

Pringle-Morse Consolidated Independent School District

District of Innovation Plan

District of Innovation Advisory Committee Members:

Scott Burrow	Superintendent
Edward Beck	Counselor
Janet Wilson	Teacher Pre-K
J.J. Shields	Teacher, 1st Grade
Leslie Ford	Teacher, 3 rd Grade
Jeff Forrest	Teacher, Junior High Science
Cindy Lieb	Teacher, Junior High Social Studies
Suzanne Frazier	Teacher, Elem/ Junior High SpEd
Amber TeBeest	Teacher, Junior High Band
Haden Hart	Teacher, Junior High Math
Shannon Lane	Teacher, Interventionist
Wirt Davis	Board Member
Christy Hart	Board Member
Carolyn Shields	Board Member

Campus and District Improvement Committee Members:

Bonnie Morton	Teacher, Pre-K/Kinder
J.J. Shields	Teacher, 1 st grade
Scott Burrow	Superintendent
Amber TeBeest	Teacher, Band
Suzanne Frazier	Teacher, 3 rd Grade
Modesta Gonzalez	Counselor
Angelica Hart	Teacher, JH
Carlos Valverde	Teacher, High School
Cindy Lleb	Teacher, Grade Sponsor
Luli Hernandez	Parent
Lauren O'Brien	Parent
Kathryn Mancini	Teacher, Sp.Ed.
Shannon Lane	Teacher/ESL
Jordan Hicks	Principal
Stephanie Gavirio	Student Representative
Alejandro Sanchez	Student Representative

I. INTRODUCTION

House Bill (“HB”) 1842 passed during the 84th Legislative Session, permits Texas public school districts to become Districts of Innovation and to obtain exemptions from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code (“TEC”). On November 17, 2016, the Pringle-Morse Consolidated Independent School District’s Board of Trustees (“Board”) passed a Resolution to Adopt a District of Innovation Plan to increase local control over District operations and to support innovation and local initiatives (this “Plan”). The adoption of this Plan seeks to increase the District’s flexibility in order to improve educational outcomes for the benefit of the students and the community.

II. TERM

The term of this Plan is for five years, beginning August 1st, 2021 and ending July 31, 2026, 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 innovations as part of HB 1842, the Board will nominate a new committee to consider and propose additional exemptions in the form of an amendment. Any amendment adopted by the Board will adhere to the same term as the original plan. The District may not implement two separate plans at any one time.

III. INNOVATIONS/EXEMPTIONS

The District proposes the innovations below by exempting itself from the requirements of the Texas Education Code in the following areas:

A. Uniform School Calendar – (TEC § 25.0811) (TEC § 25.0812)

Board Policies Affected: EB(LEGAL) EB(LOCAL)

Current Law

Section 25.0811 of the Texas Education Code states that a school district may not begin instruction before the fourth Monday in August. Section 25.0812 of the Texas Education Code Section states that a school district may not schedule the last day of school before May 15.

Plan

To allow for a calendar that fits the local needs of the community, this Plan gives the District the flexibility to change the date of the first and last days of school. Under this Plan, no student will begin earlier than the first Monday of August. Local control of the instructional calendar affords the District the following advantages:

- 1) This Plan will allow a more balanced number of instructional days per semester and utilize more instructional time prior to the state assessments given in early May.
- 2) An additional goal is to improve the District attendance rate and student success through flexibility in the calendar.

B. Teacher Contract Days – (TEC § 21.401)

Board Policies Affected: DC(LEGAL) DC(LOCAL)

Current Law

Section 21.401 of the Texas Education Code defines a teacher contract as a ten-month contract

requiring 187 days of service.

Plan

With the passage of §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. Pringle-Morse CISD will annually evaluate the number of contract days needed for certified staff in that school year to meet district objectives. The number of days will not exceed 187. The innovation will provide the following advantages:

This flexibility in contract days without a corresponding reduction in teacher salaries will make the District's salaries more competitive.

