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Fort Bend ISD

District^{OF}
INNOVATION

Local Innovation Plan

Developed by the

Local Innovation Committee:

December 2016-February 2017

FBⁱ**ISD**
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To maximize opportunities for all FBISD students, the process was initiated by the School Board of Trustees for Fort Bend ISD (FBISD) to become a District of Innovation. It was determined that the potential benefits would include more local control conducive to determining flexibilities to best meet the needs of all students. Additionally, with options to implement innovative practices, including exemptions from certain statutory requirements, staff will be more equipped to make decisions in the best interest of our students.

To become a District of Innovation, FBISD has followed the process established by the Texas Education Code (TEC) Chapter 12A which includes:

Required Texas Education Code Action	FBISD Timeline
Board Resolution (TEC 12A.001 (c) (1))	October 17, 2016
Public Hearing by School Board (TEC 12A.002 (a))	November 14, 2016
Board appointment of a Local Innovation Committee to develop a Local Innovation Plan with: (1) comprehensive educational program with innovations, and (2) list of Education Code provisions to be exempt TEC 12A.002 (b)(2), 12A.003	November 14, 2016
Board takes action to notify commissioner of intent to vote on proposed plan TEC 12A.005 (a) (2)	February 13, 2017
District Advisory Committee, (Academic Advisory Council), holds public meeting. Plan must pass by a majority vote TEC 12A.005 (a) (3)	February 8, 2017
Post the Local Innovation Plan online for 30 days for public comment TEC 12A.005 (a) (1)	February 10, 2017-March 11, 2017
School Board considers approval of the Local Innovation Plan. Plan must pass by 2/3 majority vote TEC 12A.005 (b)	March 27, 2017
If approved, the Local Innovation Plan is for a period of five years TEC 12A.005 (c), TEC 12A.006	Effective at the start of the 2017-2018 school year and ending at the end of the 2021-2022 school year

The Local Innovation Committee developed a Local Innovation Plan which includes proposed flexibility and Texas Education Code Sections requiring exemption in the following areas:

- School Calendar (4 Texas Education Code Sections Requiring Exemption)
- Teacher Certification (1 Texas Education Code Section Requiring Exemption)
- Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Final Grade- 90 Percent Rule (1 Texas Education Code Section Requiring Exemption)

FBISD is looking forward to the possibility of a more personalized approach to student learning and teaching and is eager to capitalize on the possibilities of becoming a District of Innovation.

1

Core Belief

All students can reach their full potential.

commitment:

FBISD will provide an educational system that will enable all students to reach their full potential.

2

Core Belief

We believe student success is best achieved...

A ...through effective teachers that inspire learning.

commitment:

FBISD will recruit, develop and retain effective teachers.

B ...in a supportive climate and safe environment.

commitment:

FBISD will provide a supportive climate and a safe learning/working environment.

C ...by empowered and effective leaders throughout the system.

commitment:

FBISD will provide and promote leadership development at all levels.

D ...in a well-functioning, high-performing community of learners.

commitment:

FBISD will be a collaborative, efficient and effective learning community.

Mission

FBISD exists to inspire and equip all students to pursue futures beyond what they can imagine.

Vision

FBISD continuously improves teaching and learning by developing effective staff and building scalable systems.

District Goals and Priorities

FORT BEND INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

District Goal 1:

FBISD will provide an educational system that will enable all students to reach their full potential.

Priority 1:

Fort Bend ISD will demonstrate the development of systems that will be used to ensure the delivery of an unbiased, guaranteed, aligned, written, taught, and tested curriculum.

Priority 2:

Fort Bend ISD will demonstrate the development of expectations for effective teaching and learning that include well-defined systems for advanced learning opportunities and interventions for academic and behavior support.

Priority 3:

Fort Bend ISD will demonstrate the development of a well-defined, well-supported assessment system that is rigorous and used to inform instruction.

District Goal 2:

FBISD will recruit, develop and retain effective teachers.

Priority 1:

Fort Bend ISD will demonstrate the development of systems that will be used for effectively and efficiently attracting, evaluating, and developing talent.

District Goal 3:

FBISD will provide a supportive climate and a safe learning/working environment.

Priority 1:

Fort Bend ISD will demonstrate the development of systems that will be used to build, maintain and sustain a positive culture and climate and effective relationships among all stakeholders.

Priority 2:

Fort Bend ISD will demonstrate the development of systems that support a safe and secure learning environment and workplace for students and staff.

District Goal 4:

FBISD will provide and promote leadership development at all levels.

Priority 1:

Fort Bend ISD will demonstrate the development of systems that will be used for effectively and efficiently attracting, evaluating, and developing leaders.

District Goal 5:

FBISD will be a collaborative, efficient and effective learning community.

