

SAVOY I.S.D.
District of Innovation Plan
2019-2024



Introduction:

The 84th Texas Legislature passed House Bill 1842 in the spring of 2015, providing public school districts the opportunity to become Districts of Innovation. To qualify, an eligible school district must adopt a five-year innovation plan according to the Texas Education Code. Districts of Innovation may be exempt from certain

state statutes in order to take greater local control in decisions concerning the education and instructional models for students and have increased autonomy from state mandates that govern programming: and empower Savoy ISD to innovate and plan creatively in a manner specifically designed for the best needs of our students.

- The Savoy ISD Board of Trustees resolved in January 2018 to seek designation as a District of Innovation.
- This plan supports exemplary practices and local decision-making processes to improve student learning.
- The board appointed a District of Innovation Committee in January 2019 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 and that Savoy ISD will use have the flexibility to use creative and innovative strategies in the future to provide increased opportunities for student and staff success.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Brian Neal, Superintendent/Parent

Mike Smith, High School Principal

Tammy Smith, High School Assistant Principal

Korey Kennedy, Elementary Principal/Parent

Jennifer Green, Counselor/Parent

Rapee Sritairat, Director of Technology/Parent

Chad Tallon, Teacher/Parent

Julie Grant, Teacher

Barby Popowski , Staff/Parent

Connie Garcia, Parent

District of Innovation Timeline

January 07, 2019 District Advisory Committee submitted petition to the board of trustees to develop a District of Innovation Plan

January 14, 2019 Board of Trustees held a public hearing in

accordance with the statute

January 14, 2019	Board of Trustees appointed a committee to Develop a local innovation plan
February 06, 2019	District of Innovation committee held initial Meeting
February 11, 2019	District of Innovation committee met to review first draft of plan
March 20, 2019	District of Innovation committee sent updated draft of plan for review
April 1, 2019	Draft to District DOI committee for final review
April 4, 2019	Post proposed plan on the district's website for 30 days for staff, parent, and community review
April 4, 2019	Public Meeting on near final plan
May 08, 2019	Notified Texas Commissioner of Education of intention to vote on adoption of proposed plan
May 13, 2019	Board of Trustees formally approved the innovation plan
May 17, 2019	Formal notification to Texas Commissioner of Education that plan is adopted

As a result of this plan, Savoy ISD will apply the following innovative guidelines to the instructional needs of its students and staff.

Innovations

1. Teacher Certification

(DK Legal, DK local, DK Exhibit) (TEC §21.003)

Current Law

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 TEA. TEA then approves or denies this request. In certain circumstances, a district can use a local one-year permit.

Proposed

In order to best serve Savoy ISD 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 field. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials the certified teacher possesses in which would qualify this individual to teach this subject.
- b. Individuals with experience and/or expertise in CTE, Languages other than English, and fine arts could be eligible to teach a vocational skills, language courses or fine arts courses 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 he/she feels the individual could be an asset to the 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.

2. Teacher Probationary Contracts

(DCA Legal) (TEC §21.102,)

Current Law

Under current guidelines, probationary periods for newly hired teachers who have been in public education for at least five of the previous eight years cannot exceed one year. This limited period is insufficient in some cases to fully determine the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom.

Proposed

Relief from Texas Education Code 21.102 will permit the District the option to issue a probationary contract for a period of up to three years for experienced teachers, counselors or nurses newly hired in the Savoy ISD. This will allow for better evaluation and teacher effectiveness. These teachers will be evaluated annually.

3. Professional Development/Mentor Teacher

(TEC §21.451) (TEC §21.458)

Current Law

TEC 21.451 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. This provision states that the district may only assign a mentor to a teacher with less than two years of teaching experience, despite the fact that a teacher at any level of experience may benefit from a mentor-mentee relationship. 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.

Proposed

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.

4. Inter-District Transfer Students

(TEC § 25.036)

Current Law

Under Texas Education Code 25.001, a district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district. Under TEC 25.036, a transfer is interpreted to be for a period of one school year.

Proposed

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. Transfer students are expected to follow the attendance requirements, rules and regulations of the District. TEC 25.036 has been interpreted to establish the acceptance of a transfer as a one-year commitment by the District. The District is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one-year commitment in accepting transfer applicants. On rare occasions, student behavior warrants suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion. In addition, student attendance may fall below the TEA truancy standard. In these rare cases, Savoy ISD seeks exemption from the one year transfer commitment.

5. School Start Date

(EB Legal) (TEC §25.0811)

Current Law

State law currently prohibits school districts from starting class before the fourth Monday in August, unless they are year-round districts.

Proposed

To develop a calendar that fits the needs of the community of Savoy. We have developed a calendar that we feel meets the students, community, and staff needs.

- a. Students will begin no earlier than the 2nd Monday of August.
- b. This start date will provide more educational days prior to state testing.
- c. This will allow the first and second semesters to be somewhat equal in the number of days of instruction.
- d. The goal is to improve the district attendance rate and student success through the flexibility in the calendar.

6. Class Size in Kindergarten through 4th Grade

(EB Legal) (TEC §25.111, 25.112, 25.113)

Current Law

Kindergarten-4th Grade classes are to be kept at a 22:1 student: teacher ratio according to state law. When a class exceeds this limit, the district must complete a waiver with TEA.

Along with this waiver, it is required that a letter informing parents of the waiver be sent home with each child that is in a section that exceeds 22:1 ratio.

Proposed

While we certainly believe that small class size plays a positive role in the classroom, we do not believe it has a negative effect when you only add one or two more students. Many times it is not the number of the students but the makeup and chemistry of the classroom which influences the learning environment.

