can be achieved without financial cost to the district; and (2) for each strategy identified under Subdivision (1), the initial, short-term capital costs and lifetime costs and savings that may result from implementation of the strategy. (b-1) For purposes of Subsection (b), a strategy for achieving energy efficiency includes facility design and construction. (c) In determining under Subsection (b) whether a strategy may result in financial cost to the district, the board of trustees shall consider the total net costs and savings that may occur over the seven-year period following implementation of the strategy. (d) The board of trustees may submit the plan required under Subsection*

Proposed

Delete the requirements for districts to reduce annual electric consumption by 5 percent and to develop plans for that purpose. 5% is an arbitrary number. It is a “one size fits all” awkward law. Energy consumption and savings are a building by building, district by district calculation. Therefore, the requirements to develop plans and other bureaucratic steps to meet this arbitrary goal are unnecessary. Moulton ISD recently made large changes in lighting and HVAC with a renovation project.