

May ISD

District of Innovation Plan

Start Date August 2017-August 2022

Authority and Background

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, February 20th, 2017, during a special called board meeting, May ISD Board of Trustees unanimously passed a resolution allowing a May ISD to pursue developing a Local Innovation Plan. A public hearing was conducted the same day for discussion on the topic. The board of trustees appointed an 8-person Local Innovation Committee to research, discuss and develop a Local Innovation Plan.

The committee met on March 1, 2017 and March 7, 2017 to review, discuss, and develop the innovation plan. The plan was posted online for public viewing and feedback on March 24, 2017. The final version of the plan was referred to the District Site Base Committee for a final vote. The District Advisory Committee held its meeting on April 25, 2017 and voted to approve the plan with 14 votes for and 1 vote against. With a majority of committee members voting in the affirmative, the plan moved on for final vote of the May ISD Board of Trustees. On March 26, 2017 the Board of Trustees reviewed and approved the plan with 7 votes for and 0 votes against.

May ISD Vision-Mission-Core Beliefs-Goals-Objectives

May ISD will challenge students in an educational environment designed to inspire excellence, create thought, maximize potential, instill responsible behaviors and attitudes while embracing and fostering the belief that all students can be successful in their quest of a post-secondary education or career path.

Texas Education Code Exemptions

The Innovation Committee 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 May ISD. The committee believes that these exemptions will offer much needed flexibility for the District:

1. Uniform Start Date (Ed. Code 25.0811)

Current Law

Students are prohibited from starting school before the 4th Monday of August. For many years, this was strictly a local decision. Districts had the option to apply for a waiver to start earlier, but the legislature took away all waivers and dictated that districts may not begin until the 4th Monday, with no exception. Charter schools are not subject to the 4th Monday of August requirement and may schedule an earlier first school day.

Rationale for Exemption

The flexibility of the start date allows the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of the students, the school, and the community. Benefits to this exemption include but are not limited to:

- Aligning school start date to accommodate college start dates for dual credit students
- Starting school mid-week in order to aid in the transition to school for students. This provides a natural break after establishing routines, procedures, and expectations before introducing rigorous academic based lessons for students transitioning to their respective campus.
- Providing a better opportunity to balance the number of days in each semester.
- Providing more instructional and accelerated instruction days prior to State mandated tests.
- Providing ongoing professional development for staff. Currently we must have most of our professional development at the beginning of the school year with less time for ongoing training during the school year.

Assurances

May ISD will not start school prior to the second Monday in August

2. Length of School Day (25.082 Subsection A)

Current Law

State law currently requires that all school days must be 420 minutes (7 hours) long each day in order to count for ADA calculations and funding purpose, and to accumulate instructional minutes toward the 75,600 minutes required annually.

Rationale for Exemption

Exemption from the 420-minute (7 hours) day requirement would allow May ISD the flexibility needed to alter the school day schedule on selected days, whenever locally determined 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. Exempting completely from

the 420-minute requirement 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 our teachers to analyze student data and engage in targeted, relevant professional development. Benefits of this exemption would include but not be limited to:

- Allowing flexibility to schedule “innovation” or “flex” days into the school calendar. Examples would include days for intensive accelerated instruction for identified students, preparation days for staff, data analysis days, ongoing professional development days for staff or a combination of each.
- The District would be able to be more strategic in its approach to learning styles and learning environments.
- More “out of the box” conversations among staff because restrictions have been lifted
- More preparation time is a challenge for every teacher. Allowing teachers to more frequently “sharpen the axe before cutting the wood” might allow for more high quality lessons and improved classroom management.

Assurances

May ISD does not have any 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, which is approved by the Board of Trustees, published, and distributed to stakeholders in advance of the school year and continuously published using school media. May ISD will stay inside the state minimum number of minutes (75,600) required for funding for the year.

3. Teacher Certification

(Ed. Codes 21.003, 21.053)

Current Law

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. With various stipulations a district can issue a district teaching certificate that is subject to approval from the commissioner. 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. State law also requires a district to notify parents within 30 days when a non-certified teacher is assigned to a class for 30 consecutive instructional days.

