S&S Consolidated Independent School District

District of Innovation Plan

Approved by the District of Innovation Committee, December 1, 2016
Approved by the Advisory Council, December 8, 2016
Final Board Approval to be determined on January 16, 2017
Mr. Mike Morath  
Commissioner of Education  
Texas Education Agency  
1701 N. Congress Ave.  
Austin, TX 78701

Re: S&S Consolidated Independent School District – District of Innovation

Dear Commissioner Morath:

The S&S Consolidated Independent School District has been in the process of developing a Local Innovation Plan in accordance with House Bill 1842 enacted by the 84th Texas Legislature. On October 17, 2016 a special called meeting was held where the Board of Trustees approved a resolution to hold a public hearing to discuss the possibility of becoming a District of Innovation. A public hearing was used to explain and further discuss this unique opportunity. On October 17, 2016, the Board of Trustees unanimously approved a committee of teachers, parents, administrators, community members and a board member to pursue a District of Innovation plan.

The committee met on October 26, 2016 and November 30, 2016 to discuss and draft a Local Innovation Plan. The proposed plan was reviewed by the faculty and staff of the Middle School on November 1st and by the High School and Elementary faculty and staff on November 9th. The meetings gave everyone an opportunity to provide feedback for the District of Innovation Committee. On December 6, 2016, members of the District of Innovation Committee shared the final proposal with the District Advisory Committee who unanimously approved the plan. The plan was posted on the District web page for public input on December 8, 2016. The Board of Trustees anticipates voting on the plan January 16th, 2017.

Please let me know if you need any further information.

Sincerely,

Roger Reed  
Superintendent of Schools, S&S CISD  
roger.reed@sscisd.net  
903-564-6051
During the 84th Legislative Session HB 1842 was passed in order to provide more local control in certain areas. HB 1842 allows a traditional public school to utilize the exemptions in Education Law that charter schools currently are entitled to. We feel this is a great opportunity for our local district to create a plan based on the needs of our students and community that will remain in effect for the next five years. (2017-2022).

**Uniform Start Date (TEC §25.0811)**
State law currently prohibits school districts from starting class before the fourth Monday in August, unless they are year-round districts.

**Rationale for Exemption**
The flexibility of the start date allows the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the need of the students, the school, and the community. In addition, this flexibility allows the district to better align its starting date to accommodate the start date of colleges in which the district uses for dual credit courses. Another benefit of exempting this restriction is it allows the school to look at starting classes as a short week which can ease the transition for students entering kindergarten, middle school, and high school. Additionally, the ability to change the school start date can also help to better balance the amount of days in each semester.

**Teacher Contract Days (DCB Legal, Local) (TEC §21.401)**
Current education law in Chapter 21 requires a teacher who is on a 10 month contract to work an equivalent of 187 days.

**Rationale for Exemption**
In an attempt 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.

**Probationary Contracts (DCA Legal) (TEC §21.002, §21.102)**
For experienced teachers new to the district, the probationary period 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. A one year probationary period is not a sufficient amount of time to evaluate the teacher’s effectiveness in the classroom. Currently, contracts for S&S CISD employees occur in March which demands that employment decisions must be made with very little time for evaluating teacher effectiveness and prior to state assessment results.

**Rationale for Exemption**
For experienced teachers, counselors, librarians, or nurses new to the district that have been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, a probationary contract may be issued for up to two years from the first day of employment with S&S CISD.

**90 Percent Attendance Rule (TEC §25.092)**
State law mandates a student may not be given credit or a final grade for a class unless
the student is in attendance for at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered. In addition, if a student is in attendance greater than 75 percent and less than 90 percent may be given credit or a final grade for the class if the student completes a plan approved by the campus administrator and meets the instructional requirements for the class.

**Rationale for Exemption**

The 90 percent rule is an arbitrary percentage and while student attendance at a rate of 90 percent or better will remain a goal of our district, schools should have the option to set their own requirement. Local districts need the flexibility to set attendance requirements which reflect their specific situations and expectations.

Abstaining from the requirement means the district won’t have to penalize students who miss class due to extra/co-curricular activities, academic activities, or other extenuating circumstances. The flexibility can allow for local boards to set higher expectations for attendance while promoting student engagement, as well as social and emotional development, by encouraging more students to participate in extracurricular activities.

It must be noted, Relief from Section §25.092 does not in any way impact or alter existing compulsory attendance requirements or University Interscholastic League ("UIL") rules. Opting out of Section §25.092 in no way limits or modifies a teacher's right to determine the finality of a grade in accordance with Texas Education Code Section §28.0214, nor does it restrict or alter a teacher's right to assign grades in accordance with Texas Education Code Section §28.0216.


Kindergarten – 4th Grade classes are to be kept at a 22 student to 1 teacher ratio according to state law. When a class exceeds this limit, the district must complete a waiver with the Texas Education Agency. These waivers are always approved by TEA so this would eliminate the waiver process. Along with the waiver, it is required that a letter is sent home to each parent in the section that exceeds the 22:1 ratio, informing them the waiver has been submitted. Many times soon after the waiver is submitted, students move out of the district and we are below the 22:1 ratio.

