



## **District of Innovation Plan**

## **Introduction:**

House Bill 1842, passed in 2015 in the 84th Session of the Texas Legislature, partly amended Chapter 12A of the Texas Education Code (TEC) to create Districts of Innovation (DOI). The designation allows school districts to be exempt from certain sections of the TEC, providing more flexibility and control in meeting the needs of students and the communities served locally. DOI districts are also better positioned to be innovative and forward-thinking while continuing to comply with the state's fiscal, instructional, and academic accountability requirements.

In January 2019, the Savoy ISD Board of Trustees appointed a DOI committee to represent teachers, parents, and administration. The committee's goal was that Savoy ISD will achieve the flexibility to exercise more creative local control over existing programs without some statutory constraints. On May 13, 2019, the Savoy ISD Board of trustees formally approved the final draft of the DOI plan submitted and approved previously by the DOI committee. Savoy ISD sent it to the Texas Commissioner of Education for formal notification of the plan being adopted on May 17, 2019.

To maintain its DOI designation, Savoy ISD must review and update its DOI plan every five years.

To begin the renewal process and update its DOI plan, the district held a regular meeting on March 7, 2024, of the Savoy ISD Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees voted unanimously to initiate the process of renewing the District's DOI designation and designated the district-Level District of Innovation Committee, which includes teachers, administrators, parents, and community members, as the committee to develop the DOI plan.

The DOI Committee met on March 26, 2024 to begin the renewal process of the DOI plan. On April 9, 2024 the DOI Committee held a public open meeting. The DOI Committee members voted on the approval of the final DOI renewal plan. The DOI plan was posted on the District's website after the final vote. Savoy notified the commissioner of its intentions to renew the DOI plan. The plan was presented to the Savoy ISD Board of Trustees for approval at its May 9, 2024, meeting. The District also notified the commissioner as required by Chapter 12A. The Board approved the DOI Plan by a unanimous vote, and the DOI Plan will be in place for five years.

The District of Innovation Committee may amend the plan at any time with the school board's approval. The implemented plan supports the mission and vision of the Savoy ISD Board of Trustees.

## **District of Innovation Committee Members:**

Samuel Talley, Acting Superintendent/High School Principal/Parent

Danny Henderson, Elementary Principal

Rapee Sritairat, Technology Director/Community Member

Stephanie Buchanan, Counselor

Julie Grant, Teacher

Laurie Cutler, Teacher/Community Member

Donna Leach, Administrative Assistant/Community Member

Jennifer Vance, 504/ESL/Dyslexia Coordinator/ Community Member

Leslie Hill, Parent/Community Member

Chris Hiegert, Parent/Community Member

Morgan Polk, Parent/Community Member

## **District of Innovation Renewal Timeline:**

- |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>March 7, 2024</b>  | Savoy ISD Board of Trustees voted unanimously to initiate the process of renewing the District's DOI designation and designated the District-Level DOI Committee  |
| <b>March 26, 2024</b> | DOI Committee met and began the renewal process of the proposed DOI Plan  |
| <b>April 9, 2024</b>  | The DOI Committee holds a public open meeting. The DOI Committee members voted on the approval of the final DOI renewal plan. DOI plan posted on the District's website after final vote. Notified the commissioner of its intentions to renew the DOI plan |
| <b>May 9, 2024</b>    | The Final DOI renewal plan is presented to the Savoy ISD Board of Trustees for approval and received an approval through unanimous vote. The District notified the commissioner as required by Chapter 12A. The DOI Plan will be in place for five years.   |

## Innovations:

<b>Transfer Students</b>	
Texas Education Code §25.036 allows school districts to accept transfer students on an annual basis when both the receiving district and the student applicant's parent or guardian approve the transfer in writing.	
Benefit of Exemption	Because transfers granted under this provision are for one school year, school districts are prohibited from revoking the transfers during the school year. Exemption from this requirement will allow the District to revoke transfers granted under this provision when students fail to comply with the District's Student Code of Conduct, or their attendance drops below 90%.
Local Innovation	The District will have the ability to revoke a transfer granted under this provision if the student violates the District's Student Code of Conduct and is expelled, placed in a disciplinary alternative education program, or in or out of school suspension, or when the student's attendance falls below the TEA 90% attendance standard. Savoy 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.

<b>Teacher Contracts</b>	
Texas Education Code §21.102(b) prohibits a school district from giving a probationary employment contract for more than one school year to a teacher who has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment in a school district.	
Benefit of Exemption	Exemption from this requirement will allow the District to give probationary contracts for more than one year to teachers who have previously worked in public education for five of the last eight years, giving the District additional time to determine if the teacher's performance merits a term employment contract.
Local Innovation	Campus administrators and hiring officials will have the option to issue a probationary contract for a period of up to three years to fully assess a teacher's job performance, as well as time to provide additional support and training to a teacher before deciding if the teacher should receive a term employment contract.

