

SEALY INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

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DISTRICT OF INNOVATION PLAN

Sealy ISD is committed to ensuring all work done is conducted within these collaboratively established parameters:

We will base all decisions on what is best for students. We will not accept mediocrity from students or staff.
We will not limit our perspective of student success to the confines of standardized assessment results.
We will establish sustainable processes to guide our continuous development.
We will treat each person with dignity, value, and respect.

In accordance with these parameters, the SISD Board of Trustees has established the following goals:

- 1) Provide effective academic programming to positively impact student achievement.
- 2) Provide appropriate facilities to meet the needs of the school district.
- 3) Hire, retain, and develop highly effective personnel.
- 4) Provide effective and appropriate two-way communication.
- 5) Ensure the scope of student services effectively meet students' needs.

In order to best serve our stakeholders and effectively progress in our mission to create engaged students with a global perspective on opportunity, we have developed a five-year District of Innovation Plan. We believe that the plan as outlined will allow greater local consideration for factors that uniquely impact the students of Sealy ISD. It is the intent of the committee that the plan will be formally reviewed twice annually and will be considered for revision each year with the option to renew the plan comprehensively following the third year of implementation.

Approved by the District Advisory Team on 8/11/21

Approved by the Sealy ISD Board of Trustees on October 20, 2021.

TheDOI Plan is effective from the 2022-2023 school year through the 2026-2027 school year.

District & Campus Level Planning

TEC 11.252 & 11.253 state that each campus and district shall have an improvement plan developed, evaluated, and revised annually. Under this statute the campus and district improvement plans must include nine compliance components and the improvement planning committees must hold at least one public meeting each year.

SISD Goal Alignment

1) Provide effective academic programming to positively impact student achievement. 5) Ensure the scope of student services effectively meet students' needs.

Challenge Created by Current Statute

The nature of the components indicated in the standards references often make the campus and district improvement plans cumbersome compliance documents rather than workable guides for actionable goals.

Alternative Local Standard

The district has a history of collaboratively involving multiple stakeholders in the processes of annually assessing campus and district needs and establishing and monitoring short and long term goals. SISD will continue to move forward with our collaborative improvement plans being reflective of action-oriented tasks and measurable goals. The documents, however, will no longer restrict and overburden the content of the plans to encompass the previously included items relative only to compliance rather than relevant actions aimed at progress toward established goals.

First Day of Instruction

TEC 25.0811 states that a school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August.

SISD Goal Alignment

1) Provide effective academic programming to positively impact student achievement.

Challenge Created by Current Statute

The restriction for a late August start date inhibits the ability of the district to annually build an academic calendar that supports local goals of balancing grading cycles, embedding frequent professional learning opportunities for faculty and staff, maximizing instructional days prior to administration of standardized assessments, and promoting participation in community and county wide events.

Local Alternative Standard

SISD will continue collaborative local processes to annually create an academic calendar that aligns with the goals of balancing academic grading periods, considers local community and county events that impact student attendance, and includes regular professional learning opportunities for district personnel. SISD district leadership will set a start date [first day of instruction] for students that best meet the learning needs and priorities of the district.

Probationary Contracts

TEC 21.102 (b) states that a probationary contract may not be for a term exceeding one school year and may be renewed for a maximum permissible probationary period of three school years for teachers new to the profession. Additionally, for a person who has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment by the district, the probationary period may not exceed one year.

SISD Goal Alignment

3) Hire, retain, and develop highly effective personnel.

Challenge Created by Current Statute

There are times when teachers' probationary programs have not sufficiently prepared them for success in the classroom and/or when their experiences in other districts have not equipped them for the level of performance expected by Sealy ISD. In these cases, the limit on the probationary period often forces the district to non-renew probationary contracts as opposed to offering term contracts for teachers who need a longer probationary period for further development.

