

Introduction

House Bill 1842, passed by the 84th Legislature, allows districts to seek designation as a District of Innovation in order to pursue flexibilities available to Texas' open-enrollment charter schools.

Potential benefits of becoming a District of Innovation include:

- **Local control:** Districts decide which flexibilities best suit their local needs.
- **Customization:** Districts can create an innovation plan for a level of school (e.g., only high schools), grade level, or a single campus.
- **Autonomy:** Districts must submit a district of innovation plan to the Commissioner of Education, but approval is not required.
- **Flexibility:** Districts will have the flexibility to implement practices similar to charter schools, including exemptions from certain mandates.

On November, 28, 2016, the Sunnyvale ISD Board of Trustees initiated the process by adopting a resolution to pursue designation as a District of Innovation.

Process

On December 12, 2016, the Board appointed a District of Innovation Committee that is composed of teachers, parents, community members, school administrators, and board members. The committee met on January 24, 2017 to discuss options and determine flexibilities to pursue through the District of Innovation Plan. The committee discussed district goals and determined flexibilities that would support goal attainment.

District of Innovation Team Members

On December 12, 2016, the Sunnyvale ISD Board of Trustees appointed members of the Superintendent's Roundtable, with the addition of campus principals, to serve as the District of Innovation Team.

Carmen Ayo	Sunnyvale Middle School Principal
Wendy Beard	Sunnyvale Elementary School Teacher
Stasia Armstreet	Sunnyvale High School Teacher
Carolyn Baker	Sunnyvale Middle School Teacher
Lauren Becker	Parent
Joi Blackley	Parent
Cindy Burkett	Community Business Representative
Janet Clements	School Board Member

Tobin & Pheba Daniel	Parents
Susan Heston	Sunnyvale Elementary Speech Pathologist
Billie Hobbs	Sunnyvale Middle School Staff
Kim Ingram	School Board Member
Mahlee Laird	Sunnyvale Middle School Teacher
Erica Lawless	Director of Special Programs
Rebecca Linn	Community Business Representative
Sara McLaughlin	Sunnyvale High School Teacher
Christi Morgan	Assistant Superintendent
Pam Schultz	Sunnyvale Elementary School Teacher
Henry Shim	Parent
Sara Staley	Sunnyvale Elementary School Principal
Shirley Stallings	Parent
Ron Sterling	Sunnyvale High School Principal
Angela Teel	Sunnyvale Middle School Teacher
Lisa Tunnell	Sunnyvale High School Teacher
Phyllis Whitehead	Sunnyvale Elementary School Teacher
Doug Williams	Superintendent

Process Timeline

Board Resolution to Pursue Process	November 28, 2016
Public Hearing and Committee Appointment	December 12, 2016
District of Innovation Committee Meeting	January 24, 2017
Public Meeting for Feedback/Approval	February 9, 2017
District of Innovation Meeting/Approval	February 23, 2017
Plan Sent to Commissioner	
Posted to SISD Website	
Public Approval by District of Innovation Team	
Submitted for Approval by Board of Trustees	

Notification of Approval to Commissioner of Education

Term of Plan

The term of the District of Innovation Plan, as constituted by the Texas Education Agency, will be five years. The plan will begin Spring, 2017 and conclude Spring, 2022, unless terminated by the Board of Trustees. The Superintendent's Roundtable Committee will monitor the Innovation Plan and will give feedback on the effectiveness of the plan.

SISD will continue to abide by the Texas Education Code and Board Policies, with the exception of those identified in the Innovation Plan. If additional exemptions should be considered at a later date, the district will reconvene the District of Innovation Committee. This plan may be amended, rescinded, or renewed by a majority vote of the Superintendent's Roundtable Committee, along with a two-thirds vote by the SISD Board of Trustees. The Commissioner of Education will be notified in the event that the plan is amended, rescinded, or renewed, and the Superintendent's Roundtable Committee will review progress of the plan on an annual basis.

Goals and Core Values

Mission Statement:

The mission of the Sunnyvale Independent School District is to provide the highest quality education by creating life-long learners through comprehensive academic, athletic, cultural, and extra-curricular opportunities for the children of our community.

Core Values:

Positive Environment
STEM Education
21st Century Learning Skills
Future-Ready Graduates
Proactively Address Student Needs

Goal One:

Sunnyvale ISD will provide TEKS-based curriculum, engaging research-based instruction, and a technology-rich environment that meets the diverse needs of our students. Students will demonstrate academic growth and further develop communication, critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity skills.

Goal Two:

Sunnyvale ISD will promote a safe, secure, and orderly school environment by providing programs and resources which ensure appropriate physical, behavioral, and emotional development.

Goal Three:

Sunnyvale ISD will facilitate parental involvement and embrace student diversity in order to ensure a positive culture within the school and community. Teacher expectations, critical information, involvement opportunities, and district initiatives will be communicated in a clear, consistent manner.

Goal Four:

Sunnyvale ISD will practice recruitment of high-quality staff, monitor staff retention, and provide staff development which enhances professional growth. Teachers will gain necessary skills to provide engaging, research-based instruction that encourages critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity.