Priority 1:

Fort Bend ISD will demonstrate the development of scalable systems that support productive, reliable, and efficient district operations.

A Fort Bend ISD Graduate has a rigorous academic foundation, strong character, and is...

...equipped with skills for life.

Fort Bend ISD graduates exhibit grit and determination in all aspects of life; respect self and others; engage in healthy life choices; are literate and articulate; proficient with technology; and meaningfully and practically apply knowledge in productive ways.

...a servant leader.

Fort Bend ISD graduates demonstrate confidence while maintaining a humble and kind demeanor; prioritizing the needs of others while accepting responsibility for themselves and are accountable for their own actions; are optimistic; and strive to bring out the best in others.

...an effective communicator.

Fort Bend ISD graduates communicate clearly both orally and in writing; respectfully and actively listen to others; appropriately engage in courageous conversations; and appropriately adapt their communication style to the audience.

...a critical thinker.

Fort Bend ISD graduates are visionary and solutions-oriented problem solvers; are inquisitive and innovative; and have the courage to actively challenge conventional methods in order to improve themselves and the world around them.

...a compassionate citizen.

Fort Bend ISD graduates are empathetic to their fellow citizens, exhibiting care and concern for others; are inclusive and embrace differences; are culturally aware; actively engage in improving our diverse community; exercise their right to vote; and are dependable, respectful, trustworthy, and self-disciplined.

...a collaborative team member.

Fort Bend ISD graduates work effectively with others to achieve group goals; take actions that respect the needs and contributions of others; yield their own objectives to the goals of the team; and positively facilitate and contribute to teamwork.

...a life-long learner.

Fort Bend ISD graduates approach life with wonder and curiosity; seek opportunities to be creative; possess a thirst for knowledge and the ability to adapt to change; and are academically prepared to pursue and attain futures beyond what they can imagine!

Local Innovation Committee

Local Innovation Committee Members	Position
Kristen Adams	FBISD Elkins HS, Teacher
Mandy Antolini	FBISD Clements HS, Campus Assessment Coordinator
Walter Benavides	FBISD Christa McAuliffe MS, Teacher
Sonal Buchar	Community Member
Monique Brown	Community Member
Stacy Bynes	Community Member
Mike Chan	Community Member
Tramaine Chatman (Ad Hoc Member)	Community Member
Chetan Dave	Community Member
JJ Clemence	Community Member
Dolores Collins	FBISD Campus Parent Educator
Jill Curtis	Community Member
Christopher Hill	Fort Bend Education Foundation Board Member
Cathy Hunter	Community Member
Q Imam	Community Member
Nicole Jackson	FBISD Madden ES, Teacher
Vanesia Johnson	Community Member
Cynthia Knox	Community Member
Dee Koch	Community Member
Allie Lam	Community Member
Glenda Macal	FBISD, Heritage Rose ES, Teacher
Marc Muscarello	FBISD, Baines MS, Assistant Principal
Jay Neal	University of Houston, Assistant Provost
Chuckwudalu Ononenyi	FBISD Student
Queen Onyeahialam	FBISD Student
Joe Rodriguez	FBISD, Assistant Superintendent
Michael Schiff	Community Member
Mike Schofield	Community Member
Terri Wang	Fort Bend Education Foundation Board Member
Karrie Washenfelder	Fort Bend Employee Federation
Lavanta Williams	FBISD, Heritage Rose ES, Principal
Local Innovation Committee Support	
Meeting Facilitator: Dr. Shelby McIntosh	K12 Insight, Managing Director
Legal Counsel: Debra Esterak	Rogers, Morris & Grover, LLP, Attorney
District Support: Beth Martinez	FBISD, Chief of Staff and Strategic Planning
District Support: Ginger Carrabine	FBISD, Executive Director of Strategic Planning
Writing Development Team members: Kristen Adams, Mandy Antolini, Chris Hill, Nicole Jackson, Glenda Macal, and Karrie Washenfelder Alternates: Walter Benavides, Q Imam	

I. INTRODUCTION

House Bill 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 October 17, 2016, the Fort Bend Independent School District’s Board of Trustees (“Board”) passed a Resolution to Initiate the Process of Designation as a District of Innovation.

On November 14, 2016, the Fort Bend ISD School Board of Trustees appointed a thirty-member Local Innovation Committee (“Committee”) comprised of students, teachers, principals, administrators, and community members. The Committee membership represents a cross-section of the District. The Committee meetings were facilitated by an external consultant with legal counsel present. The Committee met on December 2, 2016, December 6, 2016, January 6, 2017, and January 18, 2017 to discuss and develop the Local Innovation Plan (“Plan”). Various subject matter experts, representing multiple departments, served as a resource and provided feedback. A subcommittee, the Writing Development Team, was formed from the Committee to draft the Plan. The subcommittee met on January 20, 2017 and February 3, 2017 to finalize the Plan.

