

# Mineola ISD

## District of Innovation Plan

### August 2016



#### I. Mineola ISD as a District of Innovation

House Bill 1842, passed during the 84<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session, permits Texas public school districts to become Districts of Innovation and to obtain exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. On February 15, 2016, the Mineola ISD Board of Trustees ("Board") passed a Resolution to 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 to improve educational outcomes for the benefit of students and the community. In its resolution, the Board clarified that it did not desire the District to be exempted from any existing laws relating to teacher contracts or teacher benefits.

On March 21, 2016, the Board held a public meeting and made the determination to pursue the District of Innovation designation. At that time, the Board decided to extend the existing Strategic Planning Committee as the appointed Local Innovation Committee comprised of diverse leaders representing a cross-section of the District's various stakeholders, including teachers, principals, parents, community members, and administrators. The Strategic Planning Committee meetings began in January and extended into the Strategic Planning / Innovation Committee in April. This draft Local Innovation Plan ("Plan") was developed from April through June (see Timeline in Section V). The Committee sought and considered input on the Plan through the community values survey, a student survey of all 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders, and input from staff and administrators. Based on direction provided by the Board and input from various District stakeholders, the Committee proposes the following Plan.

#### II. Comprehensive Educational Program

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

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

*Mineola Independent School District, in partnership with the community, is dedicated to developing lifelong learners and leaders prepared to contribute to a diverse and dynamic world.*

**B. Values:** The operation of the District as well as organizational behavior are based upon the core values of:

*Respect, Empathy, Resilience, Integrity, Ambition*

**C. Strategic Objectives:** The District Strategic Plan includes the three following objectives:

- ❖ Personalized Opportunities:
  - All students will have the opportunity to develop their individual interests and abilities in a safe and innovative environment.
- ❖ Exceptional Staff and Facilities:
  - All students will benefit by attracting and retaining excellent staff.
- ❖ Strong Support Network:
  - All students will grow through strong community partnerships.

**D. Strategies:** Establishing a culture of innovation requires flexibility and additional local control in order to achieve our District Mission and Strategic Plan. The critical elements include:

- ❖ Provide innovative curriculum and schedules within quality facilities
- ❖ Promote personalized learning through innovative instructional methods
- ❖ Promote personalized support for students and staff
- ❖ Promote innovative partnerships with the community
- ❖ Provide innovative ideas for parental involvement
- ❖ Provide innovative programs by modifying the school day and year

The District needs local flexibility for the elements presented above to improve student outcomes on college and career readiness, personalized learning, character development, social and emotional learning, leadership skills, and workforce ready skills; to expand quality engagement and enrichment opportunities for families; to enhance professional development opportunities for staff to build leadership capacity and collaborate on support systems that will benefit students; and to strengthen community partnerships.

By providing an innovative curriculum and schedules for students, the District will promote a more authentic and engaging learning environment that is challenging and supports problem solving, creative and critical thinking, and effective communication. This innovative environment will include an emphasis on Fine Arts and Career and Technology programs as well as support for all extra-curricular and academic programs. Designing and maintaining quality facilities that support innovative instructional practice is also a priority. The promotion of personalized learning through innovative instructional methods develops the leadership capacity for students to become productive, contributing members of the community with social and emotional skills. Promoting personalized support for students and staff employs a growth mindset utilizing goals setting and continuous improvement through building strong support systems. Promoting innovative partnerships with the community will increase community involvement and unify business, civic organizations, families, and schools towards support and services for the District. Providing innovative ideas for parental involvement will strengthen

the relationship of home and campuses to ensure student success. Providing innovative programs by modifying the school day and year will enable the District to provide more time for professional development for staff and parents along with more time for enrichment opportunities for students and support.

### **III. 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 outlined in this plan and the necessity for local control in decision making of the plan elements, Mineola ISD seeks exemption for all allowable TEC requirements under the HB 1842 statute. The following exemptions are highlighted as examples, but not all inclusive.

#### **A. Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Final Credit**

In order to provide engaging and challenging learning to all students, the District needs relief from Texas Education Code Section 25.092, which inhibits the goals of the Plan by not allowing the District to issue class credit or a final grade for a class if a student is not in attendance an arbitrary percentage of the time that a class is offered. In other words, the law currently requires the District to award class credit to students based on "seat time" rather than based on content mastery. Exemption from this requirement will provide educational advantages to students of the District by promoting active 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.