- 1) This may increase the daily rate the District pays teachers.
- 2) This should enhance teacher recruitment, therefore putting the District on a more level playing field with neighboring districts.
- 3) This may significantly improve teacher morale.
- 4) This will provide teachers with opportunities during the summer months to seek beneficial staff development that relates to their field.

C. Teacher Certification – (TEC § 21.003)

Board Policies Affected: DK (LEGAL), DK (LOCAL), DK (EXHIBIT), DBA (LEGAL), and (DBA (LOCAL)

Current Law

The Texas Education Code requires a public school employee to have the appropriate certification for his or her current assignment unless the appropriate permit has been issued. In the event a district cannot locate a certified teacher for a position or where a teacher will teach a subject outside of his or her certification, the District must first submit a request to the Texas Education Agency before hiring a non-certified teacher or allowing a teacher to teach outside of his or her area of certification. TEA then either approves or denies this request. In certain circumstances, a district can use a local one-year permit.

Plan

The current state teacher certification requirements inhibit the district's ability to hire teachers to teach hard-to-fill, high demand, dual credit, and career and technical/STEAM (applied Science, Technology, Engineering, and Arts & Mathematics) courses, as well as our bilingual education classes.

In order to best serve District students, certain decisions on certification will be handled locally. Campus administrators will have the ability to consider out-of-state educator certifications and professional qualifications or credentials of candidates, as well as to review the strengths and qualifications of campus staff to make local recommendations for teaching outside of certain certification areas in hard to fill positions, as allowed by locally established policy. The Superintendent or designee will approve all local certifications and will report to the board of trustees.

D. Teacher Duty Free Lunch – (TEC § 21.405)

Board Policies Affected: DL (LEGAL)

Current Law

Under current law teachers and full-time librarians are entitled to at least a 30-minute lunch period free from all duties and responsibilities connected with the instruction and supervision of students/

Plan

This Plan will give the District the authority to require teachers to remain on duty during lunch on a rotating basis. This will provide the District with the following advantages:

- 1) This will provide the District with scheduling flexibility.
- 2) This will provide students with direct contact with teachers during lunch and/or recess period, which will allow for a better understanding of student-to-student relationships and also improve student conduct and reduce inappropriate behavior.
- 3) This will allow for a safer school environment by having appropriate staff available to meet the needs of students.

E. Planning and Preparation Time – (TEC § 21.404)

Board Policies Affected: DL (LEGAL)

Current Law

Each classroom teacher is entitled to at least 450 minutes within each two-week period for instructional preparation, including parent-teacher conferences, evaluating students' work, and planning. A planning and preparation period under this section may not be less than 45 minutes within the instructional day. During a planning and preparation period, a classroom teacher may not be required to participate in any other activity.

Plan

This Plan will exempt the District from the requirement to provide the planning and preparation time mandated by section 21.404 of the Texas Education Code. This will give the District the flexibility as to when and how it provides planning and preparation time to its teachers. It is necessary for teachers to use planning time to discuss student needs across content areas, student interventions, and instructional strategies needed for student academic growth. A collaborative time is needed to review data from universal screener with a collaborative team with like planning times. This will allow the data to be used in the most advantageous way to promote student growth.

Flexibility in planning and preparation time helps in creating schedules where teachers can reach more students and have more planning time on teacher teams. All teachers will have planning and preparation time each week, but this Plan will provide the District with additional flexibility in this area.

These planning events will be on an as needed basis, but the District will strive to require no more than one such planning event per week.

F. Probationary Contract – (TEC §21.102)

Board Policies Affected: DCA (LEGAL)

Current Law

Current law requires that for experienced teachers new to the district who have been employed in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, a probationary contract may be issued for one year.

Plan

For experienced teachers new to the district who have been employed 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 date of employment with Pringle-Morse CISD.

