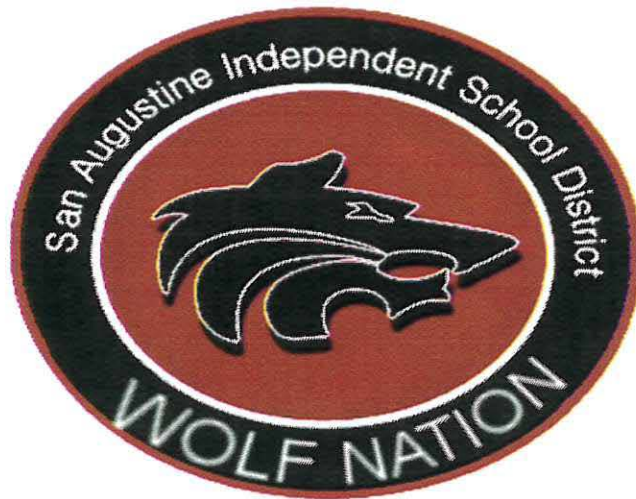


San Augustine ISD



District of Innovation Plan 2017-2022

(Designed in accordance with Texas HB 1842)

*Adopted 5/27/17
Amended 2/15/18*

San Augustine ISD

A District Plan for Innovation

The 84th Texas Legislature passed House Bill 1842 in Spring 2015, providing public school districts the opportunity to become *Districts of Innovation* and to obtain exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. On February 16, 2017, the San Augustine ISD Board of Trustees ("Board") passed a Resolution to Initiate the Process to Consider Designation as a *District of Innovation* in order to increase local control over District operations and to support innovation and local initiatives to improve educational opportunities for the benefit of students and the community.

On February 23, 2017, the Board held a Public Hearing and made the determination to pursue the *District of Innovation* designation. At that time, the Board appointed the District Advisory Committee to develop a plan with (1) comprehensive educational program with innovations, and (2) list of Education Code provisions to be exempt.

To qualify, an eligible school district must adopt a five-year innovation plan according to the Texas Education Code.

Why San Augustine ISD is seeking the designation as a *District of Innovation*.

Districts of Innovation may be released from several statutes to have:

- Greater local control in making decisions about the educational and instructional model for students;
- Increased freedom and flexibility with accountability relative to state mandates that govern educational programming; and
- Empowerment to innovate and think and plan differently

The Proposed Plan would:

- Determine a Flexible School Start Date:
San Augustine ISD will determine on an annual basis its own local starting date for the first semester, not to precede the second Monday in August of any given year, instead of the Texas statute that requires districts to begin a new school year on the fourth Monday of August.
- Allow Alternatives to Educator Certification for Distinctive Subjects:
When a certified educator is not found for a unique circumstance or innovative class, the school district may allow a non-certified professional to teach OR a certified educator to teach a subject in a related field without the traditional state credentials.
- Adjust Instructional Minutes and School Day Length:
SAISD will make every effort to meet the goal of 75,600 instructional minutes per year, but may want to approach this total more creatively without being confined to either 420 minutes or seven hours of instruction per day.
- Allow Board to Make Adjustments to Teacher Contract Days for Purposes of School Closures, etc.

- Allow the district to renew probationary contracts for teachers one additional one-year period for a maximum of two school years.

This exemption would relate to teachers who are new to the district and who have been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment by the District.

SAISD is committed to providing high quality instruction in an environment conducive to learning. The district believes that the current state assessment alone is a poor measurement of student learning, and it only serves as a single data point among many more reliable indicators of academic measurement.

THE PROCESS

On February 16, 2017, the San Augustine Independent School District's Board of Trustees passed a Resolution to initiate the process to consider the Designation as a *District of Innovation* in order to increase local control over District operations and to support innovation and local initiatives to improve educational opportunities for the benefit of students and the community. On February 23, 2017, the district held a Public Hearing to provide an overview of the process, concepts, and benefits of such a designation. The Board also appointed the District Advisory Committee on February 23, 2017 with a charge to begin the process of drafting a local innovation plan. The District Advisory Committee is comprised of mostly classroom teachers, with several being parents of SAISD students. The remaining members are campus and district administrators and directors. The committee began work on March 22, 2017 to draft a plan of innovation.

