

**Southland Independent School District
District of Innovation Draft of Plan**

Local Innovation Committee Members

Eric Cravy - Business Member
Roque Gomez - Business Member
Bethany Miller - Community Member
Tracy Fogerson - Community Member
Kim Carpenter – Parent
Mary Ann Cardona - Parent
Amanda Calderon - Elementary Teacher
Tara Friers - Elementary Teacher
Ashley Chisum - Secondary Teacher
Ben Stokes - Secondary Teacher
Keegan Cooke - Secondary Teacher
Martha Angerer – Special Programs
Gregg Johnson – K-12 Principal
Wyanza Basinger – Business Manager
Toby Miller - Superintendent

TIMELINE

October 15, 2018

- SISD Administration presented to the Board the idea of becoming a District of Innovation. A resolution was approved and signed by Board members to consider becoming a District of Innovation.

November 12, 2018

A public forum was held to solicit input from the community on becoming a District of Innovation. The Board approved to pursue becoming a District of Innovation. The Board appointed a Local Innovation Committee comprised of community members, business leaders, parents, teachers and administration to begin the process of developing a local plan in accordance with TEC12A.003 to address the needs of the district.

December 4, 2018

- Local Innovation Committee met to examine data, draft an innovation plan and develop information for presentation at a public hearing.

January 22, 2019

- Local Innovation Committee met to approve current draft of innovation plan and approved posting on the Southland ISD website for public view and comment.

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. Southland ISD is seeking to increase local control over District operations and to support innovation and local initiatives to improve educational outcomes for the benefit of our students and the community of Southland.

TERM

The term of the plan is five years, beginning with the 2019-2020 school year through the 2023-2024 school year unless amended or terminated by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. The Local Innovation Committee will continually monitor the effectiveness of the Plan and recommend to the Board any suggested modifications.

**EXEMPTIONS REQUESTED FROM THE TEXAS EDUCATION CODE
*FLEXIBLE CALENDAR, FIRST /LAST DAY OF INSTRUCTION***

Exemption from:

- TEC §25.0811
- TEC §25.0812

Related Board Policies:

- EB Legal

Description of current provisions:

- TEC §25.0811 states a school district may not begin student instruction before the 4th Monday of August.
- TEC §25.0812 states a school district may not schedule the last day of school for students for a school year before May 15.

Description of Innovative Plan:

The district plan is to begin instruction no earlier than the 2nd Monday of August and end the school year prior to June 1st. Having the flexibility to locally set a school start and end date allows for a school calendar which addresses the local needs of our community and emphasizes engaged learning activities, college & career readiness, and social and emotional needs of students. An earlier start date provides for staff development and holiday days that are spaced throughout school year and provides the ability to tie student holidays to traditional business holidays if and when possible. The innovative plan allows the first and second semesters to be closer in the number of days of instruction, which will improve active learning by balancing the amount of instructional time in each semester. Teacher preparation will be provided throughout the school year with opportunities for follow up and review. Secondary schools could have additional flexibility in order to promote attendance and course completion incentives.

CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS, FLEXIBLE SCHEDULING AND OFFERINGS

Exemption from:

- TEC §21.003

Related Board Policies:

- DKLEGAL
- DKLOCAL
- DK EXHIBIT

Description of current provision:

TEC 21.003 requires that a person may not be employed as a teacher by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued by the appropriate state agency. In the event a district cannot locate a certified teacher for a position or a teacher is teaching a subject outside of their certification, the district must request emergency certification for the Texas Education Agency and or the State Board of Educator Certification.

Description of Innovative Plan:

TEC 21.003 In order to best serve SISD students, the goal of the district will be to continue to hire certified staff in all positions and decisions on certification will be handled locally. The current state teacher certification requirements inhibit the District's ability to hire teachers to teach hard-to-fill and career and technical courses, and desired local offerings. In order to enable more students to obtain the educational benefit of such course offerings, the District seeks to establish its own local qualification requirements and its own requirements for training of professionals and experts to teach such courses in lieu of the requirements set forth in law. This exemption directly supports the move from "highly qualified" requirements in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). By obtaining exemption from existing teacher certification requirements, the District will have the flexibility to hire community college instructors, local experts with trade skills or proven abilities, or internal applicants seeking assignments outside of their traditional certification area. This will enrich applicant pools in specific content areas and afford more students the opportunity to take more innovative courses if certified teachers are not available to teach those courses. In addition, this exemption will afford the District the

flexibility to hire professionals in certain innovative trades or vocations to teach the crafts of those trades or 12 vocations (such as welding, fine arts, health sciences, law, etc.) if certified teachers are not available to teach those courses.

Note: The District acknowledges that our special education and bilingual teachers must continue to be SBEC certified.

PROBATIONARY CONTRACT, FLEXIBLE EVALUATION PERIOD

Exemption from:

- TEC §21.102(b)

Related Board Policies:

- DCA Legal

Description of current provisions:

Experienced teachers new to the district are placed on a probationary contract, which 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.

Description of Innovative Plan:

A one-year probationary period is not sufficient to evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom since teacher contract renewal timelines demand that employment decisions be made prior to District receipt of state assessment results. Relief from Texas Education Code 21.102 will permit the District the option to issue a probationary contract for a period of up to two years for experienced teachers, counselors or nurses newly hired in Southland ISD. This will allow Southland ISD to better evaluate a teacher's effectiveness.