- a. Savoy ISD will attempt to keep all K-4th core classrooms to a 22:1 ratio or below. However, in the event the class size exceeds this ratio, the superintendent will report to the Board of Trustees.
- b. In the event a K-4th core classroom reaches 24:1, the campus will notify the parents of the students in the classroom and inform them of the situation.
- c. A TEA waiver will not be necessary when a K-4th classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio.
- d. This gives Savoy ISD the flexibility without having to file the waivers with TEA.

7. Local School Health Advisory Council and Health Education Instruction

(FFA Local) (TEC § 28.004)

Current Law- Sec. 28.004 (d) 1 of this code requires the SHAC to meet four times annually.

Proposed

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. Innovation Strategies: a. The District takes exemption from the requirement to hold a minimum of 4 meetings per year under Sec. 28.004(d-1) The committee shall meet at least once each year. Rationale: As a small district committee members are intimately aware of the needs of the District's students and are often able to review and revise the District's plan in a single meeting. This should be a matter for the local board of trustees and the committee members to determine how often they need to meet to meet the district's needs.

8. Minimum Attendance for Class Credit (90% Attendance Rule)

(TEC §25.092)

Current Law

TEC §25.092 declares 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.

Proposed Innovation

Savoy ISD believes 90% is an arbitrary percentage emphasizing "seat time" over content mastery. By claiming exemption from Sec. 25.092, the district can abstain from penalizing students who miss class time due to extra- and co-curricular activities, academic activities, and/or other extenuating circumstances enabling the district to accommodate students with

legitimate scheduling conflicts while reducing dropouts and increasing the number of qualifying graduates. Note that relief from Sec. 25.092 does not in any way impact or alter existing compulsory attendance requirements or University Interscholastic League (UIL) rules. Furthermore, in no way does this exemption limit a teacher's right to determine the finality of a grade in accordance with Texas Education Code Sec. 28.214 nor does it restrict or alter a teacher's right to assign grades in accordance with Texas Education Code Sec. 28.216. Regardless of whether any adjustments or changes are made to the minimum attendance for class credit or final grade laws, Savoy ISD believes this issue to be a local, individualized decision as opposed to a state mandate.

9. Reduce Teacher Contract Days Without Reducing Pay

(DCB Legal, DCB Local) (Education Code 21.401)

Current Law

Current education law located in Chapter 21 defines a teacher contract as a ten-month contract equivalent to 187 days.

Proposed

This proposal reduces teacher contract days with no effect on teacher salaries. The exact number of days will be set each year by the calendar committee. The number of teacher contract days will be no greater than 187 and no lower than 182. This will allow for better alignment between teacher contract days and the 75,600 minutes required of students.

- a. This proposal will increase the daily rate the district pays teachers.
- b. This proposal should enhance teacher recruitment, therefore putting the district on a more level playing field with other districts.
- c. This proposal will significantly improve teacher morale.
- d. This proposal will provide teachers more opportunities during the summer months to seek out beneficial staff development that relates to their field.

10. BANK DEPOSITORY CONTRACT

(BDAE LEGAL)(Ed. Code 45.205, 45.206)

Current Law:

Currently, each district must 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.

Proposed

This exception is to allow the district 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. 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.

11. Length of School Day (Early Release/Late Arrival)

(TEC §25.082)

Current Law

Texas Education Code Section 25.082(a) states that a school day shall be at least seven hours (420 minutes) each day, including intermissions and recesses.

Proposed

Exemption from Section 25.082(a) would allow for early release days creating much-needed time for teacher professional development and collaborative planning that directly support first line instruction. Flexibility with early release schedules allows the district to accommodate these essential professional learning and preparation times as well as allows for occasional late arrival flexibilities caused by inclement weather and other unforeseen circumstances where the district decides it is safer for children to arrive later on a case by case basis. The district will still attain at least 75.600 minutes total for the school year.

12. District-level Site-based Decision Making Committee Decisions.

(BQ Legal, BQ Local, BQA Legal, BQA Local, BQB Legal, BQB Local) (TEC §11.252)

Current Law

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.

Proposed

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

13. College Visit Absences.

(TEC §25.087 b-2)

Current Law

A school district may excuse a student from attending school to visit an institution of higher education accredited by a generally recognized accrediting organization for a maximum of two days during the student's junior and two days during their senior year of high school for the purpose of determining the student's interest in attending the institution of higher education.

Proposed

Savoy ISD recognizes the importance of the college selection process in our student's futures. Many of our students apply to five or more colleges, some out of state. More than two days are needed by many students. This innovation allows the counselor/administrator to decide on a case by case basis for extending more days when needed.

14. Teacher and Principal Evaluation

(DNA Legal, DNA Local) (TEC §21.203, 21.352, 21.354, 21.3541)

Current Law

The State of Texas began using a new appraisal system in 2016-2017, the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS). Districts currently have the option to only formally appraise teachers once every five school years. Savoy ISD teachers on term contracts are formally evaluated at least once every three years. Teachers on probationary contracts are evaluated every year. Principals are evaluated annually on a local developed plan.

Proposed

A committee of administrators and teachers would have the option to develop a teacher evaluation system that would combine T-TESS with other best practices that would best fit the needs and goals of Savoy ISD.

- a. Savoy ISD will create and utilize a locally developed teacher and principal evaluation tool.
- b. This instrument will be developed with input from central administration, and teachers. It will use staff input, T-TESS, T-PESS, and any other relevant best practices.
- c. Campus's teachers must be formally evaluated at least every third year.
- d. All teachers will have an annual summative conference to discuss the year and to set personal goals and staff development plan for the coming year.
- e. Principals will continue to be evaluated annually with locally developed instrument.
- f. These locally developed plans should reflect the strengths, areas of concern, and goals for Savoy ISD.