

Mart ISD District of Innovation Plan

In January 2017, the Mart ISD Board of Trustees charged the administration to work with the District of Innovation (DOI) Committee to develop a “District of Innovation Plan” as permitted by the Texas Legislature under HB 1842 (TAC Chapter 102). The District of Innovation Plan, as developed, is intended to enhance the educational environment in Mart ISD. The DOI Committee that developed this plan is substantially composed of teachers. The ultimate goals of the plan are to advance innovative curriculum, instructional methods, community participation, governance of campuses, and parental involvement by eliminating burdensome compliance requirements and focusing district resources on what matters most to the Professional Learning Community, parents and students of the District.

Mart Independent School District - District of Innovation Committee Membership

Betsy Burnett	Principal, Mart High School – Elementary parent
Amy Stone	Principal, Mart Middle School - Elementary parent
Jennifer Daigle	Principal, Mart Elementary School – High School parent
John Luedke	District Technology Director
Landry Williams	Technology Representative
Lisa Byrd	Mart High School Representative – Elementary parent
Monica Pechacek	Mart Middle School Representative - Middle School parent
Laurie Hall	Mart Elementary School Representative - Elementary parent
Len Williams	Interim Superintendent

Process

- January 18, 2017 – Mart ISD Board adopted a District of Innovation resolution to begin the process to develop a District of Innovation Plan.
- January 25, 2017 – Public Hearing to allow public comment on the proposed District of Innovation planning.
- January 25, 2017 - Mart ISD Board of Trustees approved a District of Innovation committee
- February 1, 2017 - District of Innovation (DOI) committee met to discuss options open to MISD under the District of Innovation designation.
- February 8, 2017 – Superintendent notified the Texas Education Commissioner of the intentions for Mart ISD to pursue a District of Innovations designation.
- February 8, 2017 – DOI committee members reported individual campus innovation suggestions and how they could impact the educational process at Mart ISD. The members then compiled eight areas to request exemptions.
- February 14, 2017 - Resolution passed by the Mart Board of Trustees posted on the MISD website for the required thirty days.
- February 15, 2017. DOI approved the compiled DOI Plan.
- February 15, 2017 - Superintendent sent the Mart Independent School District, District of Innovation Plan to the MISD attorneys for review.
- March 15, 2017 - Board of Trustees will consider to accept the District of Innovation Plan recommended by the DOI committee and reviewed by the MISD attorneys.

Term

The term of the plan is for five years beginning August 1, 2017 and ending July 31, 2022, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. The committee will monitor the effectiveness of the plan and recommend to the Board any suggested modifications.

District of Innovation Plan: Areas of State Law Considered for Exemptions

Mart ISD will consider ALL permitted exemptions as described in the District of Innovation legislation (TAC 102) of 2015. The following items identify exemptions that the District will seek immediately. Mart ISD reserves the right to examine and approve exemptions in all areas identified in statute or Commissioner Rules.

Chapter 21: Educators - Teacher Certification

Statutory Citation: TEC 21.003, TEC 21.044, TAC Title 19 Part 7 Chapter 231, Subchapters A-G, DK Legal, DK Local, DK Exhibit

The flexibility in allowing Mart ISD to make local decisions about teacher certification would provide a better opportunity to offer innovation in course selections for CTE courses as well as hard to fill, high-demand dual credit courses. By obtaining exemption from existing teacher certification requirements, the District will have the flexibility to hire professionals from diverse academic or vocational fields that qualify the candidate to teach a particular course they may not be certified to teach, internal applicants seeking assignments outside their traditional certification area, as well as enrich applicant pools in specific content areas in order to afford more students the opportunity to take dual credit courses if certified teachers are not available to teach those courses. At the same time, when best for the curriculum for our students, MISD will continue to seek and employ fully certified teachers.

Chapter 21: Educators - Teacher Instructional Assignment

Statutory Citation: TEC 21.003, TEC 21.044, TAC Title 19 Part 7 Chapter 231, Subchapters A-G

Mart ISD will be exempt from the requirements which limit the district's ability to assign staff to meet local needs. Current requirements sometimes limit the ability of MISD to staff hard-to-fill positions. While MISD will continue to seek and employ fully certified teachers, exemptions from these requirements will allow the district to meet its staffing needs. Examples of these exemptions include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Allow an elementary certified teacher with expertise in early grades (ie. 1st/2nd grade) to teach kindergarten.
- Allow a teacher certified to teach through 6th grade to teach courses in grades seven and/or eight.
- Allow a teacher certified to teach elementary reading to be the reading teacher of record for middle and/or high school students.
- Allow a teacher certified in middle school and/or high school mathematics to teach elementary grades such as fourth and/or fifth.
- Allow a teacher to teach one or two classes out of their certified field in an area or areas that the teacher has college coursework and/or expertise.
- Allow for greater flexibility in determining appropriate CTE experience in order to teach a CTE course.

These exemptions will allow the District to be innovative as educators and offer courses and class sizes previously impossible to have contemplated. This kind of flexibility will allow the District to move our personnel to places where their greatest talents and passions may be, regardless of where their certification might be limiting them, and in turn, they may take our students to greater and higher achievements.

Chapter 21: Educators - Teacher Contract Days

Statutory Citation: DCB Legal, DCB Local TEC 21.401

Current education law in Chapter 21 defines a teacher contract as a 10 month contract equivalent to 187 days. Proposal would reduce teacher contract days from 187 to a decreased length with no effect on teacher salaries. This would be an attempt to better align the teacher days to the 75,600 minutes required of students.

