

Spring Branch  
Independent School District

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District of Innovation  
**RENEWAL PLAN**

January 25, 2021



# Spring Branch Independent School District

## DISTRICT OF INNOVATION RENEWAL PLAN

### Background: The Evolution of SBISD's Strategic Framework

Since 2012, SBISD's single-focused strategic goal has been **Spring Branch T-2-4**. This goal affirms the district's aim for every Spring Branch ISD graduate to attain a **technical certificate, military training, or a two-year or four-year degree**.

When the district adopted T-2-4, the district also affirmed **four belief statements** about a great school system. The District believes that a great school system: (1) builds on the strengths and gifts of each child; (2) provides students from poverty the same opportunities for success after high school as students from non-poverty homes; (3) instills in every student the belief that he or she can achieve more than he or she thinks possible; and (4) ensures that every adult in the system is committed to the successful completion of some form of higher education for every child.

In Spring, 2015, the district adopted five **Core Values** to serve as guiding principles that undergird and inform the actions, behaviors, and decisions of our Board of Trustees, staff, students, community, and partners. These essential, non-negotiable ideals and expectations define who we are as Spring Branch ISD, individually and collectively, when we are at our best. Known as the Spring Branch Way, they are: Every Child, Collective Greatness, Collaborative Spirit, Limitless Curiosity, and Moral Compass.

On April 25, 2016, the SBISD Board of Trustees voted unanimously to become a **District of Innovation**, and adopted a strategic plan known as the Learners Journey. Since then, key aspects of the Learners Journey, including, but not limited to, professional learning communities; identification of priority standards; family education, engagement and empowerment; and implementation of an employee compensation plan, have been implemented and have become embedded in the district practices.

In July 2019, Dr. Jennifer Blaine became the SBISD Superintendent of Schools. Dr. Blaine's deep review of student performance data affirmed the need to refine the systemwide focus to achieve T-2-4 for Every Child. To bring focus and clarity to all stakeholders, Dr. Blaine identified **Superintendent Priorities**. Signaling the alignment of the board and the superintendent, these also are **the Board of Trustees Priorities**. At the elementary level, these priorities are: literacy, numeracy, and social emotional supports, with a focus on the needs of English Learners. At the secondary level, these priorities remain, with two added priorities: expansion of Career and Technical Education, and digital expansion of both technology devices and implementation of the district's learning management system.

In spring 2020, the system reviewed and refined the articulation of the strategic components that, when taken together, guide our efforts, our priorities and our accountability to meet Spring Branch T-2-4 and bring further clarity to the system. The **Superintendent’s Priorities** and **Board of Trustees’ Priorities** define areas of focus, **District and Campus Improvement Plans** set forth the action plans to meet the priorities, and **Key Performance Indicators** are the quantifiable multiple measures for which the system is accountable. All are undergirded by **SBISD’s Beliefs** and **Core Values**. Heretofore, T-2-4 has served as an aspirational goal for our students once they complete their educational experience in SBISD. To better shape the educational environment to reach the goal of T-2-4 for Every Child, the district will define the characteristics of the T-2-4 graduate at key points as they matriculate through our system. In May 2020, the SBISD Board of Trustees approved the charge for a Visioning for the Future Committee to define ***The Vision of a T-2-4 Graduate at 5<sup>th</sup> Grade, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade and 12<sup>th</sup> Grade (The Vision of a T-2-4 Graduate)***. This broad-based stakeholder committee began its work in October 2020, and will complete and present its proposed Vision of a T-2-4 Ready Graduate to Trustees in February 2021.

When taken together with the strategic components named above, ***The Vision of a T-2-4 Graduate*** will complete the district’s strategic planning framework and will shape and guide the district’s strategic work to achieve T-2-4 for Every Child over the next five years (2021-2026). The district renews its current District of Innovation Plan (Innovation Plan) to support the goal to envision the T-2-4 graduate and support Every Child as he or she moves toward that vision.

