

I. INTRODUCTION

House Bill 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 that are available to open charter enrollment schools. On September 26, 2016, the Board of Trustees (“Board”) of the Katy Independent School District passed a Resolution to Initiate the Process for Designation as a District of Innovation.

A public hearing was held during the Board Meeting on October 18, 2016. At that time, employees, parents, students and community members had the opportunity to share their opinions regarding the District’s pursuit of a designation as a District of Innovation. The Board approved moving forward with the development of a Local Innovation Plan at its meeting on October 24, 2016 and appointed a twenty-one member Local Innovation Committee (“Committee”) to develop the Plan.

II. TERM of the Local Innovation Plan

The term of the Local Innovation Plan (“Plan”) is for a period of five years, beginning at the start of the 2017-18 school year and ending at the end of the 2021-22 school year, unless the Plan is terminated or amended earlier by the Board in accordance with statute.

III. A COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

The Plan’s comprehensive educational program is guided by and aligned with the Vision Statement, Mission Statement, District Goals, and Priorities of Katy Independent School District.

A. Vision Statement

Be the legacy.

B. Mission Statement

Katy Independent School District, the leader in educational excellence, together with family and community provides unparalleled learning experiences designed to prepare and inspire each student to live an honorable, fulfilling life – to create the future.

C. District Goals

1. Student Growth and Success

Each student will be provided engaging, relevant and meaningful learning experiences which foster the acquisition of the Katy ISD Instructional Cornerstone Skills (collaboration, communication, creative thinking, critical thinking, information literacy, problem solving and social contribution) that lead to student success.

2. Safe and Orderly Learning and Working Environment

A safe, orderly, positive and quality learning and working environment will be provided for students and staff.

3. Community Engagement

Parents and community members are provided a variety of opportunities for active, collaborative involvement which support student success.

4. Effective and Efficient Operations

Resources are allocated in an efficient manner to facilitate quality learning experiences and a positive and effective work environment.

5. Organizational Improvement

Strategic data points and shared agreements are utilized to make decisions regarding planning, evaluation, and performance needs.

IV. Innovations

The District's Vision and Mission and the alignment of local practices and operations require flexibility in local control to ensure the following:

1. The instructional calendar supports the continuous improvement of student learning;
2. Increased opportunities for professional learning and growth;
3. There are opportunities to work in high performance, collaborative teams;
4. Students and staff will have a safe and secure learning environment; and
5. Family and community needs are considered as part of the District's focus on quality internal and external customer service.

Requirements of the Education Code that inhibit the District's ability to develop an instructional calendar that best meets the needs of students and the community:

1. First Day of Instruction

TEC Code Requiring Exemption: Section §25.0811

Except as provided by this section, a school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August. A school district may:

- (1) begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August if the district operates a year-round system under Section 25.084.*

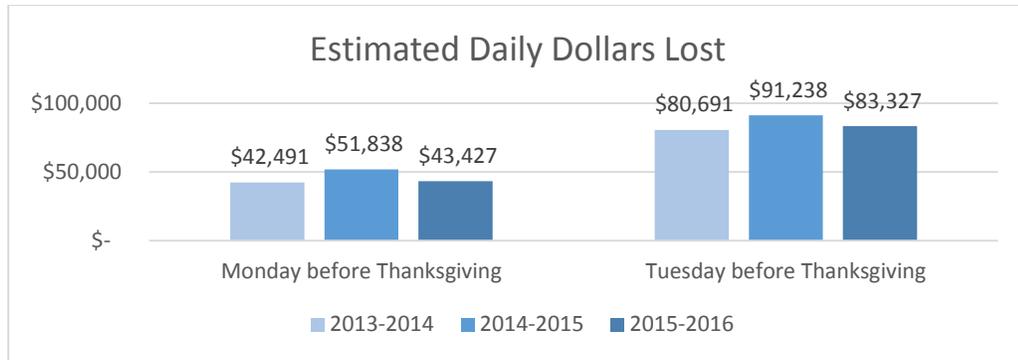
Current Status:

Texas Education Code Section §25.0811 inhibits Katy ISD's ability to establish an instructional calendar that best meets the instructional needs of students and the priorities of the community by prohibiting the District from beginning instruction before the fourth Monday in August. The fourth Monday in August is an arbitrary start date that does not meet the needs of the Katy ISD community. The District has historically ended classes for the first semester before the Winter Break to better align with college and university schedules in the area and to best accommodate high school students taking dual credit courses.

Benefit of Exemption:

Having the flexibility to establish an earlier start date will enable the District to better balance the amount of instructional time available in each semester, providing classroom teachers the opportunity to deliver more equitable learning experiences for students in the fall and spring semesters. Waiver of the required school start date will allow time at the conclusion of the school calendar for instruction prior to summer administration of state assessments required for graduation. Finally, it will also enable the District to give a full week off at Thanksgiving to alleviate the loss of funding due to student absenteeism.