By providing additional year(s) of probationary status, the district/campus administration can:

- better evaluate a teacher's effectiveness;
- Ensure fit for the district/campus culture; and
- Provide an opportunity for teacher growth.

G. Transfer of Student (Inter-District Transfer) – (TEC § 25.036)

Board Policies Affected: FDA (LEGAL) and FDA (LOCAL)

Current Law

Currently, any child, other than a high school graduate, who is younger than 21 years of age and eligible for enrollment on September 1 of any school year may transfer annually from the child's school district of residence to another district in this state if both the receiving district and the applicant parent or guardian or person having lawful control of the child jointly approve and timely agree in writing to the transfer.

*Note: This rule has been interpreted to require a transfer to be for a period of one school year.
Board Policy

Plan

Pringle-Morse CISD maintains a transfer policy under FDA (Local) requiring students not residing in the Pringle-Morse Consolidated Independent School District to file an application for transfer each school year. In approving transfers, several factors are considered:

- Student's latest report card
- Student's attendance records
- Student's scores on all applicable state-mandated assessments
- Student's disciplinary history
- Availability of space, resources, and instructional staff
- Existence of any outstanding balances that the student may have with the District
- Potential adverse effect of the transfer on the financial well-being of the District or the Districts' ability to continue providing quality educational services to all students.

The District will reserve the right to revoke the transfer of a student at any time during the year based on one or a combination of the following factors:

- Academic standing
- Course grades
- Assessment scores (state and local)
- Work habits
- Behavior
- Disciplinary history
- Excessive tardiness
- Attendance

Revocation of transfers for the above reasons is final and may not be appealed.

H. DISTRICT-LEVEL AND SITE BASED DECISION-MAKING

(TEC §11.251, §11.252, §11.253, §11.255)

Board Policies Affected: BQ (LEGAL), BQ (LOCAL), BQA (LEGAL), and BQA (LOCAL)

Current Law

The Texas Education Code requires a process for decentralizing decisions to improve the educational outcomes at every school campus through a collaborative effort by which principals, teachers, campus staff, district staff, parents, and community representatives assess educational outcomes of all students, determine goals and strategies, and ensure that strategies are implemented and adjusted to improve student achievement.

The board of trustees of each independent school district is required to ensure that a district improvement plan and improvement plans for each campus are developed, reviewed, and revised annually for the purpose of improving the performance of all students.

Plan

Pringle-Morse CISD is located in an extremely small, rural community consisting of few residents and property used mainly for agricultural purposes. The District and Campus are combined into one building. The District has an enrollment of 110 students (PreK-12). Resources for persons serving as members of the District/Campus Planning Committee and other school-related committees are limited without asking the same people to serve on several. One Administrator serves the District as superintendent/ principal. The proposal to allow the District/Campus Planning Committee to become synonymous with the Local Innovation Committee with the same duties as required in law of the District/Campus Planning Committee would be beneficial in order to develop a more cohesive plan that establishes continuity of programs and performance through grades PreK -12.

Therefore, Pringle-Morse CISD is claiming exemption from the specific provisions of TEC §11.251 - 11.255 allowing the District to determine the processes, including but not limited to the number of meetings within the school year, and memberships of the committee along with which decisions will be referred to the committee, except those prescribed by law.

I. Preclusion from providing alternative Uniform Group Coverage Program once the program of coverages under Chapter 1579, Insurance Code is implemented) – (TEC §22.004)

Board Policies Affected: Board Policy CRD (LEGAL)

Current Law

TEC §22.004 (i) states that a school district may not make group health coverage available to its employees pursuant to TEC 22.004(b) after the date a District implements the program of coverages provided under Chapter 1579 of the Texas Insurance Code. The current process allows no flexibility in the design of group health insurance benefits to fit the needs of all District employees. This provision also prohibits the District from procuring group health insurance benefits that may provide better coverages for its employees and at a lower cost. This provision is in direct contradiction to the wishes of the local Board of Trustees who represent community interests in this matter.