District Advisory Committee for District of Innovation Plan

Leasa Dunn -----	High School Principal
Hugh Perkins -----	High School Asst. Principal
Sharon Cartwright -----	High School Counselor
Jesica Herrera -----	High School Teacher/Parent
Meredith Fussell-----	High School Teacher/Parent
Joush Morris -----	High School Teacher
Tory Barnes-----	High School Teacher/Parent
Terri Mathews-----	High School Teacher/Parent
Anna Sharp-----	Elementary Principal
Rebecca Deville-----	Elementary Counselor
Jennifer Morton-----	Elementary Teacher
Paula Whiteman -----	Elementary Teacher
Lisa Crouch-----	Elementary Teacher
Deborah Evans-----	Elementary Teacher
Ashley Burks-----	Elementary Teacher
Crissy Haynie-----	Curriculum Director
Virginia Liepman-----	Superintendent

Based on direction provided by the Board and input from various District stakeholders, the Committee proposes the following plan:

1. DETERMINE A FLEXIBLE SCHOOL START DATE : (TEC §25.0811a) (EB LEGAL)

Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan:

The Texas Education Code states a school district may not begin student instruction before the 4th Monday of August. For many years this was the rule; however, districts had the option of applying for a waiver to begin earlier, even as early as the 2nd Monday in August. The start-date waiver was eventually removed when the legislature determined school districts should begin the first semester no earlier than the 4th Monday of August, with no exceptions. The current process allows no flexibility in the design of annual calendars to fit the needs of the students or the wishes of the local board of trustees, who represent community interests in this matter.

Local Innovation Strategies:

A. San Augustine ISD will start no earlier than the 2nd Monday in August of any given year. Our primary goal is to create flexibility in our calendar which will be beneficial to all stakeholders.

B. The annual calendar will be submitted by the District Calendar Committee and approved by the Board of Trustees.

2. ALLOW ALTERNATIVES TO EDUCATOR CERTIFICATION FOR DISTINCTIVE SUBJECTS: (TEC §21.003a) (TEC §21.057a-e) (DK LEGAL)

Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan:

Texas Education Codes states a person may not be employed as an educator by a school district unless the individual holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued by the appropriate state agency. In the event a school district cannot locate a certified teacher for a position, or a teacher is teaching a subject outside her or his certification, the district must request emergency certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or the State Board of Educator Certification. This system is burdensome and does not take into account the unique financial and/or instructional needs of the district, especially for innovative classes where certification may not exist or educators with those credentials may not be readily available.

Local Innovation Strategies:

A. In exceptional circumstances, when a certified educator is not found for a unique or innovative class, the campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request for local certification that will allow a non-certified, yet highly qualified, professional to teach OR a certified educator to teach a subject in a related field for which she or he is not credentialed by the state.

B. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what qualifications the individual possesses to teach the proposed subject. Emergency or financial situations creating the need for this assignment should also be noted.

C. Whenever possible, lesson plans or curriculum guides to support the uncertified yet highly qualified educator will be developed or provided in partnership with certified teachers in the same field.

D. In the event an uncertified, yet highly qualified, educator or professional is assigned to a course, the superintendent will inform and obtain consent from the board of trustees and will notify parents of students who benefit from this decision.

E. A teacher certification waiver, state permit applications, or other paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency.

By obtaining exemption from existing certification requirements, the District will have the flexibility to hire internal applicants seeking assignments outside of their traditional certification area. In addition, this exemption will afford the District the flexibility to hire professionals in certain trades or vocations to teach the crafts of those trades or vocations (welding, fine arts, etc) if certified teachers are not available to teach those courses. However, special education and bilingual teachers must continue to be SBEC certified.