There are 42 different countries and 91 languages represented in Katy ISD's student population. Many of these parents and others often take their children out of school the full week of Thanksgiving and before the end of the school year in June in order to visit family members in other states and/or to take long trips to their home countries. Besides the loss of instructional time, student absences result in a significant loss of ADA funding (\$126,000 for the Monday and Tuesday before Thanksgiving break and additional funds for instructional days at the end of the 2015-2016 school year) that could be used to support the attainment of the District's mission and vision.



By having the flexibility to end school earlier, parents will be less likely to take their children out of school prior to the last day of instruction. Graduating seniors will also be able to enroll in college courses that normally begin the first week of June to further their college and career readiness. Likewise, teachers who wish to pursue advanced college degrees or additional certifications will complete the school year in time to attend summer classes.

Local Guidelines:

The Katy Improvement Council, comprised of teachers, administrators, support personnel, parents, and business and community leaders, serves as the District’s calendar committee. This Council will develop several instructional calendar options and recommend a preferred option for Board consideration. In developing calendar options, KIC will utilize the flexibility of having more local contract on the school start date.

Exemption from the Texas Education Code Section §25.081 will require revisions in the District policies at EB (LEGAL) and (LOCAL).

2. Teacher Certification

TEC Code Requiring Exemption: Section §21.003

A person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern or teacher trainee, librarian, educational aide, administrator, educational diagnostician, or school counselor by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued as provided by Subchapter B.

Current Status:

The Texas Education Code Section §21.003 dictates that all district teachers be certified in accordance with rules adopted by the State Board of Education Certification (SBEC).

Benefit of Exemption:

In order for Katy ISD to hire personnel for Career and Technical Education hard-to-fill positions, the District must seek exemption from the law requiring certification. This would allow Katy ISD to hire nontraditional candidates who bring authentic field and industry knowledge and skills which would provide students with unparalleled learning experiences. Although it is the District's intent to limit the use of this exemption, the current statute inhibits the District's ability to recruit and employ highly qualified professionals with industry and field experience to successfully teach Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses. Potential areas of local certification may include, but are not limited to: culinary arts, automotive technology, cosmetology, criminal justice, engineering, Cisco networking, veterinary science, manufacturing, and media courses. These individuals often hold multiple certifications in their areas of expertise that would be far more beneficial in their ability to prepare students for success in these areas than would a Texas teaching certificate.

Local Guidelines:

The Superintendent, after consultation with campus leadership, the Human Resources and Career and Technical Education departments, will certify candidates that meet local credential guidelines. The Superintendent will notify the Board prior to the individual beginning employment.

Exemption from the Texas Education Code §21.003 will require the District to review its policies at DBA (LEGAL) and (LOCAL) as well as the policies at DK (LEGAL) and (LOCAL).

Candidate Qualifications may include a combination of:

- Professional work experience;
- Formal training and education;
- Relevant industry licensure, certification, or registration; and/or
- Any combination of work experience, training and education, or industry credentialed related to the subject matter he/she will be teaching.



Criminal History:

All candidates must complete the criminal background check in compliance with State Board for Education Certification (SBEC) rules mandated by TEC §22.0833 for a non-certified employee.

Teachers employed under this certification program will receive pedagogy and classroom management training.

3. Campus Behavior Coordinator

TEC Code Requiring Exemption: Section §37.0012

A person at each campus must be designated to serve as the campus behavior coordinator. The person designated may be the principal of the campus or any other campus administrator selected by the principal.

Current Status:

The District is required, by Texas Education Code §37.0012, to appoint a person at each campus to serve as campus behavior coordinator with the primary responsibility for maintaining student discipline. The campus behavior coordinator is also required to promptly notify parents, by telephone and in writing, when a student is suspended, removed to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP) or Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program (JJAEP), or taken into custody by a law enforcement officer. The requirement to designate a single employee to maintain student discipline and make all required parental notifications inhibits the District's ability to implement an effective and systematic approach to student discipline.

Benefit of Exemption:

The shared responsibility of discipline among campus principals and assistant principals will minimize the loss of instructional time and ensure the safety of all students as well as provide increased opportunities to build relational capacity with parents and students. All campus administrators engage in comprehensive professional learning to support the implementation of the Katy ISD Discipline Management Plan and Student Code of Conduct.

Assigning existing professionals the responsibility for maintaining discipline and for notifying parents of disciplinary removals and/or arrests is a much more cost effective means of fulfilling the duties of the campus behavior coordinator. Since Katy ISD employs behavior intervention specialists and Licensed Specialists in School Psychology (LSSP) that can assist students with behavior or discipline issues, decisions regarding student behavior and discipline are often collaborative in nature.

Local Guidelines:

The District will designate all campus principals and assistant principals to fulfill discipline and behavior duties.

Exemption from Texas Education Code §37.0012 will require policy revisions at FO (LEGAL) and (LOCAL) as well as the legal policies at FOA and FOC. In addition, the Student Code of Conduct will need to be revised to eliminate the reference to a campus behavior coordinator.