On 6/18/2020, the Board of Trustees adopted findings declaring that Texas Education Code

22.004 is not in any of the prohibited exemptions that can be included in a District's local innovation plan pursuant to Texas Education Code 12A.004 and the list of the Commissioner's prohibited exemptions in Texas Administrative Code Title 19, Chapter 102, subchapter JJ, Section 102.1309.

Plan

Increased local control of the group health benefits plan to allow the District to be responsive to employee and community needs.

J. Local School Health Advisory Council – (TEC § 28.004)

Board Policies Affected: BDF (LEGAL)

Current Law

Currently, the District is required to establish a local School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) to assist a district in ensuring that local community values are reflected in the district's health education instruction. A majority of members are required to be parents of students enrolled in the district and must not be employed by the district.

Plan

Pringle-Morse CISD will claim an exemption to this requirement. The District will determine the make-up of members to the local school health advisory council. The members of the SHAC should determine how often the committee should meet; however, the PMCISD SHAC shall meet at least once per year. Due to the District's size, the SHAC is consistently aware of the needs of the District's students and are often able to review, advice, and revise plans in fewer than four meetings.

K. Depository Contract (TEC 45.205-45.209)

Board Policies Affected: BDAE (LEGAL)

Current Law

TEC §45.205 requires that depository bank contracts not exceed a two-year term. This section provides school districts the authority to extend a depository contract for two additional two-year terms.

Plan

In such a small community with limited bank availability, the current statute requiring a Request for Proposal (RFP) promotes disruption to district operations and increases the administrative burden.

- Pringle-Morse CISD will only send depository services out for bid if the district determines contract pricing becomes uncompetitive or there is some operational or financial reason to send the district's banking services out for bid.
- Relief from TEC §45.205 allows the district to ensure that its resources are concentrated on student achievement and that campus operations are not disrupted.
- Texas Education Agency Forms will be altered to meet the needs of PMCISD

L. Mandatory DAEP (TEC 37.006(a)(2)(C-2)

Board Policies Affected: FOC (LOCAL)

Current Law

TEC § 37.006(a)(2)(C-2) provides a student must be removed from class and placed in DAEP if the student (1) within 300 feet of school property, or (2) while attending a school-sponsored or school-related activity, possesses, uses, sells, gives, or delivers to another person an e-cigarette, as defined by Section 161.081 of the Texas Health and Safety Code. This mandatory DAEP placement for “vaping” is administratively burdensome and removes students who pose no direct threat to their peers from their regular educational setting.

Plan

The District shall be excepted from the requirements of TEC § 37.006(a)(2)(C-2) so that school administrators may, but are not required, not place students who violate + TEC § 37.006(a)(2)(C-2) in DAEP.

M. DAEP and Student Discipline Requirements (TEC §37.006) (§37.008(7)) *Board Policies Affected: FOCA (LEGAL) and FOB (LEGAL)*

Current Law

TEC §37.006 states that an elementary student may not be placed in a DAEP with any other student who is not an elementary student. However, students younger than 10 may only be placed in a DAEP if they commit an expellable offense under 37.007.

Sec. §37.008(7). DISCIPLINARY ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMS. Requires each school district to provide a disciplinary alternative education program that provides for the students who are assigned to that program to be separated from students who are not assigned to the program. (a) Each school district shall provide a disciplinary alternative education program that: (7) employs only teachers who meet all certification requirements established under Subchapter B, Chapter 21.

Plan

- While Pringle-Morse CISD would make every attempt to comply with the existing education code, exemption from this requirement would allow the district to better utilize staff and facilities by allowing junior high and high school DAEP students to attend the same classroom as In School Suspension students when necessary.
- Exemption from this requirement would allow the district to make common sense decisions about which students are age appropriate to be in the same room together and allow the district to better utilize existing staff and facilities in the event of an elementary DAEP placement.
- Pringle-Morse CISD has a very limited number of students assigned to DAEP and often classes will be provided using computer-based instruction and/or a blended instructional model.

