

Silverton Independent School District

District of Innovation Plan

Background:

House Bill (“HB”) 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 (“TEC”). On December 8, 2016 the Silverton Independent School District's Board of Trustees (the “Board”) passed a Resolution to Adopt a District of Innovation Plan to increase local control over District operations and to support innovation and local initiatives. The adoption of this plan (this “Plan”) seeks to increase the District's flexibility in order to improve educational outcomes for the benefit of students and the community.

On January 3, 2017, the Board of Trustees nominated a District of Innovation Advisory Committee comprised of diverse leaders representing a cross-section of the District's stakeholders including teachers, the principal, community members, a board member, and the superintendent.

On November 11, 2021, a Public Hearing was held to discuss the renewal of the District of Innovation Plan. The DOI committee met and approved the intent to renew the plan, and the Board voted to approve the intent to renew. On November 17, 2021, a Notice of Intent letter was sent to the Commissioner of Education. On January 24, 2022, the Board voted to adopt the renewal plan.

District of Innovation Advisory Committee Members:

Chantell Francis-Elementary Teacher	Beverly Minyard-Community Member
Janee’ Harrison-Elementary Teacher	Tammy Brannon-Community Member
Carrie Ann McJimsey-Junior High Teacher	Lori Mullins-Community Member
Dotty Powers-Junior High Teacher	Mike Hayes-Principal
Danette Coffey-High School Teacher	Michelle Francis-Superintendent
Beth Nickerson-High School Teacher	Pam Cogdell-Community Member

Term:

The term of this Original Plan is for five years, beginning on August 1, 2017, and ending on July 31, 2022, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board in accordance with law. The Renewal Plan is for five years, beginning on August 1, 2022, and ending on July 31, 2027. The committee will continually monitor the effectiveness of this Plan and recommend to the Board any suggested modifications to this Plan. The District may not implement two separate plans at the any one time.

Innovations:

The District proposes the innovations below by exempting itself from the requirements of the Texas Education Code in the following areas:

I. Uniform School Calendar - (TEC § 25.0811) (TEC § 25.0812)

Board Policies Affected: (EB(LEGAL)) (EB(LOCAL))

Currently, section 25.8011 of the Texas Education Code states that a school district may not begin instruction before the fourth Monday in August. Section 25.8012 of the Texas Education Code states that a school district may not schedule the last day of school before May 15.

This Plan gives the District the flexibility to change the date of the first and last days of school. Local control of the instructional calendar affords the District the following advantages:

- It allows the District to determine locally, on an annual basis, what start and end dates best meet the needs of students, the school, and the community.
- It allows for the alignment of the school calendar with Advanced Placement Exams and STAAR/EOC timelines.
- It allows the District to better align its start date with the start date of colleges, which the District uses for dual credit courses.
- It allows the District to look at starting classes in the middle of the week as opposed to the first day of the week in order to provide a short first week of school, which can ease the transition for students entering kindergarten, middle school, and high school.
- It gives the District the ability to better balance the amount of days in each semester.

****Sections 25.081(a) and 25.081(e) regarding 420 daily instructional minutes and the 7 hour school day requirement were both repealed in the 85th Legislature session and are no longer applicable. ****

II. Length of School Day - (TEC § 25.081) (TEC § 25.082)

Board Policies Affected: (EC(LEGAL)) (EC(LOCAL))

Currently, section 25.081 of the Texas Education Code defines a day of instruction as 420 minutes of instruction, and section 25.082 of the Texas Education Code requires that a school day be for at least seven (7) hours, including intermissions and recesses.

This Plan gives the District the flexibility to reach the annual goal of 75,600 minutes of instruction without being limited by the “420 instructional minutes” and “seven hour day” requirements of the statutory provisions listed above. Local control of the length of the school day affords the District the following advantages:

- It provides the District with the flexibility needed to alter the length of the school day on selected days, as locally determined to be necessary or beneficial to the District and its stakeholders.
- It gives the District a significant amount of local control over scheduling and would, in turn, give the District added flexibility to work non-instructional days into the schedule to allow for teachers to analyze student data and engage in targeted, relevant, professional development.

