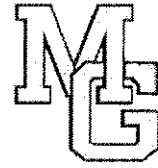


# Miller Grove ISD

District of Innovation Plan

March 7, 2017



## **Introduction**

House Bill 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 start date and required minutes of instruction.
- **Local control:** Districts decide which flexibilities best suit their local needs.
- **Autonomy:** District submit a District of Innovation Plan to the commissioner of education, but commissioner approval is not required.

On March 2, 2017, the Miller Grove ISD Board of Trustees (Board) passed a resolution to explore/initiate the process of designation as a District of Innovation in order to increase local control over district operations and to support innovation and local initiatives. The adoption of this plan seeks to increase the district's flexibility, in order to improve educational outcomes for the benefit of students and the community. Also, on this date the Superintendent and board selected/appointed a 14-member District of Innovation Committee (Committee). This committee is comprised of diverse leaders representing a cross-section of the district's stakeholders including but not limited to, teachers, principals, parents, community members, and administrators. The committee met on March 7, 2017 to discuss and draft the Local Innovation Plan (Plan).

On March 2, 2017, the Board held a public meeting and made the decision to pursue the District of Innovation designation. Based on direction provided by the Board and input from various stakeholders, the Committee proposes the Plan below and the Miller Grove ISD Board of Trustees will consider the Plan at its meeting in April 2017.

## **Comprehensive Educational Program**

### **Term**

The term of this Plan is for five years, beginning August, 2017 and ending 2022, 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

the same 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.

## **Mission & Values**

The Miller Grove ISD District of Innovation Plan is founded and aligned to the Board's Mission, Values, Strategic Objectives and Goals for the District.

**Mission:** The following adopted Mission Statement is used as the foundation for the District:

**M**olding students for success by fostering creativity, strong work ethic, academic excellence, and respect for self and others.

**G**rowing impactful "Team Players" through Academics, Agriculture, Arts, and Athletics.

**Values:** The operation of the district, as well as organizational behaviors, are based upon the core values of:

Creativity, Strong Work Ethic, Academic Excellence, and Respect for Self and Others.

## **Goals**

- All students will benefit by attracting and retaining excellent staff
- All students will have the opportunity to develop their individual interests and abilities in a safe and innovative environment
- All students will grow through strong community partnership

## **Parameters**

- Decisions will be made in the best interest of our children
- Learning is our core business
- We will be good stewards of taxpayer dollars
- We will not allow government regulations to impede opportunities for our students' education

## **Strategic Objectives**

- ❖ The District will ensure all students have a safe environment.
  - ❖ Provide a safe and secure physical environment through a partnership with community, local emergency officials, parents, students, and staff
  - ❖ Address the needs of the "whole student" by providing programs in which character, behavior, social and emotional skills, drug and alcohol abuse, conflict resolution, and

health

awareness are the focus.

- ❖ Ensure a firm, fair and consistent discipline plan is followed throughout the school year
- ❖ The District will ensure all academic achievement for every student through partnerships, curriculum, and programs.
  - ❖ There will be a partnership with parents, community members and students to ensure success in their learning
- ❖ The District will ensure a culture of innovation among staff and students
  - ❖ Engage students in flexible and personalized learning experiences
  - ❖ Develop leadership capacity within the entire school, including students, staff and community. Apply appropriate, effective, and efficient resources to provide a blended learning environment
- ❖ The District will ensure a supportive system that develop/retain exceptional staff
  - ❖ Provide a positive culture of support to all staff members
  - ❖ Develop proficient educators through professional learning opportunities in order to provide high quality instruction
  - ❖ Partner with Region 8 Service Center to provide support and education to our staff
- ❖ The District will ensure open communication with the community that is timely and relevant
  - ❖ Reach all populations of Miller Grove community in an effective and timely manner through our website, all call system, social media, notes home and electronic outdoor signage
  - ❖ Join the community and the schools in a seamless, mutual relationship of communication, involvement, and service
- ❖ The District will ensure our facilities support a learner centered environment
  - ❖ Provide students a fine arts Pre-K through 12 program emphasizing an environment of excellence through, choir, theatre, music, and visual arts in collaboration with the community
  - ❖ Create Innovative learning spaces to facilitate student collaboration, engagement, and creativity through the efficient use of taxpayers funds.
  - ❖ Expose all Pre-K through 12th grade students to a variety programs
  - ❖ Provide the opportunity for students to take dual credit classes to earn college credit through an accredited community or junior college.

## **Texas Education Code exemptions required for the fulfillment of the goals upon adoption by the District of Innovation Plan**

Under HB 1842, districts may identify certain requirements imposed by the Texas Education Code (TEC) that “inhibit the goals of the plan from which the district should be exempted on adoption of the plan”. Given the comprehensive education program outline in this plan and the necessity for local control in decision making of the plan elements, Miller Grove ISD seeks exemption for all allowable TEC requirements under the HB 1842 statute.

### **Areas of Innovation**

#### **Instructional Minutes/Length of Instructional Day/Early Release (TEC 25.081& 25.082)**

##### Current Law

TEC 25.081 requires that a school district provide at least 75,600 minutes of instruction, including intermissions and recesses for students each school year. Education Code 25.081(e) defines a day of instruction to mean 420 minutes of instruction while 25.082(a) requires a school day to be at least seven hours each day, including intermissions and recesses.

##### Plan

Although all students will still be required to receive 75,600 minutes of instruction, the flexibility to adjust when those minutes of instruction are accrued will allow Miller Grove ISD to more effectively meet the needs of our students. This exemption will also allow Miller Grove ISD to alter the length of the school day or school year to meet the needs of Miller Grove ISD.