- Increase the daily rate the district pays teachers
- Enhance teacher recruitment
- Improve teacher morale

Chapter 25: Admission, Transfer, and Attendance – School Calendar

Statutory Citation: Texas Education Code (TEC) Section 25.0811 and Section 25.0812:EB Legal

Mart ISD will be exempt from the first day of instruction requirements listed in TEC 25.0811 and the last day of instruction requirements listed in TEC 25.0812.

Current law mandates a school start date of the 4th Monday of August or later. This requirement creates unequal semesters, poor decisions on scheduled holidays, and a school year that ends in June. Mart ISD, using input, should be allowed to develop a school calendar that best meets the needs of our students, parents, staff, and community. Multiple calendar options will be developed for consideration. The calendars will be presented to district staff for consideration, keeping in mind surrounding entities benefit from a common calendar. The calendar with the approval of the DOI committee vote will be presented to the Board of Trustees for their review and consideration. Final calendar approval, including when the MISD school year begins and ends, will be made by the locally elected MISD Board of Trustees.

Chapter 25: Admission, Transfer, and Attendance –Operation of Schools

Statutory Citation: TEC 25.081

Mart ISD will be exempt from the length of school day as listed in TEC 25.081.

The flexibility to adjust minutes of instruction within a designated school day will assist with personalizing learning to better meet student needs. This flexibility has the added benefit of allowing the possibility of an altered length of a school day, which may include, for example, a later start/early release time which will accommodate professional learning/collaboration opportunities for teachers. As a component of the annual school district calendar development process, MISD will carefully analyze the needs of students and employees to determine which dates should be modified. Modification to the length of certain dates will be recommended when there is a clearly identified purpose, such as professional learning, focused on meeting the needs of students and employees. It is recommended that future DOI calendar committees fully explore the flexibility found within this exemption by reviewing the current practice of modifying the length of school days and fully consider options that will provide the maximum benefits to students, teachers, and families. The action steps listed below represent the calendar development process which allows for input from all areas of the school district:

Chapter 25: Admission, Transfer, and Attendance - Inter-District Transfers

Statutory Citation: FDA LOCAL, Texas Education Code 25.036

Currently, under Texas Education Code 25.036, a district may choose to accept students as transfers, even if they are not entitled to in the district. TEC 25.036, however, has been interpreted to require a student transfer to be for a period of one school year.

Mart ISD student transfer policy FDA (Local) requires that all nonresident students who wish to transfer must 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. On the application, transfer students are informed that they are expected to follow the attendance requirements, rules, and regulations of the district. In the past, the form has informed nonresident students who have been accepted as inter-district transfer students that they may have their transfer status revoked by the Superintendent at any time during the year if the student is assigned discipline consequences of suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion. In addition, students who do not attend the state's minimum attendance standards of 90% of all classes in a semester/school year may also be subject to immediate revocation of the transfer status.

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 be exempt from any one-year commitment that might be implied by the provisions of TEC 25.036 when accepting transfer applicants. On rare occasions, student behavior warrants the kind of disciplinary consequences contemplated in the Mart transfer agreement. Students who engage in this kind of misbehavior and students who do not attend school for 90% of all classes interferes with our school district's ability to educate our student body in a way that is effective, tailored to students who are at school consistently and ready to learn, and able to focus time and attention on preparing for work towards achievement on state assessments. When students are disruptive and/or excessively absent, our teachers must time correcting the behavior, catching those students up, and cannot adequately prepare the students who are behaving and want to learn. These teachers are hampered in their ability to have the time they need to implement any kind of truly innovative strategies, because they are spending their time disciplining students and catching up students who are falling being the 90% state requirement. For these cases, Mart ISD seeks exemption from the one year transfer commitment.

Chapter 25: Admission, Transfer, and Attendance – Class Size and Student Teacher Ratio

Statutory Citation: TEC 25.111, 25.112, and 25.113

Mart ISD will be exempt from the waiver process for class size teacher ratio. Mart ISD will continue to adhere to the student teacher ratio but will be given flexibility if the ratio is exceeded during the school year. The flexibility would allow the superintendent to report to the Board of Trustees instead of filing a waiver with TEA.

Chapter 28: Courses of Study; Advancement - School Health Advisory Council

Statutory Citation: TEC 28.004, BDF Legal

Mart ISD will be exempt from the requirement to hold a minimum of four meetings per year. The MISD SHAC committee shall meet at least once per year. The district's size and the stability of the membership of the SHAC committee ensures that committee members are aware of the needs of the district's students and are often able to review, advise, and revise plans in fewer than four meetings. The MISD Board of Trustees and the members of the SHAC committee should determine how often the committee should meet.

This plan reflects: The work of the District Innovation Committee and the following advantages that could result from the exemptions sought:

- Hiring the best teachers / staff available.
- Providing greater flexibility in assigning teachers in hard-to-fill areas.
- Providing greater flexibility in ensuring new teachers will be effective in the classroom.
- Providing greater flexibility over the school calendar ensuring that it reflects the preferences of the local committee and the Board of Trustees.
- Eliminating state reporting that takes time but delivers no advantage to the district.
- Eliminating unnecessary local notices that take time but deliver no advantage to the district.
- Providing greater flexibility in meeting the requirements of mandated committees.
- Eliminating redundant requirements.
- Improving teacher morale by eliminating bureaucratic rules.
- Streamlining processes to allow local planning efforts take precedence over state compliance activities, eliminating hours of work that could be better spent on the needs of the district's students.

I formally (recommend) (do not recommend) the above District of Innovation Plan.
DOI Committee member(s)

Betsey Burnet

Date

Amy Stone

Date

Jennifer Daigle

Date

John Luedke

Date

Landry Williams

Date

Lisa Byrd

Date

Monica Pechacek

Date

Laurie Hall

Date