

STERLING CITY INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

DISTRICT OF INNOVATION PLAN

BACKGROUND

The 84th Texas Legislature passed House Bill 1842 which allows public school districts to declare exemptions from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code by becoming a designated District of Innovation. On Monday, February 13, 2017, during the regularly scheduled board meeting, a public hearing was conducted to consider whether Sterling City ISD should develop a plan for designation as a District of Innovation. The Sterling City ISD Board of Trustees unanimously passed a resolution to consider developing a District of Innovation Plan. The board of trustees appointed a District of Innovation Committee to explore development of the District of Innovation Plan.

The DOI Committee met on March 6, 2017, and developed the proposed District of Innovation Plan. The proposed plan was posted on the SCISD District website on March 6, 2017, and will remain on the website through April 5, 2017, for stakeholder review.

TERM

The term of the District of Innovation Plan is for five years, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law.

TIMELINE

February 13, 2017	Public Hearing, Resolution approved by Board of Trustees, and DOI Committee appointment
March 6, 2017	District of Innovation Committee plan development meeting
March 6, 2017	Post Proposed District of Innovation Plan on the school website for 30 days
March 31, 2017	Sent notification of intent to the Commissioner of Education
April 5, 2017	DOI Committee holds public meeting and recommends District of Innovation Plan for Board approval
April 10, 2017	Board of Trustees approved District of Innovation Plan
April 13, 2017	Sent notification of adoption to the Commissioner of Education

DISTRICT OF INNOVATION COMMITTEE

STERLING CITY ISD 2016-2017

ELEM. PRINCIPAL	Michele Guetersloh
SECONDARY PRINCIPAL	Ty Stevens
ELEM. PARENT	Monica Rivas
SECONDARY PARENT	Chad Coburn
ELEM. TEACHER	Christy Bearden
ELEM. TEACHER	Wendy Justiss
ELEM. STAFF	Rosario Williams
SECONDARY TEACHER	Jeannie Sparks
SECONDARY TEACHER	Jennifer Sisco
SECONDARY STAFF	Sara Miller
DISTRICT STAFF	Bob Rauch
DISTRICT STAFF	Shelli Long
COMMUNITY MEMBER	Sylvia Rodriguez
BUSINESS REP.	Brad Howard

Texas Education Code Exemptions

The Sterling City ISD in conjunction with the District of Innovation Committee has reviewed the Texas Education Code and determined which exemptions currently inhibit the local district from making the best use of time for student instruction and educational opportunities for our students at Sterling City ISD.

I. UNIFORM START DATE (TEC §25.0811)

Current State law prohibits a school district from starting school before the fourth Monday in August unless the District participates in a year-round calendar.

RATIONALE FOR EXEMPTION

If the District has the flexibility in the start of school date, we can determine locally what best fits the needs of our students and school. This flexibility will help coordinate dates with the students that are taking dual credit courses through a college and create more balance in the number of days in each semester.

II. LENGTH OF SCHOOL DAY (TEC §25.081)

Current State law requires that all school days must be 420 minutes long each day for ADA funding and calculations. The total number of minutes for the year must be at least 75,600.

RATIONALE FOR EXEMPTION

Exemption from the 420 minute day requirement would allow Sterling City ISD the flexibility needed to alter the school day schedule on selected days whenever it is locally determined as necessary or beneficial to the district and its stakeholders. While there is a waiver process available to request exemption from this requirement, the waiver is limited to a 6 day maximum for the school year.

Exempting completely from the 420 minute requirement would give the district a significant amount of local control over scheduling (above and beyond the 6 day maximum as needed) without the fear of diminishing state funding or losing credit for instructional time.

Sterling City ISD does not intend to shorten the school day on a regular basis, or without specific purpose. Superintendent approval is required for any time adjustment in a regularly scheduled school day. Any adjustments shall not reduce annual school instructional minutes below 75,600 minutes.

III. TEACHER CERTIFICATION (TEC §21.003, §21.053 AND §21.057)

Current State Law requires that a person may not be employed as a teacher/instructor by a District unless they hold the appropriate permit or certification issued by an appropriate State Agency. Currently, districts must notify the State in order to request an emergency certification if we are unable to find a certified individual.

RATIONALE FOR EXEMPTION

In order to best serve SCISD students, decisions on teacher certification will be handled locally.

- The campus principals may submit to the Superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach a subject(s) out of their certified field. The Principal must provide reasoning for the request and document what credentials the certified teacher possesses which qualify this individual to teach this subject.
- 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 review the request. If approved, the Superintendent will present the request to the Board of Trustees for approval. Local teaching certificates will require an employment agreement rather than a contract.
- This process will allow more flexibility in our scheduling and more options for our students in class offerings leading to industry recognized certifications.

IV. SUBMITTING WAIVERS FOR KINDERGARTEN-GRADE 4 CLASS SIZE (TEC §25.112, and TEC §25.113)

Current State law requires Kindergarten-4th Grade classes to meet the 22 student to 1 teacher ratio. When a class exceeds this limit, the District must submit a waiver to TEA. These waivers are rarely, if ever, rejected, which creates a bureaucratic step that serves no purpose.

RATIONALE FOR EXEMPTION

In certain circumstances small class size plays a positive role in the classroom, however in most cases master teachers who are highly skilled in student engagement strategies are equally effective with larger class size environments.

Typically, it is not the number of students, but the classroom environment that influences positive student learning outcomes.

- SCISD will attempt to keep all core K-4 classrooms to a 22:1 ratio. However, in the event the class size exceeds this ratio, the Superintendent will report to the Board of Trustees for local approval.
- The required TEA waiver and parental notification will not be required when a K-4 classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio.
- This will give SCISD flexibility without having the bureaucracy of waivers within TEA.

V. CONTRACT SERVICE DAYS (TEC §21.401)

Current State law requires educators that are employed on a 10 month contract to work a minimum of 187 days.

RATIONALE FOR EXEMPTION

With the passage of HB 2610 and TEC §25.081 which changed the required instructional days to minutes, the law did not address the contract days for 10 month employees. The number of days required for teachers should be a local decision.