LENGTH OF THE SCHOOL DAY

Exemption from:

- TEC §25.082(a)

Related Board Policies:

- EB Legal

Description of current provision:

TEC §25.082 requires that a school day be at least seven hours each day, including intermissions and recesses.

Description of Innovative Plan:

Exemption from the 420 minutes/day requirement would allow Southland ISD the flexibility needed to alter the school day schedule whenever it was locally determined as beneficial to the district and its stakeholders to accommodate the unique needs of our students. The district would not be tied to 6 early release days, which is the maximum that can be requested under the existing early release waiver process. Exempting the district from the 7- hour school day requirement would give the district a significant amount of local control over scheduling without the fear of a loss of state funding or losing credit for instructional time that might cause the district to fall out of compliance with the daily minute requirements. This would also allow the district the flexibility to schedule non-instructional days into the schedule to allow for teachers to analyze student data and engage in targeted, and relevant professional development. The district Minimum Minutes of Instruction procedures are listed below.

- Southland ISD will meet or exceed the 75,600 minutes/year of instruction.
- Southland ISD does not intend to shorten the school day on a regular basis, or without specific purpose.

To the greatest extent possible, "early release" days will be planned ahead of time and noted in the district calendar, which is approved by the Board of Trustees and published and distributed to stakeholders in advance of the school year and is continuously published using school media.

NUMBER OF CONTRACT DAYS

Exemption from:

- TEC §21.401(a),(b)

Related Board Policies:

- DCB Legal, Local

Description of current provisions:

Current education law in Chapter 21 requires an educator be employed under a contract for no less than ten months' service, and further requires an educator so employed to provide a minimum of 187 days' service.

Description of Innovative Plan:

Consistent with its desire as expressed throughout this plan to achieve flexibility, innovation, and local control over the District's calendar and scheduling as necessary to provide the highest quality programming possible to students and to meet the particular needs of our community, the District wishes to align the teacher days to the 75,600 minutes required of students. The district would have the option to reduce the amount of contract days with no effect on teacher salaries.

TRANSFER STUDENT RESTRICTIONS - END OF TERM

Exemption from:

- TEC §25.036

Related Board Policies:

- FDA (Local)

Description of current provision:

A district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district. Under TEC 25.036, a transfer is interpreted to be for a period of one school year.

Description of Innovation Plan:

Southland ISD maintains a transfer policy under FDA (Local) requiring nonresident students wishing to transfer to file a transfer application each school year. In approving transfer requests, the availability of space and instructional staff, availability of programs and services, the student's disciplinary history records, work habits, and attendance records are also evaluated. Transfer students are expected to follow the attendance requirements, rules and regulations of the District. The District has interpreted this code as establishing the acceptance of a transfer as a one-year commitment. The District is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one-year commitment in accepting transfer applicants. On rare occasions, student behavior warrants suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion. In addition, student attendance may fall below the TEA truancy standard. In these rare cases, Southland ISD seeks exemption from the one-year transfer commitment. Nonresident students who have been accepted as inter-district transfer may have such transfer status revoked by the Superintendent at any time during the year if the student is assigned discipline consequences of suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion. In addition, students not meeting the State's 90% attendance standard may also be subject to immediate revocation of the transfer status.

SCHOOL DISTRICT DEPOSITORY CONTRACTS

Exemption from:

- TEC §45.205
- TEC §45.206

Related Board Policies:

- BDAE (LEGAL)
- BDAE (LOCAL)

Description of the Current provision:

The depository for the District shall serve for a term of two years and until its successor is selected and has qualified. A district and its depository bank may agree to extend the contract for two additional two-year terms. Per S.B. 754, passed by the 85th Texas Legislature, effective September 1, 2017, TEC Section 45.205 will allow the District to extend a depository contract for three additional two-year terms. The contract term and any extension must coincide with the district's fiscal year. An extension is not subject to the requirements of Education Code 45.206, *Education Code 45.205* and Education Code 45.204.

Description of Innovation Plan:

In a small district and a small town, the District's choices for its depository bank are limited. SISD uses services provided by the bank on a daily basis. SISD will continue to use the local depository for the District without rebidding. At the end of each two-year term, the District and its depository bank may agree to extend the contract for multiple two additional year periods. The District must review the contract to ensure the best value and support for the District and obtain Board approval for each of the two-year periods. Nothing in this process would hinder the District's ability to undertake bidding the District Depository Bank at the end of any of the two-year periods. The time saved by the superintendent, business manager and the board of trustees by not having to deal with this ministerial duty every two years will allow the superintendent, business manager and the board more time for studying and planning for student progress, instructional strategies, and innovative options for the district educational goals. The District believes it can operate most optimally if it is not limited to two or even three additional two-year extensions of its depository contract.

TRANSPORTING RESTRICTIONS – INTERLOCAL AGREEMENTS

Exemption from:

- TEC §34.007

Related Board Policies:

- FDA Local

Description of current provisions:

Current education law in Chapter 34 allows for transportation of transfer students provided there is an interlocal contract with the home district of the transfer student.

Description of Innovative Plan:

Consistent with its desire to serve not only our students, but also their parents, we wish to be allowed to pick up and drop off students at one location within neighboring districts. This will allow students in all districts the ability to enjoy true school choice and not be hindered by lack of transportation to and from their preferred school

EXEMPTION FROM FUTURE TEC MANDATES

To best serve our local Southland ISD community, staff, and students, Southland ISD hereby includes a provision in our Local Innovation Plan for the District to maintain control over any future, eligible Texas Education Code mandates, which may be exempted by a majority vote of the Southland ISD Board of Trustees.