It is not necessary to have certified teachers on site. Pringle-Morse CISD is a rural district and often does not have certified teachers available when DAEP is needed. The Campus administrator will ensure that the staff of the DAEP has the support necessary to properly supervise the students assigned to the program and will lend assistance of teachers with specific certification as needed.

N. Automatic Mathematics Enrollment TEC § 28.029

Current Law

TEC § 28.029 requires the District to develop an advanced mathematics program for middle school students that is designed to enable those students to enroll in Algebra I in eighth grade. It

further requires the District to automatically enroll certain students in an advanced mathematics course.

Plan

This requirement is administratively burdensome to calculate students required to be placed in mathematics courses. The District is exempting itself from the automatic enrollment in advanced mathematics requirement as required by SB 2124. The District believes that the parents, teacher, and administrators are best suited to make determinations on which students are placed in an advanced math course and not an arbitrary scale score from a state assessment.

O. 90 Percent Attendance Rule (TEC § 25.092)

Board Policies Affected: FEC (LOCAL)

Current Law

TEC § 25.092 provides a student may not be given credit or a final grade for a class unless the student is in attendance at least 90 percent of the days the course is offered.

Although Section 55.092 provides a student may complete a plan approved by the student's principal in order to receive credit or a final grade if the student is an attendance at least 75 percent of the days a class is offered, this statute still requires the district to award class credit to students based on "seat time" rather than based on content mastery.

Plan

The District shall be excepted from the requirements of Section 25.092. The 90 percent rule is an arbitrary percentage, which means school districts award credit based on seat time rather than based on content mastery. Abstaining from the requirement means the district will not have to penalize students who miss class due to extra/co-curricular activities, academic activities, or other extenuating circumstances. This exemption will allow the district to promote student engagement, as well as social and emotional development, by encouraging more students to participate in such activities. It will also allow PMCISD administrators to award credit to students because they can show they understand the concepts, rather than because they have attended a certain number of school days. The proposal would allow counselors and administrators to refocus efforts on students who are truly at risk, while simultaneously providing rigor and relevance in the curriculum. Exemption from this requirement will provide educational advantages to students of the district by promoting learning through innovation in the 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. PMCISD will also explore other innovative ways to demonstrate mastery, given this exemption. This exemption supports the districts overarching goals and provides the flexibility needed to implement tools, resources, and training that support personalized learning for both students and teachers. Relief from Section 25.092 does not, in any way, impact or alters existing compulsory attendance requirements or University Interscholastic League ("UIL") rules. Moreover, opting out of Section 25.092 in no way limits or modifies a teacher's right to determine the finality of a grade in accordance with Texas Education Code Section 28.0214, nor does it restrict or alter a teacher's right to assign grades in accordance with Texas Education Code Section 28.0216.

P. Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator: (TEC§37.0012)

Board Policies Affected: FO (LEGAL)

Current Law

Current law requires a person be designated to serve as the campus behavior coordinator (CBC) who is primarily responsible for maintaining student discipline and implementation of Chapter 37 and allows duties imposed on a campus principal or other campus administrator to be performed by the campus behavior coordinator.

Plan

The proposal is for the District to seek exemption from the statute requiring each school to have a designated Campus Behavior Coordinator. The district believes it can better meet the needs of its students by implementing a more personal discipline approach. This approach allows the campus principal to collaborate with and/or delegate assistant principals the responsibilities of the campus behavior coordinator. This enables administrators to spend the necessary time with students to develop a rapport that can hold students accountable while teaching them how to more effectively monitor their own behavior in the future.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION

This Innovation Plan is designed to create parameters within which the District will operate, in order to provide additional student opportunities. Specific implementation plans will be developed by the appropriate personnel. Adjustments to Board Policy will be researched and adopted where appropriate.