Morgan Mill ISD



District of Innovation Plan

Committee Members

* Wendy Sanders, Superintendent
* Barrett Hutchison, Principal
* Michelle Kimple, Teacher
* Marybeth Burns, Teacher
* Haylee Turley, Teacher
* Kourtney Redstrom, Teacher
* Haley Vander Laan, Teacher
* Nancy Lingle, Teacher
* Rachel Jones, Teacher
* Keeton Coleman, Teacher
* De Shewmaker, Parent

January 2020 Amendment Committee

* Wendy Sanders, Superintendent
* Barrett Hutchison, Principal
* Marybeth Burns, Teacher
* Kourtney Redstrom, Teacher
* Haley Vander Laan, Teacher
* Haylee Turley, Teacher
* Christina Baker, Teacher
* Taylor Stricklin, Teacher
* Nancy Bassham, Teacher
* Rachel Jones, Teacher
* Nan Goodman, Teacher
* Gary Thompson, Teacher
* Ruby Mendoza, Parent

**INTRODUCTION**

House Bill (HB) 1842 passed during the 84th Legislative Session, permits Texas public school districts to become Districts of Innovation and to obtain exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. • Potential benefits of becoming a District of Innovation include: • Flexibility: Districts will have the flexibility to implement practices similar to charter schools, including exemptions from certain mandates including the uniform school start date and required minutes of instruction. • Local control: Districts decide which flexibilities best suit their local needs. • Autonomy: Districts must submit a district of innovation plan to the commissioner of education, but approval is not required. Districts are not exempt from statutes including curriculum and graduation requirements, and academic and financial accountability.

**TERM**

The term of the Plan is for five years, beginning with the 2017-2018 school year and ending with the 2021-2022 school year unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. If, within the term of this Plan, other areas of operations are to be considered for flexibility as part of HB 1842, the Board will appoint a new committee to consider and propose additional exemptions in the form of an amendment to the Plan. Any amendment adopted by the Board will not extend the term of this Plan. The District may not implement two separate plans at any one time.

Amended: January 2020

**School start date**

*(EB Legal) (Ed. Code 25.0811)*

*Currently*

*Students may not begin school before the 4th Monday in August. For many years this was the rule, however, districts had the option of applying for a waiver to start earlier. The vast majority of districts applied for the waiver and would begin the 3rd Monday, some even going as early as the 2nd Monday.*

*The Texas tourism groups lobbied to have this stopped because they believed it was hurting their tourism business. Therefore, several years ago the legislature took away all waivers and dictated that districts may not begin until the 4th Monday, with no exceptions.*

Proposed

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. This enables us to personalize learning, balance the amount of instructional time per semester, and provide more flexible professional development opportunities for our staff. Another benefit of exempting this restriction is it allows the school to look at starting classes as a short week easing the transition to schooling for students entering Pre-K and Kindergarten.

**Minimum Minutes of Instruction and Length of School Day**

*(EC Legal)(EB Legal) (Ed. Code 25.081)(Ed. Code 25.0820)*

*Currently*

*State law currently requires that all school days be 420 minutes in length in order to count for ADA calculations and funding purposes and to accumulate instructional minutes towards the 75,600 minutes required annually.*

Proposed

Exemption from the 420 minutes requirement would allow Morgan Mill ISD the flexibility needed to alter the school day schedule on selected days whenever it is locally determined as 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 teachers to analyze student data and engage in targeted, relevant professional development.

Morgan Mill 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 and published and distributed to stakeholders in advance of the school year and continuously published using school media.

**Designation of a Campus Behavior Coordinator**

*(FO Legal and Local) (Ed. Code 37.0012)*

*Currently*

*Senate Bill 107 amended the Texas Education Code by adding Section 37.0012, which requires the designation of a campus behavior coordinator on each campus. This designee is responsible for maintaining student discipline and the implementation of Chapter 37, Subchapter A.*

Proposed

The proposal is for the district to abstain from the state requirement that each school have a designated campus behavior coordinator. MMISD’s approach to discipline is collaborative with multiple people providing emotional and social support to students, rather than just one person. Exemption from this requirement will allow the option of increasing collaboration in regard to student discipline.

**Probationary Contracts**

*(DCA Legal) (Ed. Code 21.102)*

*Currently*

*A probationary contract may not exceed one year for new teachers to our district who have been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment by the district. Under this circumstance, the district must either give the teacher a term contract or terminate their contract after their first year in the district.*

Proposed

For experienced teachers new to the district that have been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, a probationary contract may be issued for up to two additional years from the last date of district employment. The same rules will apply to any teachers returning to MMISD. This will allow the district more time to evaluate the teacher’s effectiveness.