The Committee proposes this Plan for consideration of approval by the Academic Advisory Council (AAC), as required by TEC 12A.005, at a public meeting on February 8, 2017. Should the AAC approve the Plan, the Plan will be posted for a required 30-day public comment period.

II. TERM of the Local Innovation Plan

The term of the Local Innovation Plan (“Plan”) is for a period of five years, beginning at the start of the 2017-18 school year and ending at the end of the 2021-22 school year, unless the Plan is terminated or amended earlier by the Board in accordance with statute. With the exception of laws applying to the school calendar, each law proposed for exemption shall continue to apply until local policies are adopted that implement the Local Innovation Plan.

III. INNOVATIONS

The District proposes flexibility in the following areas:

A. School Calendar (Start/End and Minutes of Instruction)

TEC Sections Requiring Exemption: §§25.0811, 25.0812, 25.081 (e), 25.082 (a)

Current Status:

Texas Education Code §§25.0811 and 25.0812 require that a district may not begin a school year before the fourth Monday in August or end instruction prior to May 15.

Proposed Innovation and Benefits of Exemptions:

The Fort Bend ISD goal states that FBISD will provide an educational system that will enable all students to reach their full potential. By eliminating the calendar restrictions imposed by §§25.0811 and 25.0812, the District will improve student learning by providing flexibility to balance the days between the first and second semesters of school. With more balanced semesters in place, teachers will have a supportive climate to pace instruction and more adequate time for students who take a course in either the fall or spring semester. In addition, having the flexibility to start and end the school year earlier would allow high school seniors the opportunity to enroll in college summer school classes, thereby supporting the District’s goal of promoting College and Career readiness. The ability for students to begin the school year earlier would allow the District the possibility of offering transition grades (pre-K/Kinder, 6th, and 9th) an earlier start time for an orientation designed to help the students acclimate, socially and emotionally, to their new campus environments. This reinforces the District’s goal of establishing an active learning community.

Finally, the flexibility of the start and end dates of instruction would assist in attaining the District's goal of student success by developing staff and providing effective teachers who inspire learning. Flexibility in the calendar would allow professional development days to be distributed throughout the school year, rather than grouped together at the beginning or end of the school year. This flexibility would also allow for the possibility of teacher workdays near the end of each grading period. This work day could be utilized by staff for tasks such as finalizing grades, analyzing class data, completing report cards, conferencing with parents, and planning for improvements in teaching and learning. Ultimately, this opportunity for more thorough processing will benefit students by increasing communication between teachers, parents, and students.

Current Status:

Texas Education Code §§25.082(a) and 25.081(e) define a school day as “at least seven hours” and “420 minutes of instruction.”

Proposed Innovation and Benefits of Exemption:

The District’s goals state that our students should learn in a supportive climate. A rigid seven-hour day does not allow the District to structure its calendar to address differing needs of the student population. In order to achieve the flexibility to compile a responsive, supportive school calendar, we request an exemption from Texas Education Code §§25.082(a) and 25.081(e), which define the school day as seven hours or 420 minutes, respectively. This exemption will also provide the District flexibility and local control over the school calendar in order to better meet the needs and desires of the Fort Bend ISD community and District staff. In order to maximize available funding under the Foundation

School Program, the District will comply with 25.081(a)-(d), requiring provision of at least 75,600 minutes of student instruction (including intermissions and recesses) each school year.

B. Teacher Certification

TEC Section Requiring Exemption: §21.003

Current Status:

Texas Education Code §21.003(a) dictates that all District teachers be certified in accordance with rules adopted by the State Board of Education Certification (SBEC). Specifically, it provides: “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.”

Proposed Innovation and Benefits of Exemption:

Fort Bend ISD strives to recruit, develop and retain effective teachers. In recent years, however, the District has experienced difficulty in finding teachers certified to teach certain high school courses, especially in Career and Technical Education (CTE) and World Languages (e.g. Japanese, Mandarin, and Arabic). History has shown that these courses are difficult to staff and face teacher shortages on a regular basis.

The District would benefit from an innovative approach to recruiting and staffing hard-to-fill-positions. Allowing the District to take a creative approach to obtaining qualified, enthusiastic teachers would greatly support the community and children. The committee recognizes that there are a number of pathways to becoming a qualified, effective, and dynamic teacher. Yet, the current law inhibits the District’s ability to recruit and employ highly qualified professionals with industry and field experience. In light of this, the District seeks exemption from 21.003(a) in order to create its own avenue to credentialing highly qualified individuals who wish to teach in hard-to-staff areas. The process would build upon the District’s current partnership with an independent alternative certification program in order to better meet the needs of the District.