**Rationale for Exemption**

While we certainly believe that small class size plays a positive role in the classroom, this must be balanced with the logistics of the timing of adding staff, and the best teacher to student ratio that can be achieved given the total number of students. We do not believe it has a negative effect when a district adds only one or two more students. Many times it is not the number of the students but the makeup and chemistry of the classroom which influence the learning environment. Most importantly, research clearly shows it is the teacher in the classroom that has the greatest impact on student learning, not absolute class size. In the event the class size exceeds the 22:1 ratio for Kindergarten – 4th grade classes, a TEA waiver will not be necessary, but the
superintendent will report to the Board of Trustees for approval. This exemption only allows S&S CISD the local control over class size ratios, not a disregard for the intent of the ratio requirements. This plan also emphasizes the importance of flexible learning environments and student learning based upon student driven passions and needs. This grants flexibility in class size at all times-regrouping for success, small groups, large groups, etc. It also works to minimize paperwork.

**Teacher certification (DK LEGAL, DK LOCAL, DK EXHIBIT)**

Current law states 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 submit a request to the Texas Education Agency. TEA then approves or denies this request. In certain circumstances a district can use a local one-year permit.

**Rationale for Exemption**

In order to best serve S&S CISD students, decisions on certification will be handled locally.

a. The campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach one subject out of their certified field. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials the certified teacher possesses which would qualify this individual to teach this subject.

b. An individual with experience in a CTE field could be eligible to teach a vocational skill or course through a local teaching certificate. The principal will submit the request to the superintendent with all the individual’s credentials. The superintendent will then approve the request if they feel the individual could be an asset to students. The superintendent will then report this action to the Board of Trustees prior to the individual beginning any employment. Local teaching certificates will be for one year. The employee will be at-will.

c. This proposal will provide more flexibility in our scheduling and more options for our students in class offerings.
District of Innovation Timeline

Tuesday, September 13th, 2016
Initial meeting with administrative staff to discuss preliminary thoughts and discuss possible members of the District of Innovation Team.

Monday, September 19th, 2016
Initial discussion with Board of Trustees to discuss what being a District of Innovation would entail and how it could give our district some local control in regards to the areas outlined by the Texas Education Agency.

Monday, October 17th, 2016
5:45 PM, Special Board Meeting
Board of Trustees approve resolution to hold a public hearing to discuss the possibility of using HB 1842 to become a District of Innovation

5:50 PM, Public Hearing
Public hearing to explain and discuss the possibility of becoming a District of Innovation

6:00 PM, Regular Meeting
Approve a motion to pursue local “District of Innovation” plan.
Board of Trustees approve the members of the District of Innovation Committee.

Wednesday, October 26th, 2016 – Administration Building
Initial Meeting with District of Innovation Committee

Tuesday, November 1st, 2016 – Middle School
Meeting with Middle School Campus to discuss District of Innovation

Wednesday, November 9th, 2016 – High School
Meeting with High School Campus to discuss District of Innovation

Wednesday, November 9th, 2016 – Elementary School
Meeting with Elementary School Campus to discuss District of Innovation

Wednesday, November 30th, 2016 – Administration Building
2nd Meeting with District of Innovation Committee

Tuesday, December 6th, 2016 – Administration Building
District Advisory Committee Final Approval

Thursday, December 8th, 2016
- Post the District of Innovation Plan on the district website for 30 days
- Notify Commissioner of Education of the board’s intention to vote on adoption of proposed plan

Monday, January 16th, 2016 Regular Board Meeting
- Approve the District of Innovation Plan

Tuesday, January 17th, 2016 Update all policy changes with TASB
Resolution to Adopt a District of Innovation

WHEREAS Education Code 12A.001 provides that a district is eligible for designation as a district of innovation if the district’s most recent performance rating under Section 39.054 reflects at least acceptable performance, and that consideration of designation as a district of innovation may be initiated by a resolution adopted by the board of trustees of the district; and

WHEREAS the S&S Consolidated Independent School District’s most recent performance rating under Education Code 39.054 reflects at least acceptable performance.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees of S&S Consolidated Independent School District by adoption of this resolution initiates the process under Education Code Chapter 12A to become a district of innovation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that after this resolution is signed by the Board, a public hearing shall be held to consider whether the District should develop a local innovation plan for the designation of the District as a district of innovation and that after the public hearing the Board of Trustees of S&S Consolidated Independent School District shall appoint a committee to develop a local innovation plan or decline to pursue designation as a district of innovation.

Adopted this 17th day of October, 2016, by the Board of Trustees.

[Signatures]

Presiding Officer

Secretary
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<th>NAME</th>
<th>CAMPUS</th>
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<td>Roger Reed</td>
<td>S&amp;S CISD</td>
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<td>Lee Yeager</td>
<td>S&amp;S CISD</td>
<td>Director of Student Services</td>
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<td>Mark Youree</td>
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<td>Lance Johnson</td>
<td>S&amp;S MS</td>
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<td>Jenna Frye</td>
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<td>Dustin Wilson</td>
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<td>S&amp;S MS</td>
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<td>Annette Skupin</td>
<td>S&amp;S HS</td>
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