Silverton ISD does not have any intention to shorten the school day on a regular basis, or without specific purpose, but reserves the right to shorten days as may be required or permitted by law and as the Board determines to be in the best interest of the District and its students, staff, and the community. To the greatest extent possible, "early release" days would be planned ahead of time and noted in the District calendar, which is approved by the Board and published and distributed to stakeholders in advance of the

school year and continuously published using school media. The District would not schedule early release days under this exemption that were shorter than 240 minutes (4 hours), except in accordance with law.

III. Teacher Certification - (TEC § 21.003)

*Board Policies Affected: (DK(LEGAL)) (DK(LOCAL)) (DK(EXHIBIT))
(DBA(LEGAL)) (DBA(LOCAL))*

Currently, section 21.003 of the Texas Education Code states, "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." In the event the District cannot locate a certified teacher for a position or where a teacher will teach a subject outside of his or her certification, the District must submit a request to TEA.

The current certification requirements inhibit the District from hiring professionals with industry experience to teach Career and Technology Education ("CTE"), Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics ("STEAM"), and foreign language courses.

In order to provide more students with the opportunity to take such courses and obtain possible professional certifications, the District seeks to establish its own local qualification requirements for such courses in lieu of the requirements set forth in law. Under this Plan, decisions regarding District employee certification will be handled locally as follows:

- The campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach subject(s) out of his or her certified field, without seeking approval from TEA. The principal must provide written documentation of the reasons for the request and the credentials that the certified teacher possesses, which qualify him or her to teach the relevant subject(s). The superintendent will then determine whether to allow the certified teacher to teach the relevant subject(s) outside of his or her certified field.
- The campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request to allow an uncertified individual to teach a particular class or classes, without seeking approval from TEA. The principal must provide written documentation of the reasons for the request and the credentials that the uncertified individual possesses, which qualify him or her to teach the relevant subject(s). The superintendent will then determine whether to recommend to the Board that the Board hire the individual to teach the relevant subject(s). The Board retains final authority for the employment of uncertified individuals as teachers.

Local control of teacher certification requirements affords the District the following advantages:

- It gives the District the ability to employ industry certified and/or trade professionals to teach specialized certification courses.
- It gives the District the ability to offer a greater number of CTE courses, which results in more opportunities for students.
- It gives the District the ability to implement realistic requirements for professionals transitioning from industry to teaching.

- It gives the District the ability to employ part-time professionals to teach specialty courses.
- It allows the District to utilize technology to implement on-line courses (CTE, foreign languages, and general courses).
- It will provide more flexibility in our scheduling and more options for our students in class offerings.

IV. Class Size and Student/Teacher Ratio - (TEC § 25.111) (TEC § 25.112)

Board Policies Affected: (BF(LEGAL)) (EEB(LEGAL))

Currently, section 25.111 of the Texas Education Code states that “each school district must employ a sufficient number of teachers certified under Subchapter B, Chapter 21, to maintain an average ratio of not less than one teacher for each 20 students in average daily attendance.” Section 25.112 of the Texas Education Code states that “a school district may not enroll more than 22 students in a kindergarten, first, second, third, or fourth grade class.”

Silverton ISD will attempt to maintain an average student/teacher ratio of 20:1 and will attempt to not enroll more than 22 students in a K-4 class. However, under this Plan, the District is no longer required to maintain an average 20:1 student/teacher ratio. Further, the District is no longer prohibited from enrolling more than 22 students in a K-4 class. In the event a K-4 class size exceeds 22 students, the District will not be required to seek a class size waiver from TEA. The superintendent will be required to notify the Board whenever the average student/teacher ratio exceeds 20:1 and/or a K-4 class size exceeds 22 students.

Local control of class size and student/teacher ratio affords the District the following advantages:

- It gives the District the ability to manage increases in class sizes.
- It allows the flexibility to keep students in their current classroom environment where they have formed relationships with their peers and teachers.
- It allows the District to determine if additional staff needs to be hired and to determine the timing of a new hire that is in the best interest of the students.

Implementation:

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