Alternative Local Standard

The district will continue to invest heavily in orientation and development of teachers new to the profession and those new to the district. In Sealy ISD, an individual new to the profession will have up to a four year probationary period and an individual new to the district, (but not to the profession) will have up to a two year probationary period in the district. This allows the district to extend the opportunity for teachers to demonstrate the level of mastery expected by Sealy ISD. This will assist the district in retaining teachers in whom the district has invested valuable time and resources. It does not, however, require an extended probationary period. Campus and district administrators will retain the option to make annual employment decisions based on teacher proficiency and potential.

Teacher Certification

TEC 21.003, 21.053, and 21.057 state that: a person may not be employed as a teacher by a school district unless the person holds the appropriate certificate or permit 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, a district may request emergency certification from the Texas Education Agency; a teacher must present his or her certificate to the district before their employment contract will be binding, and prohibits the district from paying an educator as a teacher if the educator does not hold a valid certificate at the time; the district is required to submit to the commissioner the names, qualifications, and teaching assignments for anyone issued a local teaching permit. The commissioner reviews the submission and sends an approval determination to the district within thirty days of the district's submission; the district is required to submit written notice to parents if an inappropriately certified teacher is assigned to a classroom for more than thirty consecutive instructional days.

SISD Goal Alignment

3) Hire, retain, and develop highly effective personnel.

Challenge Created by Current Statute

The indicated statutes do not take into account the unique financial and instructional needs of Sealy ISD. While Sealy ISD strives to offer a market competitive salary for teachers, it is not within the district's means to lead the scale of competitive salaries which lends to creative ways to recruit highly effective personnel. Additionally, Sealy ISD strives to offer freedom and flexibility to teachers in creative ways including but not limited to the opportunity to teach courses that they are passionate about and align with student interests and strengths. This, however, may not always align with the teacher's area of certification and primary teaching assignment. Additionally, Sealy ISD values and seeks individuals with industry expertise and experience and casts a broad net with teacher recruitment beyond Texas, yet this is hindered by the statute's failure to acknowledge the validity of out-of-state teaching certifications.

Alternative Local Standard

The district will maintain high standards for teacher qualification and will make every attempt to hire individuals with appropriate certifications for the positions available in Sealy ISD. However, the district will have the flexibility to hire individuals who are knowledgeable in the subject area and equipped to effectively perform the duties of the position. Positions most likely to be filled with locally certified personnel include, but are not limited to, Career and Technology, and Languages Other Than English, ~~and Bilingual Education~~. Teachers with industry experience, out-of-state certifications, and native languages other than English with qualified education and experience could be eligible to be employed as a teacher in Sealy ISD pending local certification requirements. Additionally, teachers may be granted opportunities to teach courses outside of their standard certification area to teach to their passions and fulfill student interests. The district will continue to require non-certified individuals to pursue applicable certifications. Teachers with out-of-state certifications will be required to maintain a valid teaching certificate. The district will maintain records on all teachers employed under local teaching permits for review upon request. The district will also include a public awareness statement for the district at large in all parent and student handbooks indicating the potential employment of non-certified personnel. Employees' credentials will continue to be available upon review through traditional processes under the Public Information Act.

Note: Bilingual Education cannot be exempted from certification according to DOI rules.

Minimum Attendance for Class Credit

TEC 25.092 states that a student in any grade level from kindergarten through grade 12 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.

SISD Goal Alignment

5) Ensure the scope of student services effectively meet students' needs.

Challenge Created by Current Statute

Students in hardship situations requiring them to maintain regular employment to contribute to family household income are often unable to maintain the 90% attendance requirement at school.

Additionally, students in specialized academic programs resulting from health and/or behavioral needs are not able to be appropriately accommodated in accordance with their unique needs and specialized academic program. This requirement at times also is a challenge for students involved in multiple extracurricular activities.