## **Background: SBISD as a District of Innovation**

### **Districts of Innovation and Exemptions from Provisions of the Texas Education Code under House Bill 1842**

House Bill 1842, passed in the 84th Texas Legislative Session, and contained in the Texas Education Code (TEC) at Chapter 12A, provides **an unprecedented opportunity** for Texas public school districts to challenge the status quo. In fall 2015, Spring Branch Independent School District began the process to become a District of Innovation. The SBISD Board of Trustees voted unanimously to become a District of Innovation on April 25, 2016. Based on the requirements in TEC, Chapter 12A and implementing regulations in the Texas Administrative Code, Texas public school districts are required to renew their District of Innovation status every five years. This document serves as Spring Branch ISD’s District of Innovation Local Innovation Renewal Plan (Renewal Plan).

As a District of Innovation, Spring Branch ISD has had the **increased flexibility and freedom necessary to move Every Child toward T-2-4 success**. Spring Branch T-2-4 is the district’s single-focused goal stating that every Spring Branch ISD graduate will attain a technical certificate, military training, or a two-year or four-year degree. As a District of Innovation, **we have the ability to make important educational decisions for our students at the local level**.

We are also able to **maximize our responsiveness on behalf of our students as their needs change and as the world around us continues to evolve**. The 14 to 15 years children spend in our system necessitate that we continue to have the flexibility to prepare them for a world that does not yet exist. We must remain positioned to **minimize the barriers** that could otherwise preclude us from doing our best work on their behalf. Leveraging the freedom, flexibility, and local control afforded as a District of Innovation assures we are empowered to continue to do so.

Under TEC, Chapter 12A, districts may identify certain requirements imposed by the Texas Education Code “that inhibit the goals of the plan and from which the district should be exempted on adoption of the plan. . .” (TEC § 12A.003(b)(2)). However, because T-2-4 requires a comprehensive approach, potentially touching numerous areas in the TEC, and because SBISD needs maximum flexibility and local control of educational decisions for students to reach its T-2-4 goal, SBISD organized its Innovation Plan to be exempt from all permissible provisions of the TEC as allowed in the statute with implementation of specific exemptions to occur over time through adoption of policies by the Board of Trustees. In compliance with TEC, Chapter 12A and its implementing regulations, SBISD does not seek exemption from the following TEC sections:

- 1) A state or federal requirement, imposed by statute or rule, applicable to an open-enrollment charter school operating under the TEC, Chapter 12, Subchapter D, including, but not limited to, the requirements listed in the TEC, § 12.104(b);
- 2) TEC, Chapter 11, Subchapters A, C, D, and E, except that SBISD may implement an exemption from the TEC, § 11.1511(b)(5) and (14) and § 11.162;
- 3) TEC, Chapter 13;
- 4) TEC, Chapter 22, Subchapter B
- 4) TEC, Chapter 25, Subchapter A, §§ 25.001, 25.002, 25.0021, 25.0031, and 25.004;
- 5) TEC, Chapter 28, §§ 28.002, 28.0021, 28.0023, 28.005, 28.0051, 28.006, 28.016, 28.0211, 28.0213, 28.0217, 28.025, 28.0254, 28.02541, 28.0255, 28.0258, 28.0259, and 28.026;
- 6) TEC, Chapter 29, Subchapter G;
- 7) TEC, Chapter 30, Subchapter
- A; 8) TEC, § 30.104;
- 9) TEC, Chapter 34;
- 10) TEC, Chapter 37, §§ 37.006(l), 37.007(e); 37.011, 37.012, 37.013, and 37.020;
- 11) TEC, Chapters 39 and 39A;
- 12) TEC, Chapter 41;
- 13) TEC, Chapter 42;
- 14) TEC, Chapter 44, §§ 44.011, 44.002, 44.003, 44.004, 44.0041, 44.005, 44.0051, 44.006, 44.007, 44.0071, 44.008, 44.009, 44.011, 44.0312, 44.032, 44.051, 44.052, 44.053, and 44.054;
- 15) TEC, Chapter 45, §§ 45.003, 45.0031, 45.005, 45.105, 45.106, 45.202, 45.203;
- 16) TEC, Chapter 46;
- 17) TEC, Chapter 48; and
- 18) TEC, Chapter 49