#### **Teacher Contract Days (TEC 21.401)**

##### Current Law

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

##### Plan

To reduce teacher contract days from 187 to 182 with no effect on teacher salaries. This makes an attempt to align the teacher days to the 75,600 minutes required of students-This proposal will increase the daily rate the district pays teachers, enhance teacher recruitment, therefore putting the district on a more level playing field with larger districts. This proposal will also significantly improve teacher morale.

## **Teacher Certification**

**(TEC 21.003)**

### Current law

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 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. This system is burdensome and does not take into account the unique financial and/or instructional needs of the district.

### Plan

The current state teacher certification requirement could potentially inhibit the district's ability to hire teachers to teach many courses. In order to enable more students to obtain the educational benefits, the district seeks to establish its own local qualification requirements and its own requirements for training of professionals and experts to teach courses. This would be in lieu of the certification requirement set forth by the law. By obtaining exemption from existing teacher certification requirements, the district will have the flexibility to hire community, college instructors, university professors, business professional or certified teaching professionals seeking assignments outside of their certification area. This innovation has the potential to enrich applicant pools and afford more students the opportunity to take courses if state certified teachers are not available to teach those courses.

## **School Start and End Date**

**(TEC 25.0811 and 25.0812)**

### Current Law

TEC 25.0811 states that a school district may not begin student instruction before the 4th Monday of August. TEC 25.0812 states that a school district may not schedule the last day of school before May 15th. The current process allows no flexibility in the design of annual calendars to fit the needs of the community or the wishes of the local Board of Trustees who represent community interests in this matter.

### Plan

Relief from the statute will allow Miller Grove ISD to develop a calendar that addresses student instruction and focused professional development in conjunction with the new instructional minutes requirement, rather than days. Also, relief from the statute will enable Miller Grove ISD to align the district calendar with local universities, advanced placement exams, and STAAR timeline. This plan would provide for increased local control of the instructional calendar in order to be responsive to community needs.

## **Submitting waivers for Kindergarten-Grade 4 class size**

**(TEC25.112, 25.113)**

### Current Law

Kindergarten – 4 th 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.

### Plan

While we certainly believe that small class size plays a positive role in the classroom. Miller Grove ISD will attempt to keep all K-4th core classrooms to a 22:1 ratio. However, in the event the class size exceeds the 22:1 ratio, the superintendent will report to the Board of Trustees. 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 and complete a waiver with the Texas Education Agency. A TEA waiver will not be necessary when a K-4th classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio. This gives Miller Grove ISD the flexibility without having the bureaucracy of waivers within the Texas Education Agency.

## **Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator**

**(TEC 37.012)**

### Current Law

Restricts local decision making by requiring one person to be designated as the Campus Behavior Coordinator. This requirement limits the campuses from allowing the person most suitable to address the children's needs to make disciplinary decisions.

### Plan

Miller Grove will not name one campus behavior coordinator per campus. Rather, the district will allow decisions to be made based on the needs of the individual student and situation to determine the most appropriate professional staff member to work with the student to promote social and emotional growth. Campus principals will guide this process by having frequent discussions about appropriate disciplinary decisions and procedures. The focus will remain on the social and emotional learning of the students. Staff members will also be provided training opportunities to ensure successful implementation of disciplinary techniques. Also, assignments to the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program will remain the responsibility of the campus principal.

## **Inter-district Transfer**

**(TEC 25.036)**

### Current Law

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.

### Plan

Miller Grove 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 Districts. TEC 25.036 has been interpreted to establish the acceptance of a transfer as one year commitment by the District. The District is seeking to eliminate the provision of 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, the student attendance may fall below the TEA truancy standards. In these rare cases, Miller Grove ISD seeks exemption from the one year transfer commitment.

Local-Nonresident students who have been accepted as inter-district transfer may have such 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 expulsions. In addition, students not meeting the state's 90% attendance standard may also be subject to immediate revocation of the transfer status.

### **Minimum attendance for class credit or final grade**

**(TEC 25.092)**

#### Current Law

Except as provided by this section, 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. A student who is in attendance for at least 75 percent but less than 90 percent of the days a class is offered may be given credit or a final grade for the class if the student completes a plan approved by the school's principal that provides for the student to meet the instructional requirements of the class.

#### Plan

In order to provide engaging and challenging learning to all students, the District needs relief from Texas Education Code Section 25.092. Exemption from this requirement will provide educational advantages to students of the District by promoting active learning through innovation in methods, locations, and times instruction may be delivered to students, thereby accommodating students with legitimate scheduling conflicts, reducing dropouts, and increasing the number of qualifying graduates. In addition, exemption from this requirement will allow District not to penalize students who miss class due to legitimate school activities and will promote student engagement, as well as social and emotional development, but encouraging more students to participate in such activities.

Activation of the exemptions from the TEC will most likely require the revision and/or addition of Miller Grove ISD local policies. Any exemptions from TEC or amendments to the District of Innovation Plan will be reflected in Policy AF (LOCAL) – INNOVATION DISTRICTS following board action pursuant to law.

**Miller Grove Independent School District  
Strategic Planning / Innovation Committee Members**

Grant Earp	Student
Mike Hasten	Parent
Stacie Wilbur	Parent
Colton Baylus	Community Member
Wayne Darty	Community Member
Gail Garmon	Community Member
Vicki Harris	Paraprofessional
Ginger McCreight	Elementary Teacher
Emma Hudson	High School Teacher
Clark May	School Board Member
Brandon Darrow	School Board Member
Gary Billingsley	Jr High/High School Principal
Jaime Fox	Elementary School Principal
Steve Johnson	Superintendent