Alternative Local Standard

The district will continue to maintain high standards for student attendance. However, through the allowances of the Local District of Innovation Plan, the district will work to create a true alternative learning center for students in hardship needing greater flexibility with school attendance and completion of coursework through alternative methods of delivery and flexible pacing. Additionally, administrative discretion and consensus will be relevant to determinations regarding attendance requirements for students with unique personal circumstances, challenges, and academic programming needs. Requirements for earning credit outside of the minimum attendance requirement will be developed locally to include demonstration of mastery of course content.

Minimum Minutes of Instruction

TEC 25.081 states that a “day” of instruction means 420 minutes of instruction while requiring at least 75,600 minutes of instruction annually.

SISD Goal Alignment

5) Ensure the scope of student services effectively meets students’ needs.

Challenge Created by Current Statute

The requirement for a “day” of instruction to be no less than 420 minutes limits the ability of the district to provide true alternative learning options for students based upon individual needs and circumstances including hardship, health, and functional abilities.

Local Alternative Standard

The district will develop true alternative learning programs and options which may include variance in the length of students’ instructional day and actual “seat-time” contact hours based upon academic program, age, health, ability, personal circumstances, hardship, and level of functioning in the traditional educational setting. The flexibility could also have the added benefit of allowing for the possibility of an altered length for the school day, for example a later start or early dismissal, to accommodate professional learning or collaboration opportunities for teachers and staff.

Planning and Preparation Time

TEC 21.404 states that a district must ensure 450 minutes within each two-week period for instructional preparation. A planning and preparation period may not be less than 45 minutes. During this time a classroom teacher may not be required to participate in any other activity.

SISD Goal Alignment

3) Hire, retain, and develop highly effective personnel.

Challenge Created by Current Statute

By prohibiting a district from requiring teachers to participate in professional learning activities and team workshops during their planning and preparation period, it requires such activities to be scheduled before and after school and on the limited and less frequent workdays available throughout the school year which often results in teachers working extended hours and/or having their "workdays" over scheduled with required meetings. Additionally, it often is not possible to coordinate full-team involvement in professional learning conversations that take place outside of the traditional workday as many are involved in coaching and sponsorship of extracurricular activities and/or have personal and family obligations outside of the standard work day.

Local Alternative Standard

Sealy ISD believes in progressively developing the capacities of all employees to ensure professional learning conversations are effective and a valuable use of teachers' time. As such, the process of developing the capacity to host effective PLC's will begin with administrators and teacher leaders, and gradually be implemented to involve full teaching teams with increased frequency over time. All SISD teachers will be expected to participate in PLC workshops and/or coaching sessions.

District Offering of Alternative Uniform Group Health Coverage in Addition to TRS-Activecare

[No longer an allowed provision within a DOI for a district per SB 1444. This provision was part of the DOI plan originally approved for renewal by the DAT on August 11, 2021 which occurred prior to being made aware of the new law.]

Challenge Created by Current Statute

~~TEC §22.004 (i) states that a school district may not make group health coverage available to its employees pursuant to TEC 22.004(b) after the date a District implements the program of coverages provided under Chapter 1579 of the Texas Insurance Code. The current process allows no flexibility in the design of group health insurance benefits to fit the needs of all Sealy ISD employees. This provision also prohibits the District from procuring group health insurance benefits that may provide better coverages for its employees and at a lower cost. This provision is in direct contradiction to the wishes of the local Board of Trustees who represent community interests in this matter.~~

~~Texas Education Code 22.004 is not in any of the prohibited exemptions that can be included in a District's local innovation plan pursuant to Texas Education Code 12A.004 and the list of the Commissioner's prohibited exemptions in Texas Administrative Code Title 19, Chapter 102, subchapter JJ, Section 102.1309.~~

Alternative Local Standard

~~The District will allow for the increased local control of the group health benefits plan by offering supplemental uniform group health coverage plans to its employees in addition to TRS-Activecare. This is critical to allow the District to be responsive to employee and community needs. This is an exemption from TEC §22.004(i).~~

~~Related Board Policies: Sealy ISD CRD (LEGAL) and CRD (LOCAL)~~