Rationale for Exemption

Generally and in certain circumstances this system is unnecessarily restrictive and burdensome and does not take into account the unique logistical, financial and/or instructional needs of the district. The current state teacher certification requirements inhibit the district's ability to hire teachers to teach hard-to-fill, high demand, dual credit, as well as career and technical courses. May ISD is located in a rural area and the current certification rules limit the district's options to hire professionals with work related experience. Benefits of this exemption would include but not be limited to:

- Allowing the local school board to establish qualifications and guidelines that are prudent and best suit the uniqueness of May ISD. Teachers would be thoroughly vetted at the local level and subjected to administration and local board approval in accordance with the open meetings requirements.
- Allowing the District to have the flexibility to utilize existing staff members to teach certain classes that other than not being certified, would be well suited to teach. This will help the District to be more efficient and offer more electives for our students.
- Utilizing local professionals, for the vast array of STEM and CATE related courses, to provide invaluable working knowledge of industry skills and standards. This could help to prepare our student for the jobs that are available in our community.

Assurances

May ISD will continue to recruit and retain highly skilled certified educators but when it is advantageous to the district to pursue a local certification the principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials the applicant possesses. This must be presented to the superintendent for approval. Special Education and Bilingual teachers will continue to be certified according to law and will not be included in this exemption. May ISD will continue to comply with parent notifications as required by law.

Qualifications that may be considered include but are not limited to:

- Professional work experience
- Formal training and education
- Active professional relevant industry certification or registration
- Combination of work experience, training, and education
- Demonstration of successful experience working with students
- Out of state teaching certification

The superintendent will make a determination on the principal recommendation and if approved, will submit the recommendation to the board of trustees for final approval. Determinations shall be made on a case-by-case basis.

There may be instances in which a currently employed State Board of Education Certified (SBEC) teacher would be needed to teach a subject that is not covered by their SBEC certification. In the event that May ISD would need to utilize a currently employed teacher for this purpose the campus principal would make this request and justification for the request in writing to the superintendent for final approval. Considerations included in this decision may include but not be limited to:

- Past teaching assignments
- College transcript
- Teacher competency in the subject matter
- Nature and level of the assignment
- Number of classes impacted
- District and student needs

May ISD will continue to offer Chapter 21 contracts to all employees in positions requiring SBEC certifications. Teachers hired on a local certification basis will be considered at-will employees and will not be entitled to a Chapter 21 contract.

4. Contract Service Days

(Ed. Code 21.401)

Current Law

State law currently requires educators employed on a 10-month contract to provide a minimum of 187 days of service.

Rationale for Exemption

With the passage of Ed. Code 25.081 which changed the required days of instruction to minutes, the law did not address contract days for 10-month contract employees. The determination of how many days are required to fulfill an employee's contract should be a local decision. Benefits to this exemptions include but are not limited to:

- Teacher contracts will more closely align with the 75,600 instructional minutes required for students and also include staff development/work days. This flexibility will enable May ISD to create a climate that values the individual's time and empowers the ability to leverage that time in what will be a focus on student outcomes. This proposal may enhance teacher recruitment and also impact and improve teacher morale.

Assurances

Professional employees will not receive a reduction in pay for any reduction in the number of days in their contract because of this exemption.

5. Probationary Contracts

(Ed. Code 21.102 Subsection B)

Current Law

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.

Rationale for Exemption

This time period is not sufficient to evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. May ISD will have the authority to offer a probationary contract for up to the maximum amount of time allowed by law regardless of past experience with other districts. Benefits of this exemption include but are not limited to:

- Increased time for principals to evaluate new District employees with more information before having to extend a term contract.
- Allowing for a new teacher in need of assistance to get additional support rather than getting non-renewed.

Assurances

Evaluating, developing and training teachers will continue to be a priority for May ISD. May ISD will use this exemption as an opportunity to invest in our teachers new to the District.