<b>Teacher Workdays</b>	
Texas Education Code §21.401(b) requires that employment contracts for educators be for a minimum of 10 months and provide for a minimum of 187 days of service.	
Benefit of Exemption	Exemption from the 187-day service requirement will give the District more flexibility in setting educator work schedules.
Local Innovation	The District will continue to provide ten-month contracts to educators, but without the 187 days of service requirement.

<b>Teacher Certification</b>	
Texas Education Code §21.003 prohibits school districts from employing a teacher, teacher intern, teacher trainee, librarian, educational aide, administrator, educational diagnostician, or school counselor unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit.	
Benefit of Exemption	Exemption from this requirement will provide the District the flexibility to hire the most qualified candidates for teaching positions. More flexibility in hiring individuals who have content-specific knowledge but do not have a teaching certification will allow the District to hire individuals who best meet the needs of the students and who are able to provide the content knowledge students need to enter an increasingly innovative world. Additionally, it will allow the District to utilize a certified teacher to provide instruction in classes outside of their content area or grade span.
Local Innovation	<p>The District's priority is to continue to hire certified staff. However, lack of certification will not exclude an applicant who can demonstrate the skills necessary to teach students the content in courses and subjects that are difficult to fill or that are in high demand. This innovation has the potential to also enrich applicant pools in specialized CTE course offerings and afford more students the opportunity to take courses if state certified teachers are not available to teach those courses.</p> <p>Possible qualification criteria might include, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Professional work experience.</li> <li>● Formal training/education in content area.</li> <li>● Active/relevant professional industry certification.</li> <li>● A combination of work experience, training, and education.</li> <li>● Demonstration of successful experience working with students.</li> </ul> <p>Teachers assigned to a core subject will have 2 years to hold the appropriate core subject certificate.</p>

<b>Parent Notification</b>	
Texas Education Code §21.057 If a district assigns an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher to the same classroom for more than thirty consecutive instructional days during the same school year, it shall provide written notice of the assignment to the parents or guardians of each student in that classroom.	
Benefit of Exemption	Savoy ISD District of Innovation Plan will ensure teachers demonstrate the skills necessary to teach students the content.
Local Innovation	Parental notification will be provided if a teacher does not otherwise qualify to teach accordance with Savoy ISD's District of Innovation Plan.

<b>First Day of Instruction and Last Day of School</b>	
Texas Education Code §§25.0811 & 25.0812 prohibit school districts from beginning instruction for students prior to the fourth Monday in August and from ending school before May 15, respectively.	
Benefit of Exemption	Exemption from these provisions gives the District more flexibility to determine school start and end dates that best meet the needs of the SISD community.
Local Innovation	The District has a robust school calendar development process. Having flexibility in the process will give stakeholders more options to consider. The superintendent will continue to make a calendar recommendation to the Board of Trustees, who have the ultimate approval of the school calendar.

<b>Minutes of Instruction</b>	
Texas Education Code §25.081 requires school districts to operate (i.e., provide instruction to students) at least 75,600 minutes each school year and gives the commissioner the authority to grant exceptions in the event of disasters and other types of emergencies. If the commissioner does not grant an exception, schools must add minutes to meet the time requirement.	
Benefit of Exemption	Exemption from this provision eliminates the possibility of the commissioner not approving a request by the District to reduce the number of required minutes of instruction in the event of a weather or other type of disaster that could impact the ability of students to attend school. It will give the District, through its Board of Trustees, in non-disaster situations, the authority to determine the number of minutes of instructional time that best meets the needs of its schools, students, their families, and staff.
Local Innovation	The District will determine the needs of its campuses in setting the amount of required instructional time. Having flexibility will give the District options to alter the length of school days, modify school start and stop times, and allow for early or late release based on the needs of the District and/or the needs of individual schools or programs. This flexibility will also give teachers time to learn from one another, make instructional decisions based on student data, build in regular time for parent conferences, and give the District discretion to determine if it is necessary to makeup instructional minutes lost due to a disaster or other event resulting in loss of instructional minutes.

