

District of Innovation

Planning Committee Recommendations

March 5, 2018

Introduction

During the 84th Legislative Session, HB 1842 passed that allows Texas public schools to become Districts of Innovation which would allow them to obtain flexibilities with certain provisions of the Texas Education code. Mt. Enterprise ISD is exercising this opportunity of becoming a District of Innovation to obtain more flexibility in order to better meet the unique needs of our district, students and community.

Term

Mt. Enterprise ISD's Innovation Plan, if approved by the board of trustees in the April 9, 2018 board meeting, will begin immediately and will conclude at the end of the 2022-2023 school year unless the plan is terminated or amended by the Mt. Enterprise ISD School Board in accordance with HB 1842.

30 day website timeframe

Under the terms of HB 1842, the strategies that the MEISD board of trustees will consider have to be posted on the school website for at least 30 days. After the period of 30 days, MEISD will have a time for stakeholders to make public comments on any or all of the strategies that MEISD is proposing to the board. The time for public comment will be during the April 9, 2018 board meeting prior to the vote of the board of trustees. In order for the District of Innovation strategies to be approved, the board has to have a 2/3rds majority for the DOI plan to pass.

MEISD Proposed Innovations

Transfer Students

Currently Under Texas Education Code 25.001, a district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district. Under TEC 25.036, a transfer is interpreted to be for a period of one school year.

Innovation Strategies:

Mt. Enterprise ISD maintains a transfer policy under FDA (LOCAL) requiring nonresident 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 and the rules

and regulations of the District. TEC 25.036 has been interpreted to establish the acceptance of a transfer as a one year commitment by the District. The District is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one year commitment, and be able to withdraw a student at any point during the school year for the following circumstances:

- Student behavior warrants suspension (in or out of school)
- Placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion
- Parents/guardians of transfer student unwilling to accept responsibility or work with MEISD for the betterment of the transfer child
- Unacceptable academic performance
- Student attendance falls below the TEA truancy standard.

First Day of Instruction

Currently in TEC 25.0811: A school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August.

Innovation Strategies:

- Mt. Enterprise ISD would like to locally determine the school start date. This flexibility would allow the district to determine, on an annual basis, what start date best meets the needs of the students.
- Starting earlier will help to balance the number of days in each semester.
- The balanced semesters will allow more instruction time before state mandated tests
- The first day for students will not occur before August 15 of each year.

Minimum Minutes of Instruction

Currently Both Texas Education Codes 25.081 and 25.082 address the length of the instructional day by limiting it to “420 minutes of instruction” or “seven hours each day including intermissions and recesses”, totaling 75,600 minutes for the year.

Innovation Strategy:

Mt. Enterprise ISD would like to be exempt from the 420 minute day requirement and have the flexibility to alter the length of the school day on selected days whenever it is determined to be necessary or beneficial to the district and its stakeholders.

- The opportunity to exempt from the 420 minute school day requirement will provide the district the opportunity to provide each campus the flexibility of creating a daily schedule that will better serve the students and teachers on each campus.
- This flexibility will give local control to the district in meeting the yearly requirement of 75,600 minutes in relation to the district calendar for each specific school year.
- This exemption will provide greater flexibility than the current waiver system.

Probationary Contracts

Currently In 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.

Innovation Strategies:

- For experienced teachers, counselors, or librarians, new to the district, who have been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, a probationary contract may be issued for up to two additional years from the first day of employment for a total of three years.
- This will allow district administrators to fully appraise the teachers' classroom management, parental relationships, and administrative skills before a term contract is awarded as with a beginning teacher.
- For exceptional teachers, MEISD may offer a term contract, after the first year with the district, provided the teacher has been employed in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment by the district.

Teacher Contract Days

Currently TEC §21.401 requires a teacher who is on a 10 month contract to work an equivalent of 187 days.

Innovation Strategies:

In an attempt to align the teacher days to the 75,600 minutes required of the students, the district would have the option to reduce the amount of contract days of teachers to no lower than 182 days with no effect on teacher salaries. Depending on the calendar each year adopted by the board of trustees, teachers will work a minimum of 182 days up to a maximum of 187 days.

Teacher salaries will be based on 187 days. On school years where the teacher works less than 187 days, salaries will remain the same but the daily rate of pay will increase. On school years where the teacher works more days than the previous year, but no more than 187 days, salaries will stay the same but the daily rate will decrease due to more days.

Teacher Certification Requirements

Currently In TEC 21.003 A person may not be employed as a teacher by a school district unless that person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued by the appropriate state agency. 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 request emergency certification from the Texas Education Agency and /or State Board of Educator Certification

TEC §21.053

This requires a teacher to present his or her certificate to the District before their employment contract will be binding, and prohibits the District from paying an educator as a teacher if the educator does not hold a valid certificate at the time.

TEC §21.057

This requires that the District provide written notice to parents if an inappropriately or uncertified teacher is assigned to a classroom for more than 30 consecutive instructional days.

Innovation Strategy

The district will maintain its current expectations for employee certification and will make every attempt to hire individuals with appropriate certifications for all positions. However, when that is not reasonably possible, the district will have the flexibility to hire individuals who are knowledgeable and equipped to effectively perform the duties of the position in question. Exemption from TEC §21.003 would allow the district the ability to locally certify teachers in the circumstances below in order to better meet the educational needs of our students, allow more flexibility in scheduling, enrich applicant pools, and provide more options for our students.

- Individuals with industry certifications and/or background, experience, skills, or work related to industry experience could become eligible to teach a CTE course through a local teaching certification. This certification will be an at-will employee on a year to year basis.
- Certified teachers, due to their education, background, and/or experience, could be equipped to teach a course outside of their certification area or grade level. This would allow the district the option of locally certifying them to do that. A teacher that is asked to teach out of their field of certification, but has knowledge or experience in the subject he/she is being asked to teach could receive a stipend for the additional work.
- Out of state certified teachers could be considered for positions upon a local review of experience, education, and credentials. The out of state teacher will have 2 years to become Texas certified. If, after 2 years, the teacher does not become Texas certified, the teacher will be terminated at the conclusion of the contract. The teacher will teach under a probationary contract both years.
- Individuals with a minimum of a bachelor degree with experience, education and/or knowledge of the subject will be considered for "hard to fill" positions such as mathematics and science. An individual qualified would become eligible to teach through a local teaching certification. Under this certification, the candidate teaching will be an at-will employee and will have one year to begin the process of becoming Texas Teacher Certified from an accredited institution.

- Teachers hired under this exemption, besides current teachers teaching a subject outside of his/her field, will be provided a mentor by a teacher from the district. This teacher will be entitled to a stipend for his/her mentorship.

Local Guidelines

The principal will make a request to the superintendent for the reason(s) for a local certification of an individual that falls under the innovation strategy directly above. The superintendent has the authority to deny and the initial authority to approve said request. Final approved authority will rest with the board of trustees.

Committee Members

Byron Jordan	Superintendent
Dr. Chance D. Mays	Secondary Principal
Andy Lee	Elementary Principal/District Technology Director
Sandra Maxey	Counselor
Paula Wigand	Teacher
Rhonda Keeling	Teacher
Wyndi Vaught	Teacher
Bettye Lollar	Teacher
Gina Valdez	Teacher
Kym Fryman	Teacher
Melissa Duncan	Teacher
Michelle Cornell	Teacher
Angie Phillips	Parent/Teacher
John Thomas III	Teacher
Yasmin Souther	Teacher
Clint Creel	Parent/Teacher
Randee Oliver	Parent
Michelle Lee	Parent/Teacher
Amy Richardson	Teacher