



Mansfield Independent School District

Local Innovation Plan

I. Introduction

The District of Innovation (DOI) is a concept passed by the 84th Texas Legislature through House Bill (HB) 1842 that gives traditional independent school districts most of the flexibilities available to open enrollment charter schools, including exemptions from many requirements mandated in the Texas Education Code.

As a District of Innovation, Mansfield ISD will have:

- greater local control as the decision makers over the educational and instructional model for students;
- increased freedom and flexibility, with accountability, relative to state mandates that govern educational programming;
- power to innovate and think differently.

HB 1842 does not allow for exemptions from statutes including curriculum and graduation requirements or academic and financial accountability.

II. Our Process

On March 29, 2016, the MISD Board of Trustees (“Board”) passed a resolution to Adopt a DOI Plan and appointed a District Advisory Committee (“Committee”) comprised of diverse leaders representing a cross-section of the District’s stakeholders including teachers, principals, parents, community members and administrators. The Local Innovation Plan (“Plan”) was approved in May, 2016. The term of the Plan was for five years, beginning on July 1, 2016 and ending June 30, 2021. The original plan was amended on April 11, 2018.

On December 15, 2020, a presentation was given to the Board to review the Plan and to notify the board that the Plan would expire in June, 2021. A new Committee was formed to review and study the Plan and any additional exemptions to consider.

Mansfield ISD’s District of Innovation Advisory Committee Members are as follows:

Name	Connection to MISD
Greg Owens	Teacher
Isabel Gonzalez	Community Member
Jeremy Ferman	Teacher
Mindy Boles	Parent
Dr. Shelly Butler	Principal
Kwanza Polk	Community Member
Gary Gates	Director Student Services
Cathy Hudgins	Principal
Regenia Crane	Principal
Jennifer Stoecker	Assistant Superintendent Human Resources
David Wright	Assistant Superintendent Student Services
Kelle Gressett	ATPE Representative
Tara Taylor	UEA Representative
Shanee Charles	Principal
Samantha Lee	Community Member
Darnesha Young	Teacher
Dr. Kristina Turner	Parent
Kari George	Parent
Christian Garippa	Assistant Director Transportation
Jennifer Young	Committee Chair

The Committee met on the following dates: March 4, 2021, March 25, 2021 and April 15, 2021. The Committee approved the Plan on April 15, 2021.

III. TERM

The term of the Plan is for five years, beginning July 1, 2021 and ending June 30, 2026, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board in accordance with the law. If, within the term of the Plan, other areas of operations are to be considered for flexibility as part of HB 1842, the Board will appoint a committee to consider and propose additional exemptions in the form of an amendment. Any amendment adopted by the Board will adhere to the same term as the original plan. The MISD may not implement two separate plans at any one time.

IV. INNOVATIONS

The District proposes flexibility and seeks an exemption in the following areas:

A. Certification Required (TEC 21.003) (DBA LEGAL) (DBA LOCAL)

TEC 21.003 states that “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.” The current certification requirements inhibit the District’s ability to hire professionals with industry experience to teach Career And Technical Education (CTE) and Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, & Mathematics (STEAM) courses. In order to provide more students the opportunity to take such courses and obtain professional certifications, the District seeks to establish its own local qualification requirements for such courses in lieu of the requirements set forth in law. The District does not wish to be exempted from any existing laws relating to teacher contracts or teacher benefits. Flexibility to establish its own 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 resulting in more opportunities for students.
- Realistic requirements for professionals transitioning from industry to teaching.
- Ability to employ part-time professionals to teach specialty courses.

B. Uniform School Calendar (TEC 25.0811) (TEC 25.0812) (EB LEGAL) (EB LOCAL)

TEC 25.0811 states that a school district may not begin instruction before the fourth Monday in August. TEC 25.0812 states that a school district may not schedule the last day of school before May 15. Local control of the instructional calendar affords the District the following advantages:

- Elimination of imbalanced 6 weeks and semester schedules while still ending the first semester prior to the holiday break.
- Alignment of calendar with TCC, Advanced Placement Exams, and STAAR/EOC timelines.
- Ensure hour/seat time requirements are met for Certification courses.
- Creates flexibility for the District to pursue year round school of choice for identified populations.

C. Elementary Counselors (TEC 33.002(b)) (FFEA LEGAL)

TEC 33.002(b) states that “A school district with 500 or more students enrolled in elementary school grades shall employ a school counselor certified under the rules of the State Board for Educator Certification for each elementary school in the district. A school district shall employ at least one school counselor for every 500 elementary school students in the district.” The flexibility created by opting out of TEC 33.002(b) affords the District the following advantages:

- The ability to employ a licensed social worker rather than a SBEC certified counselor in instances where the student populations and their families would be better served by the wrap around services provided by a licensed social worker.

D. Campus Behavior Coordinator (TEC 37.0012) (FO LOCAL)

TEC 37.0012 states that “a person at each campus must be designated to serve as the campus behavior coordinator. The campus behavior coordinator is primarily responsible for maintaining student discipline.” Exemption from this requirement will provide the following advantages:

- Will provide campuses the opportunity to allow administrators to fully understand and get to know students in their caseload rather than sourcing all discipline matters to one designated campus behavior coordinator.
- Will allow campuses to use a collaborative approach to discipline.
- Will allow campuses the flexibility to best meet the needs of their students and their families.

E. Minimum Attendance for Credit or a Final Grade (TEC 25.092) (FEC LOCAL)

TEC 25.092 states 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.” Exemption from this code would provide flexibility for students for which one or more of the following apply:

- Are unable to attend class in the traditional brick and mortar building because of illness or family concerns.
- Would benefit from a different time structure to the school day.
- Would benefit from virtual and online classes in addition to or in place of the traditional classroom setting.
- Have excused absences and have completed all makeup work.

Students taking traditional courses not impacted by this exemption would still be required to meet the 90% attendance requirement as it currently exists.

V. IMPLEMENTATION

This Innovation Plan is designed to create parameters within which the District will operate, in order to provide additional student opportunities. Specific implementation plans will be developed by the appropriate campuses and departments. Adjustments to Board Policy will be researched and adopted where appropriate.