<b>K-4 Class Size</b>	
Texas Education Code §25.112 and §25.113 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 completes a waiver with the Texas Education Agency. These waivers are approved by TEA. Along with this 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.	
Benefit of Exemption	This gives Savoy ISD the flexibility of waivers within the Texas Education Agency.
Local Innovation	Savoy ISD will continue to follow current practices and keep all K-4th core classrooms to a 22:1 ratio. However, in the event the class size exceeds this ratio, the superintendent will report to the Board of Trustees. In the event a K-4th core classroom reaches 22:1, the campus will notify the parents of the students in the classroom and inform them of the situation. A TEA waiver will not be necessary when a K-4th classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio.

**Local School Health Advisory Council and Health Education Instruction**

Texas Education Code §28.004 requires the SHAC to meet four times annually.

Benefit of Exemption	In a small district, the same staff members are required to sit on several different committees thus limiting their ability to effectively serve on those that meet at the same time, or require several meetings throughout the year. Additionally, the members of the SHAC will have a much more intimate relationship with the needs and goals of this committee due to the small number of students it serves, thus not requiring four meetings throughout the year to update its plan and vision.
----------------------	--

Local Innovation	The District takes exemption from the requirement to hold a minimum of 4 meetings per year. The committee shall meet at least once a year.
------------------	--

**Bank Depository Contract**

Texas Education Code §45.205, §45.206 require each district to renew its depository contract every two years. The two-year contract term begins and ends in odd-numbered years. In accordance with the Texas Education Code the school district must use a uniform bid or proposal blank in the form prescribed by the State Board of Education.

Benefit of Exemption	This exemption lessens the administrative burden related to preparing and reviewing a Request for Proposal (RFP) when there are a limited number of banking institutions available to bid on the district's business.
----------------------	---

Local Innovation	This exception is to allow the district's banking contract to be extended beyond the allowable contract term if the district determines contract-pricing remains competitive and there is no operational or financial reason to send the district's banking services out for bid.
------------------	---

**Professional Development/Mentor Teacher**

Texas Education Code §21.451, §21.458 dictates staff development requirements for educators. These requirements impede the District's ability to provide timely professional development to employees based on newly emerging issues, data, and student needs. TEC 21.458 sets eligibility requirements for teacher mentors and mentees.

Benefit of Exemption	The District needs the flexibility to assign mentors to more experienced teachers in need of assistance. The statute also sets eligibility requirements for mentor teachers, which limits the available pool of mentor teachers.
----------------------	--

Local Innovation	Savoy ISD will exercise local discretion in determining the areas of need, content, duration, and frequency for professional development for its instructional and non-instructional staff. The District will exercise local discretion in assigning teachers to serve as mentors based on a variety of factors, including experience, knowledge, and areas of instruction targeted for improvement or innovation.
------------------	--

<b>District-level Site-based Decision-Making Committee Decisions</b>	
Texas Education Code §11.252 and §11.251 states each school district shall have a district improvement plan that is developed, evaluated, and revised annually, in accordance with district policy, by the superintendent with the assistance of the district-level committee established under Section 11.251.	
Benefit of Exemption	The original intent of the site-based decision-making has been replaced with a list of compliance measures that have removed meaning and relevance from this district decision-making process. The requirements in content and format of the district improvement plan have shifted an otherwise important planning process into a bureaucratic process that detracts from the importance of thoughtful planning and implementation.
Local Innovation	Under the Savoy ISD District of Innovation Plan, the prescriptive list of requirements in the district improvement plan will be replaced by the Strategic Planning process. Those items listed in TEC 11.251 detailing the selection of representatives for the District Improvement Committee will continue to be implemented. Those items listed in TEC 11.252 of a compliance nature will no longer be implemented.

<b>90 Percent Attendance Rule</b>	
Texas Education Code §25.092 state law currently requires students attend class 90 percent of the school days on a district calendar to earn credit. The law requires districts to award class credit to students based on the time a student is present in a classroom for instruction, rather than mastery of content and subject proficiency.	
Benefit of Exemption	The 90 percent rule means school districts award credit based on seat time rather than based on content mastery. Flexibility in the abstaining from the requirement means the district won't have to penalize students who miss class due to enriching activities, academic activities, or other extenuating circumstances. To create future and job market ready students and learners, SISD would like to investigate the option to provide students credit for courses based on mastery of content and TEKS, not the amount of time the student spends in the classroom.
Local Innovation	This exemption would allow the district to provide innovative options to promote student engagement in course material in flexible ways, ultimately this would be allowing learning to happen any time, any place, apart from the traditional way of delivering instruction. Our students attain valuable and meaningful learning from extra/co-curricular activities and experiences that currently count against the student's 90% attendance availability if a student has to miss part of the traditional school day. Relief from Section 25.092 does not in any way impact or alter existing compulsory attendance requirements or University Interscholastic League ("UIL") rules. Moreover, 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.