

Spur Independent School District

Proposed Local Innovation Plan

The 84th Texas Legislature passed House Bill 1842, which allows public school districts to declare exemptions from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code by becoming a designated District of Innovation. On Monday, January 23, 2017, during the regularly scheduled board meeting, a public hearing was conducted to consider whether Spur ISD should develop a plan for designation as a District of Innovation. The Spur ISD Board of Trustees unanimously passed a resolution to consider developing a Local Innovation Plan and they selected the district site-based committee to serve as the Local Innovation Committee. The committee researched, discussed, and developed the Local Innovation Plan that will later be posted and presented to the board for final approval.

Spur ISD Site-based and Local Innovation Committee

Loretta Velez, Superintendent
Dee Anne Bentancourt, Elementary Principal
Craig Hamilton, Secondary Principal
Lea Howell, Counselor
Danci Fulmer, Elementary Teacher
Marci Bateman, Elementary Teacher
Tee Hale, Elementary Teacher
Keri Miller, Secondary Teacher

Makenzie Hale, Secondary Teacher
Charles Fulmer, Secondary Teacher
Amy Tanner, Business
Lisa Barron, Business
Laura Adams, Parent
Cindy Adams, Parent
Kayla Bateman, Community
Lisa Paschall, Community

Spur ISD Board of Trustees

Barry Ferguson, President
Roy Sanchez, Vice-President
Katie Weiser, Secretary
Pat Ortiz, Member

Terri Wyatt, Member
Robert Van Meter, Member
Casey Smith, Member

Term and Implementation

The term for the Local Innovation Plan would be for five years unless terminated or amended by the Board of Trustees in accordance with Texas law. In the event Spur ISD feels other exemptions would benefit the district, the committee will follow all procedures for amending the plan and presenting it for approval of the Board of Trustees.

This innovation plan and specific implementation of the plan will be followed by the appropriate campuses and principals. Adjustments to Board Policy and other district policies will be researched, reviewed, and adopted by the Board of Trustees as needed.

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Texas Education Code Exemptions

In conjunction with the Local Innovation Committee district leadership staff reviewed the subchapters of the Texas Education Code to determine which permissible exemptions currently inhibit the district from maximizing the educational opportunities of the students who attend Spur ISD. Three were identified and detailed below:

1. School Start Date (EB LEGAL) (Ed. Code 25.0811)

Current Statute:

Students may not begin school before the 4th Monday of August.

In the past, there was a waiver that districts could apply for that would allow the school calendar start to be earlier to meet the needs of the local community. The waiver faced a lobbyist movement by many Texas tourism groups to have the practice ended, because it was detrimental to the Texas tourism business. The movement resulting in Legislatures taking away all waivers and setting the 4th Monday of August rule with no exceptions.

Proposed flexibility:

The flexibility of the start date will allow the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of the students and local community. Flexibility to start earlier in August would help our district plan balanced grading periods and plan semesters instructional time that would not hinder students possibility for success.

In addition, removing the uniform start date could allow flexibility to begin the first week of classes with a shortened week, easing the transition for students.

Plan:

To meet local and community needs, the plan would allow for the creation of balanced semesters in regards to instructional time.

1. Students will start school no earlier than the 3rd Monday of August.
2. Teachers will report for duty no earlier than the 2nd Monday of August.

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2. Length of School Day (TEC §25.081)

Current Statute:

State law currently requires that all school days must be 420 minutes long each day in order to count for ADA calculations and funding purposes, and to accumulate instructional minutes towards the 75,600 minutes required annually.

Proposed flexibility:

Exemption from the 420-minute day requirement would allow us the flexibility needed to alter the school day schedule on selected days whenever it was locally determined as necessary or beneficial to the district and its stakeholders. **While there is a waiver process available to request exemption from this requirement, the waiver is limited to a 6-day maximum number for the school year.

As long as the total minutes accumulated equals 75,600 minutes for the year, this exemption would give the district a significant amount of local control over scheduling (above and beyond the 6-day maximum as needed) without the fear of diminishing state funding or losing credit for instructional time that might cause the district to fall out of compliance with annual minute requirements. This would 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.

No intentions to shorten the school day on a regular basis, or without specific purpose. To the greatest extent possible, “early release” days would be planned ahead of time and noted in the district calendar approved by the Board of Trustees and published and continuously published using school media.

Plan:

The approved school calendar with limited earlier release days will be followed unless there is a locally justifiable reason for a change. If it is decided that an additional day is needed the following steps will be taken.

1. The dates of additional needed early release days not posted on the original school calendar will be publicized to all stakeholders as soon as the decision is made that the early release is locally necessary.
2. Information will be posted on school website, calendar, and on all school social media.

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3. Teacher Certification (TEC §21.003, §21.053 and §21.057)

Current Statute:

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.

Proposed flexibility:

The current state teacher certification requirements inhibit the District's ability to hire teachers to teach hard-to-fill, high demand, as well as career and technical courses. In order to serve Spur Students, decisions on certification will be handled on a local basis.

Plan:

1. 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.
2. Individual with experience in a CTE field 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 document that the person holds that would qualify them to teach the course. The superintendent would present this to the board for approval. Local teaching certificate would be for one year.
3. This would provide flexibility in our schedule and more class options for our students.