**Teacher Certification**

*(DBA Legal/DK Legal) (Ed. Code 21.003; 21.053; 21.057)*

*Currently*

*TEC 21.003 states that a person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern or trainee, librarian, educational aide, administrator, educational diagnostician, or school counselor by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued by the appropriate state agency. In the event the district can’t locate a certified person, the district must request emergency certification from TEA and the State Board of Educator Certification.*

*TEC 21.053 requires a teacher to present their certificate to the District before their employment contract will be binding and prohibits the District from paying an educator for teaching if the educator does not hold a valid certificate at that time.*

*TEC 21.057 requires that the District provide written notice to parents if any inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher is assigned to a classroom for more than 20 consecutive days.*

Proposed

The current state teacher certification requirements inhibit the District’s ability to hire teachers to hard-to-fill, high demand, dual credit, fine arts, physical education, as well as career and technical courses and STEAM courses. In order to best serve MMISD students, decisions on certification will be handled locally. This will allow for more flexible scheduling and the opportunity to create and experiment with innovative classes. This use of scheduling will not be a substitute for hiring a certified teacher to fill a full day’s schedule. In addition, all special education and ESL teachers will continue to be SBEC certified.

**Waivers for Kindergarten-Grade 4 Class Size Waivers**

*(EEB Legal) (Ed. Code 25.111) (Ed. Code 25.112) (Ed. Code 25.113)*

*Currently*

*Kindergarten through 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 must complete a waiver with the Texas Education Agency. Also, a letter is to be sent home to each parent in the class informing them of the waiver.*

Proposed

MMISD will attempt to keep class sizes below the 22:1 ratio. In the event a class size exceeds the ratio, district administration along with the board of trustees will evaluate the need to reduce the ratio. MMISD will also waive the requirement for parent notification in the event a class size exceeds the 22:1 ratio.

A TEA waiver will not be necessary when a K-4th classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio.

**Teacher Evaluations**

*(DNA Legal) (Ed. Code 21.203) (Ed. Code 21.352)*

*Currently*

*The new teacher appraisal system issued by the state of Texas beginning in the 2016-17 school year is called the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS). Beginning in the 2017-18 school year, T-TESS will have a student achievement component included meaning a portion of teacher evaluations will include student achievement.*

Proposed

Morgan Mill ISD would like the opportunity to remove the student achievement component of T-TESS and instead include a component addressing how innovative teachers are being in their classrooms. We feel that the T-TESS instrument is robust enough without the addition of student achievement to the teacher evaluation. Administrators already take into account student achievement whether it is retention rates, passing rates, STAAR, or other test measures. We feel that with state assessment, which can only be used with approximately 30-40% of our staff, should be removed from the teacher evaluation. Using performance objectives to determine student performance appears to be subjective and/or arbitrary depending on what subject(s) we were looking at to incorporate student achievement into the T-TESS instrument.

This facet of teacher evaluations will encourage teachers to utilize technology as well as other innovative measures within their instruction, further preparing students for high school, college, and careers in this 21st century environment.

**Teacher Contract Days**

*(DC Legal) (Ed. Code 21.401)*

*Currently*

*Current education law defines a teacher contract as a ten month contract equivalent to 187 days.*

Proposed

TEC 25.081 changed student instructional days to minutes. However, TEC 21.401 has not been adjusted to change teacher contracts from days to minutes. Changes in the number of days required to fulfill the contract will not alter the teacher pay scale. Teacher daily rate will be adjusted to maintain current salary.

This proposal reduces teacher contract days from 187 with no effect on teacher salaries. This stems from an attempt to provide flexibility to better align teacher service days to instructional days.

* This proposal will increase the daily rate the district pays teachers.
* This proposal should enhance teacher recruitment, therefore putting the district on a more level playing field with larger districts.
* This proposal will improve teacher morale.
* This proposal will provide teachers more opportunities during the year to seek out beneficial staff development that relates to their field.

**Transfer Students**

*(FDA Local) (Ed. Code 25.036)*

*Currently*

*State law allows a student to transfer annually from the child’s school district of residence to another district in the state if both the receiving district and the applicant parent or guardian jointly approve and timely agree in writing to the transfer. In approving transfer requests, the availability of space and instructional staff, availability of programs and services, the student’s disciplinary history, academic performance, and attendance records are also evaluated. Under Texas Education Code 25.036, a transfer is interpreted to be for a period of one school year.*

Proposed

The district is seeking exemption from the one year commitment in accepting a transfer student allowing the district to rescind a transfer at any time during the school year if the student violates district expectations of attendance, discipline, academic achievement, and/or falsifying documentation. This flexibility would allow the district to have the option of immediate revocation of a student’s transfer status by the Superintendent or designee at any time during the school year.