19) A provision of Title 2 of the Texas Education Code establishing a criminal offense. Over the past five years, the District has phased in implementation of specific exemptions from TEC in the current Innovation Plan. **As a District of Innovation, SBISD has activated five specific exemptions as outlined in the chart below. (Board Policy AF Exhibit A) and will renew these exemptions under this Renewal Plan.**

**District of Innovation:**

**List of Texas Education Code (TEC) Exemptions Activated by the SBISD Board of Trustees under TEC, Chapter 12A**

The following list specifies TEC statutes from which the Board has activated exemptions pursuant to the current Innovation Plan, and indicates the legal and local policies impacted by each exemption:

<b>TEC Exemption and Description</b>	<b>Date of Board Decision</b>	<b>Legal Policies Impacted</b>	<b>Local Policies Impacted</b>
TEC § 12A.007 Amendment, Rescission, or Renewal of Local Innovation Plan	April 25, 2016	AF(LEGAL)	AF(LOCAL)
TEC § 25.082(a) Length of School Day	December 12, 2016	EC(LEGAL)	EC(LOCAL)
TEC § 25.0811(a) First Day of Instruction	December 12, 2016	EB(LEGAL)	EB(LOCAL)
TEC § 25.092 Minimum Attendance to Earn Credit or a Final Grade	September 25, 2017	FEC(LEGAL) EI(LEGAL)	FEC(LOCAL)
TEC § 21.003 Teacher Certification	April 22, 2019	DBA(LEGAL) DK(LEGAL)	DBA(LOCAL) DCE(LOCAL) DK(LOCAL) DN(LOCAL) DNA(LOCAL)

The current Innovation Plan requires exemption from a provision of the TEC to be activated by the revision of SBISD policies. SBISD created an enhanced local policy development process that is rigorous, transparent, and inclusive of stakeholder input. Policy changes that activate an exemption from a provision in the TEC must be approved by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the membership of the Board

of Trustees. Unless and until the SBISD Board of Trustees takes action to enact a particular exemption from the TEC and related regulations through a policy revision, nothing changes in the District's compliance with state laws and local policies. When, the Board takes action under the current Innovation Plan to activate an exemption from the TEC, the fact that SBISD is enacting an exemption as a District of Innovation is clearly noted in the legal and local policies affected. A list or index of exemptions enacted as a District of Innovation is maintained in Policy AF(LOCAL) – INNOVATION DISTRICTS.

## **Overview of exemptions enacted during SBISD's First Five Years as a District of Innovation Plan which are Renewed as Part of This Renewal Plan.**

SBISD incorporated the exemption from TEC § 12A.007 in its initial vote to become a District of Innovation. In the past five years, the district implemented four additional exemptions, detailed below:

### **TEC § 12A.007 Amendment, Rescission, or Renewal of Local Innovation Plan**

SBISD determined that TEC § 12A.007 inhibits the goals of its current Innovation Plan that the District have maximum local control over the education of its students, maximum flexibility to adapt to the needs of its student population, and maximum flexibility to effect implementation of the Innovation Plan by incremental adoption of Board policies to implement and activate specific exemptions from the TEC permitted by law. In particular, SBISD determined that regarding each such implementing policy as an "amendment" to the District of Innovation Plan is inconsistent with the overall Plan design and would require an unwieldy and time-consuming process that is not in the best interests of the District's students. Therefore, SBISD specifically exempted itself from the requirements of TEC § 12A.007, to the extent that this section of the TEC would require the approval by the district-level committee or comparable committee of any policies that the SBISD Board of Trustees may adopt by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the membership of the Board to implement and activate specific exemptions permitted by law during the term of the Innovation Plan. The district has determined that activation and implementation of specific exemptions from the TEC through adoption of board policies continues to provide maximum local control over the education of its students and maximum flexibility to adapt to the needs of Every Child. In this Renewal Plan, the district continues to exempt itself from TEC, Chapter 12A.007, to the extent that this section of the TEC would require the approval by the district-level committee or comparable committee of any policies the Board of Trustees may adopt by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the membership of the Board to implement and activate specific exemptions permitted by law during the term of this Renewal Plan.

