

# **SIDNEY INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT DISTRICT OF INNOVATION PLAN**

## **I. Background**

House Bill (HB) 1842, passed during the 84th Legislative Session, permits Texas public school districts to become Districts of Innovation and to obtain exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code.

On April 25, 2017, the Sidney Independent School District's Board of Trustees passed a resolution to adopt a District of Innovation Plan to increase local control over District operations and to support innovation and local initiatives. In addition to passing a resolution the SISD Board held a hearing to allow the public to learn more about the plan, the designated innovations, and to provide feedback. At this time, the board members appointed a District of Innovation Advisory Committee to discuss, review, and develop the plan.

The committee met on May 8th, 2017, to discuss and draft the District of Innovation Plan. On May 11, 2017, the plan was posted online for public viewing and feedback and remained online until June 9, 2017. The final version was referred to the District of Innovation Advisory Committee on June 12, 2017 for a final vote to approve the plan. The District of Innovation Advisory Committee approved the plan with a majority vote. The SISD board of trustees reviewed and approved the plan unanimously on June 12, 2017.

## **II. District of Innovation Advisory Committee**

Doug Bowden-Superintendent

James Rucker-Principal

Doug Caffey- President of school board of trustees

Christy Holland-Board member

Keg Gibson-Board member

Karla Colcleasure-Secondary

Shirley Diaz-Elementary

Waylon Salinas-Junior High

Deanna Drummond-CTE teacher

Ashley Kinnard-PEIMS coordinator

Becky Caffey-parent

Amanda Redden-parent

Lori Dudley-parent  
Lacy Carriger-parent

### III. Process

| Timeline – District of Innovation |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| April 24, 2017                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Inform Board of Trustees of the interest to become a District of Innovation.</li><li>● District of Innovation Resolution presented and adopted by the Board of Trustees</li><li>● Public Hearing regarding District of Innovation</li><li>● Board of Trustees approved committee to develop District of Innovation Plan</li></ul> |
| May 8, 2017                       | Meeting with District of Innovation Advisory Committee to develop plan  |
| May 11, 2017                      | Proposed plan posted to the District website for 30 days  |
| June 1, 2017                      | Board of Trustees sends letter to Commissioner informing of intent to become a District of Innovation   |
| June 12, 2017                     | SISD District of Innovation Advisory Committee hosts a public meeting to review/approve the final version of SISD District of Innovation Plan by majority vote.   |

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| June 12, 2017 | At the SISD school board meeting, the board members voted to approve the final District of Innovation Plan with a unanimous vote. |
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**IV. Term and Implementation**

The term of the plan is for five years, beginning at the start of the 2017-2018 school year and concluding at the end of the 2021-2022 school year, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. District policies will be amended as necessary to be consistent with the statutory exemptions and the District Innovation Plan. The District of Innovation Advisory Committee will continually monitor the effectiveness of the plan and recommend to the Board any suggested modifications to the plan.

**V. Innovations**

**Sidney ISD seeks flexibility and exemptions from the following statutory requirements:**

**Uniform Start Date**

Texas Education Code 25.0811  
 State law currently states a school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August.

*Rationale for Exemption*

The flexibility of the start date allows the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of the students, the school, and the community. Benefits to this exemption include but are not limited to:

- Aligning school start date to accommodate college start dates for dual credit students ● Starting school mid-week in order to aid in the transition to school for students. ● This provides a natural break after establishing routines, procedures, and expectations before introducing rigorous academic based lessons for students transitioning to their respective campus.
- Providing a better opportunity to balance the number of days in each semester. Providing more instructional and accelerated instruction days prior to State mandated tests.

### *Innovation Strategy*

Sidney ISD does not have any intention to start school prior to the second Monday in August.

## **Teacher Certification**

Texas Education Code 21.003

State law currently 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.

### *Rationale for exemption*

Generally, and in certain circumstances, this system is unnecessarily restrictive and does not take into account the unique logistical, financial and/or instructional needs of the district. 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. Sidney ISD is located in a rural area and the current certification rules limit the district's options to hire professionals with work related experience. Benefits of this exemption would include but not be limited to:

- Allowing the District to have the flexibility to utilize existing staff members to teach certain classes that other than not being certified, would be well suited to teach. This will help the District to be more efficient and offer more electives for our students.
  - Utilizing local professionals, for the vast array of STEM and CTE related courses, to provide invaluable working knowledge of industry skills and standards. This could help to

prepare our students for the jobs that are available in our community and beyond.

### *Innovation Strategy*

Sidney ISD will continue to recruit and retain highly skilled certified educators, but when it is advantageous to the district to pursue a local certification the principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials the applicant possesses. This must be presented to the superintendent for approval. Special Education and Bilingual teachers will continue to be certified according to law and will not be included in this exemption. Sidney ISD will continue to comply with parent notifications as required by law.

Qualifications that may be considered include but are not limited to:

- Professional work experience
- Formal training and education
- Active professional relevant industry certification or registration
- Combination of work experience, training, and education
- Demonstration of successful experience working with students
- Out of state teaching certification

The superintendent will make a determination on the principal recommendation and if approved, will submit the recommendation to the board of trustees for final approval. Determinations shall be made on a case-by-case basis.

### **Length of School Day**

Texas Education Code 25.081 and 25.082(a)

State law currently states for each school year each school district must operate so that the district provides for at least 75,600 minutes of instruction, including intermissions and recesses, for students. A school day shall be at least seven hours each day, including intermissions and recesses.

### *Rationale for exemption*

Exemption from the 420-minute (7 hours) day requirement would allow Sidney ISD the flexibility needed to alter the school day schedule on selected days, whenever locally determined 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 number 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 that might cause the district to fall out of compliance with annual minute requirements. This would allow the district the flexibility to schedule noninstructional days into the schedule to allow for our teachers to analyze student data and engage in targeted, relevant professional development. Benefits of this exemption would include but not be limited to:

- Allowing flexibility to schedule “flex” days into the school calendar. Examples would include days for intensive accelerated instruction for identified students, preparation days for staff, data analysis days, ongoing professional development days for staff or a combination of each.
- The District would be able to be more strategic in its approach to learning styles and learning environments.
- More preparation time is a challenge for every teacher. Allowing teachers to more frequently plan high quality lessons and improved classroom management.

### *Innovation Strategy*

Sidney ISD does not have any intentions to shorten the school day on a regular basis, or without specific purpose. To the greatest extent possible, “early release” days would be planned ahead of time and noted in the district calendar, which is approved by the Board of Trustees, published, and distributed to stakeholders in advance of the school year and continuously published using school media. Sidney ISD will stay inside the state minimum number of minutes (75,600) required for funding for the year.

### **Probationary Contracts**

Texas Education Code 21.102(b)

State law currently states for experienced teachers new to the district, the probationary period 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.

### *Rationale for exemption*

This period of time may not be 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.

### *Innovation Strategy*

For experienced teachers, counselors, or librarians, new to Sidney 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 Sidney ISD shall be for a period of two years with probationary contracts issued for each of the two years.