One of the overarching goals in the Strategic Plan within the focus area of providing engaging and challenging learning is to implement tools, resources, and training that support blended and personalized learning for both students and teachers. Blended learning, where instruction is delivered through a combination of time in class and time spent learning online, is one example where exemption from Section 25.092 will likely foster greater innovation to promote active learning and improve student outcomes. In addition, exemption from this requirement will allow the 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, by encouraging more students to participate in such activities.

Relief from Section 25.092 does not in any way impact or alter 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.

**B. First Day of Instruction**

The Mineola ISD Strategic Plan emphasizes the importance of an innovative learning environment, college and career readiness, along with leadership and social and emotional development. Texas Education Code Section 25.0811 inhibits these goals by prohibiting the District from beginning instruction before the fourth Monday in August. Flexibility to begin instruction earlier in the calendar year will enable the District to improve active learning by balancing the amount of instructional time in the semesters, which will allow teachers to better pace and deliver instruction before and after the winter break. In addition, by having the flexibility to start and end the school year earlier, students will be able to enroll in college courses that start in early June, thereby increasing college and career readiness. Finally, starting the school year earlier for students transitioning from elementary school to middle school and from middle school to high school will promote social and emotional learning by giving those students additional time and support to enable them to adjust socially and emotionally to their new campus environments.

**C. School Year Calendar**

The flexibility to utilize the 75,600-minute yearly requirement without restriction on the number of early release days and the opportunity to utilize the Optional Flexible Year Program (OFYP) will enhance the ability to increase intervention support for those students in need of additional learning time as well as provide support to build capacity in developing an exceptional staff through job-embedded professional development opportunities. Students identified in need of extra time to master skills and develop social and emotional skills will be afforded this additional time beyond the required 75,600-minute yearly requirement. The exemptions could include requirements pursuant to Texas Education Code Sections 25.081, 25.0811, 25.082, 25.083, and 25.084.

As designated in the Mineola Strategic Plan, time to collaborate within Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in addition to the need for mentoring support is a priority to provide innovative curriculum, instructional methods, and personalization for each student. Early release days will be strategically placed to maximize the professional development support for staff in planning for these interventions and student support.

**D. Teacher Certification for Dual Credit, Career and Technical Education Instructors, and High School Courses**

Within the focus area of providing engaging and challenging learning, the Strategic Plan sets forth specific goals under the initiative to improve college

and career readiness options. Three of these goals -development of post high school plans, improvement of workforce skills, and expansion of dual credit programs- are inhibited by Texas Education Code Sections 21.003, 21.053, 21.044 and 19 Texas Administrative Code Chapter 231 to the extent these laws limit the District's ability to hire teachers to teach hard-to-fill, high demand dual credit and career and technical/STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts & Mathematics) courses when high quality certified teachers are not available. In order to enable more students to obtain the educational benefit of such dual credit and career and technical/STEAM course offerings, the District seeks to establish its own local qualification requirements for such courses in lieu of the requirements set forth in law.

By obtaining exemption from existing teacher certification requirements for dual credit, career and technical/STEAM, and hard to fill content teachers, the District will have the flexibility to hire credentialed community college instructors or university professors 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. In addition, this exemption will afford the District the flexibility to hire professionals in certain trades and vocations to teach the crafts of those trades and vocations (such as welding, fine arts, etc.) in career and technical/STEAM courses if certified teachers are not available to teach those courses. This will also apply to content area teachers for hard to fill positions.

#### **E. Teacher and Administrator Appraisals**

The Mineola ISD Strategic Plan's element of developing exceptional staff requires building capacity towards personalize learning for students through engaging, innovative learning environment including project-based, blended learning and competency based learning. This goal along with the implementation of the new state T-TESS and T-PESS evaluations require additional time allocated towards a support model surrounded by goal setting, observation and feedback through coaching and professional development. A comprehensive professional development plan that is personalized for staff requires flexibility in the evaluation process mandated by the TEC in the elements and timeline of the evaluation process. These goals have been bound by the laws governing educator appraisals set forth in Texas Education Code Sections 21.351, 21.352, 21.354, 21.3541 and 19 Texas Administrative Code Chapter 150 to the extent these laws require that state standardized test scores be used as one of the evaluation measures for teachers and administrators.