### **TEC § 25.082(a) Length of School Day**

SBISD determined that TEC § 25.082(a), which defines a school day in terms of a 7-hour day, restricts the flexibility of campuses to schedule early release or late arrival days that support students and teachers by allowing, for example, additional time for staff development or parent-teacher conferences. Added flexibility in defining the school day removes the barrier of time to enable innovation in student learning experiences, programs and opportunities. (For additional information, including considerations and safeguards, view the District of Innovation Archive [here](#)). The district has determined that the considerations which resulted in its exemption from TEC, Chapter 25.082(a) are still present and necessitate the district's continued exemption from TEC, Chapter 25.082(a) in this Renewal Plan.

### **TEC § 25.0811(a) First Day of Instruction**

SBISD determined that TEC § 25.0811(a), which says a district cannot begin school until the fourth Monday in August, restricts the flexibility for the district to recommend academic calendars that meet the needs of students, provide professional development opportunities for teachers, and best serve SBISD families. Allowing the district more flexibility on the school start date also enables the district to better balance the number of instructional days in each semester and allows more time earlier in the school year for additional instructional days prior to state and national exams. (For additional information, including considerations and safeguards, view the District of Innovation Archive [here](#)). The district has determined that the considerations which resulted in its exemption from TEC, Chapter 25.0811(a) are still present and necessitate the district's continued exemption from TEC, Chapter 25.0811(a) in this Renewal Plan.

### **TEC § 25.092 Minimum Attendance to Earn Credit or a Final Grade**

SBISD determined that TEC § 25.092 which requires a student to attend a class at least 90 percent of the days it is offered in order to earn credit for the class, defines learning by seat time rather than learning; treats all student situations the same, regardless of the unique circumstances of each; creates an academic penalty (withholding of credit) for non-academic behavior (attendance) and assigns non-academic consequences (ALA hours) to resolve, typically at the end of the semester; and creates burdensome implementation procedures for campus staff. Enacting an exemption of TEC § 25.092 shifted the control of the 90% attendance rule from the state to the district, to better serve our students by enabling (1) a focus on learning over seat time; (2) allowing more timely interventions by campus administration and teachers; and (3) ensuring a whole child approach to intervening in cases of excessive absences. (For additional information, including considerations and safeguards, view the District of Innovation Archive [here](#)). The district has determined that the considerations which resulted in its exemption from TEC, Chapter 25.092 are still present and necessitate the district's continued exemption from TEC, Chapter 25.092 in this Renewal Plan.

## TEC § 21.003 Teacher Certification

SBISD determined that TEC § 21.003 restricted flexibility in hiring teachers needed for certain courses, specifically its Career & Technical Education (CTE) and Dual Credit courses. Enacting an exemption of TEC 21.003 exempts the District from the certification requirements for new teachers of CTE courses, when an individual holds industry credentials and/or has work experience in the area(s) of the course(s) he or she is hired to teach. It also exempts the District from the CTE certification requirements of current SBISD teachers who are certified to teach non-CTE courses but have industry credentials and/or work experience that qualifies them to teach specific CTE courses, including some special education teachers. The exemption of TEC § 21.003 additionally exempts the District from the certification requirements for teachers of Dual Credit courses when those individuals hold credentials to teach the course at the college level. (For additional information, including considerations and safeguards, view the District of Innovation Archive [here](#)). The district has determined that the considerations which resulted in its exemption from TEC, Chapter 21.003 are still present and necessitate the district's continued exemption from TEC, Chapter 21.003 in this Renewal Plan.

## CLOSING

The renewal of the SBISD District of Innovation status for an additional five years, including the extension of the five exemptions enacted to date, enables us to better prepare our students according to their individualized needs and their unique gifts and talents so that **Every Child is equipped to attain T-2-4 success**. Through this Renewal Plan, SBISD leverages increased flexibility to make the best decisions for our children because we are able to make them locally. Through this Renewal Plan, the district will have the flexibility to design and continually refine the educational environment to support the vision of a T-2-4 graduate at critical stages in their educational experience. **Propelled forward by our collective commitments as a community in support of our children, we will continue to focus our collective efforts to ensure that Every Child achieves his or her unique and optimal potential.** Our children deserve it. Their future demands it.