

**SUNRAY ISD**  
**District of Innovation Plan**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

House Bill 1842, passed by the 84th Texas Legislature, during Regular Session 2015, permits eligible Texas public school districts to become Districts of Innovation and to obtain exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code.

The adoption of this plan seeks to increase Sunray's flexibility in order to improve educational outcomes for the benefit of students and the community by making educational decisions at the local level, which is the most effective way to support the innovation plan in our district.

## **LOCAL GUIDELINES**

The District of Innovation Committee created this plan to provide the increased flexibility needed to enact the District Improvement Plan. Careful consideration was given to the selection of the exemptions contained within this plan. All were chosen to provide opportunities for Sunray ISD to personalize and enhance learning for students.

This plan is specific to the exemptions as outlined. The district intends to follow the Texas Education Code (TEC) in all other areas. Any revisions or changes to the innovation plan that may arise will be brought before the District of Innovation Committee to explore the request. If the committee determines that a revision is needed, the innovation plan will then be taken back to the School Board for approval with the revisions.

Under HB 1842, districts may identify certain requirements imposed by the Texas Education Code (TEC) "that inhibit the goals of the plan and from which the district should be exempted on adoption of the plan..." The District Improvement Plan calls for innovative practices and opportunities for our students, and therefore Sunray ISD seeks exemption from the following permissible provisions of the TEC as allowed in the statute:

- Uniform School Start Date
- Contract Service Days
- Teacher Certification
- Teacher Employment Contracts
- Class Size

## **TIMELINE**

<b>Board Resolution</b>	<b>February 13, 2017</b>
<b>Public Hearing</b>	<b>March 9, 2017</b>
<b>Appoint Innovative Plan Committee</b>	<b>March 9, 2017</b>
<b>Develop Innovation Plan</b>	<b>March 20 &amp; 21 2017</b>
<b>District Improvement Committee Approval-Public Hearing</b>	<b>March 23, 2017</b>
<b>30 Day Public Review (Website Posting)</b>	<b>March 24-April 27, 2017</b>
<b>Board Action to Notify TEA Commissioner of Board Vote</b>	<b>March 24, 2017</b>
<b>Board Action for Final Approval</b>	<b>April 27, 2017</b>
<b>Notification of Approval to TEA Commissioner, Publish</b>	<b>April 28, 2017</b>

## **TERM**

The term of this Plan is for five years, beginning April 27, 2017, and ending April 27, 2022, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board in accordance with TEC §12A.006 and §12A.008. The Committee will annually monitor the effectiveness of the Plan and recommend to the Board any suggested modification to the Plan on or before August 1st of each year of implementation. Following adoption by the Board of Trustees, the Sunray ISD District of Innovation Plan for District of Innovation designation will be reported to the Texas Education Agency.

# **INNOVATIONS**

## **Calendar (TEC §25.0811)**

Texas Education Code §25.0811 states that a school district may not begin student instruction before the 4th Monday of August.

### **Our Proposal**

Sunray ISD believes the local community should decide what is best for its students in setting the first day of instruction. By claiming exemption from Sec. 25.0811, the district shall determine the first day of instruction for its students on an annual basis with input from stakeholders. Regardless of whether any adjustments or changes are made to the current start date law, Sunray ISD believes this issue to be a local decision as opposed to a state mandate.

We anticipate the following benefits:

- Allowing to begin the school year on an abbreviated week, easing the transition for students.
- Provide more balanced instructional time in each semester.
- Allow better coordination between community colleges and the district helping students with their dual-credit classes.
- Timely and meaningful staff development throughout the calendar year.

## **Contract Service Days (TEC §21.401)**

TEC §21.401 (b) states that an educator under a 10-month contract must provide 187 days of service.

### **Our Proposal**

With the passage of §25.081 which changed the required days of instruction to minutes the law did not address contract days for 10-month contract employees. The determination of how many days are required to fulfill an employee's contract should be a local decision. Sunray ISD will annually evaluate the number of contract days needed for certified staff in that school year. The number of days will not exceed 187 nor will it be less than 182.

## **Teacher Certification (§21.003)**

TEC §21.003 states that a person may not be employed as a teacher 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 (CATE) and Science, Math, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics (STEAM), Foreign Language, History, and English Language Arts courses. The district would also like to honor candidate with Bachelor's and Master's degrees and certifications from bordering states as fully certified teachers eligible for a Texas Probationary teaching contract in our district.

### **Our Proposal**

To allow flexibility for hiring certified personnel, Sunray ISD will:

- Make all decisions on teacher certification and assignments locally
- Notifications of district teaching permits (local certification) shall not be necessary.
- The campus principal may submit in writing to the superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach one subject in a related field for which he/she is not fully certified in Texas according to SBEC guidelines.
  - Notification must include the reason for the request and document which qualifying credentials the teacher holds, justifying the out of certification assignment.
- The campus principal may consider the following criteria as minimum qualifications for eligibility to contractually hire certified personnel under a district teaching permit:
  - Professional work experience in related field exceeding 5 years.
  - Formal training, professional work certification, or registration in related field.
  - Combination of work experience, training, and education.
  - Demonstration of successful working experience with students.
  - Equal or similar out of state certification
- Any employee hired under this local district teaching permit must comply with the same professional standards, ethics, and requirements outlined in the Sunray ISD School Board policy for personnel.
- Any employee hired under the local district teaching permit must be appraised according to the same teacher appraisal system outlined in district policies DNA and DNB (LOCAL).
- A plan and timeline may be established for full State of Texas certification to be achieved.
- This local district teaching permit will be an at-will employment agreement with noncertified individuals.

## **Teacher Employment Contracts (§21.102)**

Currently, experienced teachers new to the district have a probationary period that 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. This time period is not sufficient to evaluate a teacher's effectiveness in the classroom.

### **i. Innovation Strategy**

1. Probationary Contracts- Experienced teachers and counselors new to SISD that have been employed in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, a probationary contract may be issued for up to three years from the last date of district employment. This will allow the district more time to evaluate a staff member's effectiveness.

## **Class Size (§25.112)**

TEC 25.112 limits the class size for K-4 to a maximum of 22:1. The district has the option to apply for a waiver in the event one of our classes exceeds this ratio.

Proposal: An exemption from class size would eliminate the time and paperwork required to file the waiver with TEA. The district does not intend to consistently exceed the 22:1 ratio. If the student/teacher ratio for all sections of a grade level reach 23:1 per campus, the district will start the process to add a teacher.

## **DISTRICT OF INNOVATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Brian Thompson, Superintendent

Sharly Seiler, Elementary Math Teacher

Connie Walker, Elementary Music Teacher

Lidia Rodriguez, Middle School ESL Teacher

Brandy Holloway, Middle School ELAR Teacher

Sharon Moore, High School Special Education Teacher

Caitlyn Rice, High School Math Teacher