A District Credentialing Committee would define the process, including qualifications, necessary steps, mentoring, and available positions. Candidate qualifications could include professional work experience; formal training and education; relevant industry licensure, certification, or registration; and/or any combination of work experience, training and education, or industry credential related to the subject matter he/she will be teaching. Potential areas for a local credential may include culinary arts, automotive technology, cosmetology, criminal justice, engineering, veterinary science, manufacturing, health science, media courses, and world languages.

This locally defined and developed credentialing process would capitalize on the many qualified business and industry representatives in the community by allowing them an alternative avenue into the teaching profession where they could then share their real

world experience and knowledge with our students. These individuals often hold multiple certifications in their areas of expertise that would be extremely beneficial in their ability to prepare students in these areas. Allowing Fort Bend ISD to hire nontraditional candidates who bring authentic field and industry knowledge and skills to the position would provide students with unparalleled learning experiences.

In addition to traditional classroom instruction, these instructors could teach remotely or through other multi-media devices appropriate for the classroom. This option would be conducive to part-time teaching assignments, especially for classes that may not require full-time employment. All candidates would be required to complete the criminal background check in compliance with State Board for Education Certification (SBEC) rules mandated by TEC §22.0833 for a non-certified employee. Candidates will be thoroughly vetted to ensure they have not surrendered any teaching certificates in the past or been terminated from a teaching position for reasons unacceptable to the District. Candidates would receive pedagogy and classroom management training.

The District will limit the use of this exemption to hard-to-fill vacancies. The exemption will allow the expansion of the current certified teacher pool to include skilled and experienced industry professionals. Qualified teacher applicants certified through the state of Texas will be given priority.

C. Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Final Grade (90 Percent Rule)

TEC Section Requiring Exemption: §25.092

Current Status:

Texas Education Code §25.092 mandates that a student in any grade level from kindergarten through grade 12 may not be given credit or a final grade for a class unless the student is in attendance for at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered.

Proposed Innovation and Benefits of Exemption:

Fort Bend ISD’s Mission is to inspire and equip all students to pursue futures beyond what they can imagine. One way to inspire students is to remove obstacles preventing them from pursuing non-traditional individualized learning opportunities. Currently, the state law mandates that the child must be physically present in the classroom in order to receive credit. The 90 percent attendance requirement forces students into a one-size-fits-all approach to instruction that is not practical in such a diverse school district as Fort Bend ISD. As a diverse district, FBISD needs the flexibility to better meet the needs of all students when it comes to course completion versus attendance. Some students must work to support their families; others might be raising children. Often schools are faced with withdrawals, then reenrollments because a child must leave the state or country due to a family commitment, emergency, or extenuating circumstances.

There are myriad reasons why a student may be unable to attend class in a traditional setting, yet with the advent of online learning opportunities, options for individualized

instruction outside the brick and mortar classroom are now a real and exciting possibility. Requiring seat time when there are other avenues for a more individualized approach to instruction can fail to meet the needs of all students in these special circumstances. The Local Innovation Committee envisions assisting students through the expansion of the District’s current online course offerings in order to design more robust online learning experiences for those students for whom the traditional classroom approach is not appropriate or feasible.

We seek an exemption from the law requiring students to be present in the classroom 90 percent of the time in order to earn credit. This exemption would allow the District to explore innovative solutions that will best meet the needs of our growing, diverse, and unique student population, while still ensuring that students have mastered their coursework. In addition to online learning opportunities, the District will investigate the abundant opportunities for active learning outside the classroom in order to receive course credit for content mastery, when not present for 90 percent of the days a class is offered. The Local Innovation Committee encourages the District to explore other avenues by which a student can achieve mastery, without being penalized academically. The exemption would allow the district to provide innovative options to promote student engagement in course material in flexible ways, ultimately allowing learning to happen anytime, anyplace, even apart from the traditional brick and mortar classroom.

Exemption from Section 25.092 would not impact or alter existing compulsory attendance requirements or University Interscholastic League (“UIL”) rules. Moreover, opting out of Section 25.092 would in no way limit or modify a teacher’s right to determine the finality of a grade in accordance with Texas Education Code Section 28.0214, nor would it restrict or alter a teacher’s right to assign grades in accordance with Texas Education Code Section 28.0216.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION

The Local Innovation Plan is designed to create parameters within which the District will operate, in order to provide additional student opportunities. Specific implementation plans, tasks, and timelines will be developed by the appropriate committees consisting of parents, students, community members, and District staff. Revisions to Board Policy and regulations will be developed and adopted where appropriate.