

Smyer Independent School District

District of Innovation Plan

June 1, 2022

Through

May 31, 2027



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District of Innovation Plan

The 84th Texas Legislature passed House Bill 1842 in the spring of 2015, providing public school districts the opportunity to become Districts of Innovation and to obtain exemptions from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code and allow public schools to have some of the same flexibility that public charter schools have always been allowed.

In an effort to better serve and accommodate the diverse needs of all Smyer ISD stakeholders, including students, staff, parents and community members; Smyer ISD is seeking to renew its District of Innovation plan for a term beginning June 1, 2022 through May 31, 2027.

Benefits of being a District of Innovation include:

- Take greater local control as the decision makers over the educational and instructional model for students;
- Increase freedom and flexibility, with accountability, relative to state mandates that govern educational programming; and,
- Increase empowerment and encourage innovative thinking.

Smyer ISD District of Innovation Renewal Timeline

March 7, 2022

First Meeting of the DIC/DOI Committee – Reviewed current DOI plan and options for any additional exemptions were discussed.

April 22, 2022

Public Notice of DIC/DOI Committee Meeting Posted – Meeting to be held on April 25, 2022, at 2:00 p.m. Meeting will allow for public comment on the plan and for potential vote to approve the plan by the committee.

April 25, 2022

Public meeting of the DIC/DOI Committee to allow for input from stakeholders. Committee voted unanimously to approve the plan as presented.

Innovation Plan

First Day of Instruction (EB legal, TEC 25.0811)

A district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August.

Proposal:

The flexibility of a locally approved start date allows the district to determine, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of the students and community. This would also offer the following:

- Allow for more balanced grading periods.
- Allow for more instructional time prior to state assessments in December.
- Students participating in dual credit will have more balanced semesters, which will align more with our local colleges.

Guidelines:

The district will determine, on an annual basis, when each school year will begin.

Teacher Certification (TEC § 21.003, § 21.053 and § 21.057) (DK Legal and Local)

State law 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 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 from the Texas Education Agency and/or State Board of Educator Certification. Special education and bilingual teachers must be SBEC certified.

Proposal:

The current state teacher certification requirements inhibit the District's ability to hire teachers to teach hard-to-fill, high demand, positions like foreign languages, as well as career and technical courses. In order to best serve Smyer ISD students, decisions on certification will be handled locally. Based on local need, this exemption from teacher certification requirements will enable greater flexibility in staffing and will enrich applicant pools in specific areas of need. This would allow for the following:

- Provide more flexibility in scheduling
- Provide more options for students in class offerings
- Allow degreed individuals who may not be certified to teach hard-to-fill, high demand courses.
- Allow experienced teachers to teach a course in an area they have qualified knowledge but do not have that particular certification.

- Allow industry certified and/or trade professionals to teach specialized certification courses

Guidelines:

- The District will make every attempt to hire individuals with appropriate certification for the position in question; however, when that is not reasonably possible, the District will have the flexibility to hire individuals who are knowledgeable in the area of study and are equipped to effectively perform the duties of the position.
- The campus principal may submit a request to the superintendent to allow a certified teacher to teach subject(s) out of their certified area. The request must state the reason and document the current certifications that the teacher holds that would qualify them to teach the subject.
- Individual with experience in a CTE field or other high demand area could be eligible to teach a vocational skill or course through a local teaching certificate. The campus principal would submit the request to the superintendent with all the documents that the person holds that would qualify them to teach the course.
- The Superintendent will approve or deny requests for local certification and report the action to the Board of Trustees.

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

Probationary Contracts (TEC § 21.102 (b) a

Currently, State law states that a probationary contract may not exceed one year for a person who has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment with the district.

Proposal:

This period of time is not sufficient to evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom since teacher contract timelines demand that employment decisions must be made prior to the availability of end of year classroom and student data. For experienced teachers, counselors, librarians, or nurses new to Smyer ISD that have been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, the probationary period when becoming employed by Smyer ISD shall be for a period of two years with probationary contract issued for each of the two years.

Teacher Benefits and the length of a Teacher's Contract Days (TEC § 21.401)

Currently, state law requires a teacher to work a 187 day contract. Teachers will often work longer contracts depending on their assignment.

Proposal:

Smyer ISD will reduce a teacher's contract days from 187 days to 182 days for the same salary. Teachers who work longer contracts will have their contract time reduced by five (5) days accordingly. This reduction in contract days at the current salary schedule should make our district's salaries more competitive. Our district is a small, rural school district which is unable to match the teacher pay of some of the larger and more affluent school district in the area. By reducing the days of service to 182 days, without a reduction in pay, the district is able to increase the daily rate the district pays its teachers. This move should improve teacher morale. It should enhance teacher recruitment during the years of innovation. This action will not cost the school district any more funds than it currently pays its teachers.

Inter-District Transfers (TEC 25.036, FDA Local)

Requires districts transfers to be for a period of one school year.

Proposal:

The district is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one-year commitment in accepting transfer applicants.

Guidelines:

- Smyer ISD will follow FDA Local in approving all transfers.
- On rare occasions, student behavior warrants suspension (in or out of school), placement in DAEP, or expulsion. In addition, student attendance may fall below the state's 90% attendance standard. In these rare cases a student's transfer status may be revoked by the superintendent at any time during the school year.