Innovations

1. First Day of Instruction (EB Legal) (Texas Education Code 25.0811)

TEC Sec. 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

Innovation

SISD requests flexibility of school start date to allow the local district to determine, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of students. Consideration of an earlier start date will allow for improved balance between semesters, support the district professional development plan, ease transition at the beginning of school year due to expanded options of starting mid-week, and will better align semesters with college schedule for high school dual-credit students.

Local Innovation Plan Guidelines

The first day of instruction will not begin prior to August 15, with preference given to the third week of the month. The Superintendent’s Roundtable Committee, comprised of district stakeholders, will recommend the school start for approval by the SISD Board of Trustees on an annual basis.

2. Class Size Waiver (EEB Legal) (Texas Education Code 25.112, 25.113)

TEC Sec. 25.112 (a), Except as otherwise authorized by this section, a school district may not enroll more than 22 students in a kindergarten, first, second, third, or fourth grade class

Innovation

As a fast-growth district, Sunnyvale ISD carefully analyzes growth predictions to make responsible staffing decisions to support engaging instruction in the classroom. SISD recognizes the value of reasonable class sizes in elementary grade levels and will

continue with the priority to maintain a student-to-teacher ratio of 22:1 per Kindergarten-4th grade homeroom class. However, SISD requests local control in identifying extenuating circumstances, such as enrollment growth in the Spring semester. Local considerations will include timing of enrollment of new students, consistency of instruction for students in the grade level, availability of high quality applicants, and availability of space and resources. If the 22:1 ratio is exceeded, the principal will seek board approval and notify parents of affected students.

Local Innovation Plan Guidelines

When a class exceeds the 22:1 limit, the Texas Education Code requires districts to obtain board approval and apply for a waiver through the Texas Education Agency. This flexibility will eliminate the requirement of the waiver process and support student success through allowing local decisions regarding the division of classes, disrupted instruction, and/or finding quality applicants.

3. Teacher Certification (DK Legal, Local) (Texas Education Code 21.003)

TEC §21.003(a) a person may not be employed as a teacher by a school district unless the 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 subject outside of their certification, the district must request emergency certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or State Board of Educator Certification.

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 submit a request to the Texas Education Agency (TEA). TEA then approves or denies this request.

Innovation

Sunnyvale ISD requests flexibility to utilize a local certification process to meet the growing need for diverse course offerings. The flexibility will expand staffing options through allowing Sunnyvale ISD to consider experienced staff members for positions in related fields. This flexibility will also allow SISD to expand course offerings in Career and Technical Education, through offering local certification for industry personnel to maximize offerings for students.

Local Innovation Plan Guidelines

For grades 6-12, in all subjects except *Special Education* and *ESL/Bilingual*, the campus principal may submit to the Superintendent a request for a local certification that will allow a certified teacher to teach one subject in a related field of their current certification for which he/she is not certified.

Related Fields:

English: English, Reading, Speech, Journalism, any other English course accepted by SBOE for graduation credit in English.

Social Studies: History, Government, Economics, Political Science, any other Social Studies course accepted by SBOE for graduation credit.

Science: Life Sciences, Physical Sciences, Biology, Earth Science, Physics, Chemistry, any other Science course accepted by SBOE for graduation credit in Science.

Fine Arts: Art, Music, Theater Arts, Dance, any other Fine Art course accepted by SBOE for graduation credit in Fine Arts.

Mathematics: Mathematics, Engineering, Statistics, Accounting, any Mathematics course accepted by SBOE for graduation credit in Mathematics.

Local Innovation Plan Guidelines

The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials the certified teacher possesses that would qualify the individual to teach the proposed subject in the related area. The Superintendent and Board of Trustees will approve all requests.

To support teachers credentialed through the local certification process, lesson plans for the uncertified teacher will be created in partnership with certified teachers in the same field, whenever possible.

CTE Subjects:

The current certification requirements limit the District's ability to hire professionals with industry experience to teach Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, & Mathematics (STEM) courses. In order to provide students the opportunity to take such courses and promote student ability to obtain professional certifications, the District seeks to establish local qualification requirements for such courses, in lieu of the requirements set forth in law. Flexibility to establish a local CTE teacher certification requirements affords the District the following advantages:

- Industry certified and/or trade professionals to teach specialized certification courses.
- Greater number of CTE course offerings, thus resulting in more opportunities for students.
- Realistic requirements for professionals transitioning from industry to teaching.
- Ability to employ part-time professionals to teach CTE courses.

Local Innovation Plan Guidelines

The Principal must specify, in writing, the reason for the request and document credentials that would qualify the individual to teach the proposed CTE subject. The Superintendent and Board of Trustees will approve all requests. Records of the local certification process will be maintained locally.

4. Teacher Contracts (DCA Legal) (Texas Education Code 21.102)

Texas Education Code 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

SISD requests the flexibility to extend the probationary period to two years, based upon administrator recommendation, for an experienced teacher that is new to SISD. This flexibility will allow SISD to fully determine teacher effectiveness through an extended timeline of observation and evaluation.

Local Innovation Plan Guidelines

Administrators will maintain documentation regarding extension of the probationary period locally.

Summary

Sunnyvale ISD is seeking designation as a District of Innovation in order to gain flexibility and autonomy in meeting the diverse needs of our students. The goals of our district were considered, and this plan is reflective of a desire to design innovative programs and services as we seek to prepare students for their future.