3. ADJUST INSTRUCTIONAL MINUTES AND SCHOOL DAY LENGTH: **(TEC §25.081 e) (TEC §25.082 a) (EB LEGAL)**

Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan:

The Texas Education Codes define the length of the instructional day as “420 minutes of instruction” or “seven hours each day including intermissions and recesses.” The intent of this code is to standardize across all districts the amount of time students are engaged in classroom learning. The school code also allows school districts and charter schools to add minutes as necessary to compensate for minutes of instruction lost due to school closures caused by disaster, flood, extreme weather conditions, fuel curtailment or another calamity.

San Augustine ISD believes flexibility in use of minutes as well as the length of the school day will support teachers and staff who participate in relevant professional development, perfecting their craft, deepening their content knowledge and analyzing student data. In addition – particularly at the elementary level – flexibility in both instructional minutes and the length of the school day will protect all-important parent-teacher conferences especially in the event of inclement weather days, which may impact cumulative instructional minutes allocated over the course of a school year.

Local Innovation Strategies:

A. San Augustine ISD will make every effort to maintain the total of 75,600 minutes of instruction per year, but seeks an exemption from these statutes as necessary so it may approach the 75,600-minute goal in a more creative manner without being confined to either 420 minutes or seven hours of instruction every day. This will offer campuses greater flexibility in creating daily/weekly instructional schedules that better meet the needs of the students we serve.

B. This exemption will allow for local control regarding the early dismissal of students for various purposes. Early release days may be used for additional professional development, unique instructional arrangements, teacher collaboration, teacher/parent conferences, releasing prior to a holiday and other special occasions, or other school related activities.

4. ADJUSTMENT OF TEACHER CONTRACT DAYS: (TEC §21.401) (DC LEGAL)

Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan:

Texas Education Code states that a contract between the district and an educator must be for a minimum of ten months of service. An educator employed under a ten-month contract must provide

a minimum of 187 days of service. The Commissioner may reduce the number of days of service, but such a reduction does not reduce an educator's salary.

District calendars are designed to maintain the minimum total of 75,600 minutes of instruction per year. However, due to individual campus schedules, excess minutes of instruction may be 'banked' and used as required make-up time in the event of bad weather or emergencies requiring the closing of a campus or district. Although this flexibility has been allowed for required student attendance, there was no flexibility that impacted teacher contract days. Districts should have the option to reduce the number of contract days for educators when bad weather or emergencies arise.

Local Innovation Strategies:

A. San Augustine ISD will continue its very conservative practice regarding the implementation of bad weather/emergency closures. In the event that inclement weather or emergencies arise requiring the closure of a campus or entire district, the Board of Trustees shall have the option to reduce the number of contract days by an amount less than or equal to the number of attendance days adjusted for student instruction.

B. If the Board of Trustees makes any change to reduce the number of contracted days, such a reduction may not reduce an educator's salary.

5. EXTENSION TO PROBATIONARY TEACHER CONTRACTS: (TEC §21.102) (DCA LEGAL)

Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan:

Currently, the TEC 21.102 states that a probationary contract may not exceed one year for new teachers to our district who have been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment by the district. Under this circumstance, the district must either give the teacher a term contract or terminate their contract after their first year in the district.

Local Innovation Strategies:

SAISD would like to have the ability to renew the probationary contract one additional one-year period, for a maximum of two school years, for all teachers that are new to the district who have been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of eight years preceding employment by the District.

Terms of *District of Innovation* Plan

The term of the *District of Innovation* Plan is for five (5) years, beginning at the start of the 2017–2018 school year and ending at the end of the 2021–2022 school year, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with statute. The District Advisory Committee will continually monitor the effectiveness of the *District of Innovation* Plan and recommend to the Board of Trustees any suggested modifications. Activation of the exemptions from the TEC will most likely require the revision and /or addition of San Augustine ISD local policies. Any exemptions from TEC or amendments to the *District of Innovation* Plan will be reflected in Policy AF (Local) – INNOVATION DISTRICTS following board action pursuant to law.