In order to promote professional development that focuses on individual growth, the District needs to maintain local flexibility to build a practice of using a variety of measurements, including goal setting, observations, and

student growth progress toward learning objectives. These measures can be included in evaluations with teacher and administrator appraisals.

**F. Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator**

Embedded in multiple strategies within the Mineola ISD Strategic Plan is to help students become socially and emotionally intelligent individuals. Social and emotional learning is inhibited by Texas Education Code Section 37.0012, which constrains campus governance by requiring one person at each campus to be designated to serve as the campus behavior coordinator. This requirement inhibits social and emotional learning because it restricts the District's ability to promote a more collaborative discipline program in which the schools, along with the community provide social and emotional supports to students. By obtaining exemption from Section 37.0012, the District will be better able to focus on establishing classroom protocols and utilizing school culture to foster the development of individual responsibility, positive behavioral interventions and supports while encouraging the social and emotional development of each student and his or her responsibility toward the community.

**IV. Terms of District of Innovation Plan**

The term of the Plan is for five years, beginning at the start of the 2016-2017 school year and ending at the end of the 2020-2021 school year, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with statute. The Committee will continually monitor the effectiveness of the Plan and recommend to the Board any suggested modifications to the Plan.

Activation of the exemptions from the TEC will most likely require the revision and/or addition of Mineola 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.

**V. Strategic Planning / Innovation Process Timeline**

September 18, 2015	Superintendent Learning and Listening Tour public meeting
October 28, 2015	Superintendent Learning and Listening Tour public meeting
December 3, 2015	Superintendent Learning and Listening Tour public meeting
January 13, 2016	Superintendent Learning and Listening Tour public meeting
January 15, 2016	Strategic Planning Committee established
January 29, 2016	Strategic Planning Committee meeting
February 5, 2016	Strategic Planning Committee meeting
February 8, 2016	Superintendent Learning and Listening Tour public meeting
February 22, 2016	Design Teams established (5 teams) "What We Value" Community Survey released
February 29, 2016	Design Team meetings

March 14, 2016	Design Team meetings
March 17, 2016	Superintendent Learning and Listening Tour public meeting
March 21, 2016	Design Team meetings
March 21, 2016	Public Hearing on District of Innovation School Board passed Resolution to pursue District of Innovation (DoI) Strategic Planning Committee set as DoI Committee
March 24, 2016	Design Team meetings
March 28, 2016	Design Team meetings
April 1, 2016	Strategic Planning / DoI Committee meeting
April 14, 2016	Superintendent Learning and Listening Tour public meeting
May 22, 2016	Student Survey (6 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup> grades) released
May 31, 2016	Strategic Planning / DoI Committee meeting
June 9, 2016	Strategic Planning / DoI Committee meeting
June 20, 2016	School Board Meeting to Review District of Innovation Plan
July 1, 2016	Draft Innovation Plan released for 30-day public comment
August 11, 2016	District Advisory Council approval of District of Innovation Plan
August 15, 2016	School Board Meeting approval of District of Innovation Plan

**Mineola Independent School District  
Strategic Planning / Innovation Committee Members**

Robin Averett	Parent
Teri Bedford	Teacher
Luke Blackwell	Teacher
Demethrius Boyd	Community Member
Cynthia Clark	Teacher
Kara Ellerbee	Teacher
Shane Elmore	Parent
Marianne Eubanks	Community Member
Ange Everett	Assistant Principal
Reagan Fischer	Student
Anna Galaz	Parent
Jason Henderson	Parent
Martha Holmes	Teacher
Jayne Lankford	Community Member
Sheronda London	Paraprofessional
Jo McCarty	Community Member
Jeni Massey	Principal
Mark Neeley	Community Member
Kellam Newell	School Board Member
Donna Palmer	Counselor
Jim Phillips	Teacher
Waymon Ragsdale	Community Member
Veronica Rivera	Paraprofessional
Hector Rodriguez	Teacher
David Sauer	Principal
Mike Sorenson	Principal
Elaine Tuck	Community Member
Kim Tunnell	Superintendent
Venita Watts	Assistant Superintendent
Devante Williams	Student