



**SMSD**  
**LOCAL**  
*Innovation Plan*  
**2017-2022**



# Stafford MSD

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# Stafford MSD

## Local Innovation Plan Committee

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Deputy Superintendent  
Chief Academic Officer  
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Primary School Principal  
Primary School Teacher  
Primary School Teacher  
Elementary School Principal  
Intermediate School Principal  
Intermediate School Assistant Principal  
Intermediate School Teacher & SMSD Parent  
Intermediate School Parent  
Middle School Principal  
Middle School Teacher  
Middle School Teacher  
High School Principal  
High School Teacher  
High School Parent  
CTE Director  
Federal and State Programs Director  
Grants Coordinator  
Director of Multi-Lingual/ESL Programs  
President SMSD Board of Trustees  
SMSD Board of Trustee  
Community Member  
High School Parent  
City of Stafford Councilwoman  
City of Stafford Councilman  
Coordinator of Elementary Instruction  
Coordinator of Secondary Instruction  
Elementary Math Specialist  
Elementary Reading Specialist  
Secondary Reading Specialist  
SMSD Alumni  
SMSD Alumni

# Local Innovation Plan Timeline

September 2016

## Overview Presentation of the District of Innovation

On September 12, 2016, a general overview of District of Innovation was presented.

October 2016

## SMSD Board of Trustees Consider Adopting Resolution

On October 10, 2016, the SMSD Board of Trustees approved a resolution to explore the opportunity of SMSD becoming a District of Innovation

November 2016

## SMSD Board of Trustees will hold a public hearing

On November 14, 2016, the SMSD Board of Trustees appointed a District of Innovation committee who will be responsible for developing a Local Innovation Plan.

January –

February 2017

## A Local Innovation Plan will be developed

The SMSD District of Innovation Committee will develop a Local Innovation Plan. This process will include periodic dialogue and feedback between the DOI Committee and the Board of Trustees.

Host  
community  
engagement  
opportunities

Gain Insight  
&  
Identify areas  
of Work

Begin the  
Design  
Process

March 2017

## 30 Day Public Review & Notification of Intent to Vote

The SMSD District Of Innovation Committee will post the completed plan for public review and comments. At the end of the 30 day posting the Board of Trustees will approve the plan.

April 2017

Texas Education Agency Commissioner Notified

# District of Innovation Plan

## Introduction

HB 1842 was passed during the 84th Texas Legislative Session in Spring 2015, and provides Texas public school districts the opportunity to be designated as Districts of Innovation. To access these flexibilities, a school district must adopt an innovation plan, as set forth in Texas Education Code Chapter 12A.

Districts of Innovation may be exempt from a number of state statutes which allow districts to have:

- greater local control as the decision makers over the educational and instructional model for students;
- increased customization, freedom, and flexibility, with accountability, relative to state mandates that govern educational programming; and
- empowerment to innovate and think differently.

Districts are not exempt from statutes including curriculum and graduation requirements, and academic and financial accountability.

On October 10, 2016, the Stafford Municipal School District (SMSD) Board of Trustees approved a resolution to initiate the process of designation for SMSD to become 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 all SMSD students and community. The Board passed this resolution based on its:

- Commitment to the success of every student
- Practice of supporting quality education and innovation for the benefit of students; and
- Embracing the belief that an effective decision-making platform surrounded with freedom will assist in exercising local control over the decision-making process.

The SMSD Board of Trustees appointed a Local Innovation Committee comprised of community members, teachers, parents, and district and campus administrators to develop a Local Innovation Plan.







# Terms

By law, the term of the designation as a District of Innovation may not exceed five years. The term of the SMSD Local Innovation Plan begins at the start of the 2017-18 school year, and ends at the end of the 2021-22 school year, unless rescinded or renewed by a majority vote of the SMSD District of Innovation Committee. An amendment to the Plan does not change/extend the date of the term of designation as an innovation district; exemptions that were already formally approved are not required to be reviewed. The District must notify the TEA within five business days of rescission of the plan and provide a date (not to be later than the start of the following school year) at which time it will be in compliance with all sections of the TEC. During renewal, all sections of the plan and exemptions shall be reviewed and the original statutory adoption process must be followed. The District shall notify the Commissioner of Education of any actions taken to amend, rescind or renew the Plan along with the associated TEC exemptions and local approval dates. The Local Innovation Plan Committee will annually review the plan, unless the Board determines a review must be done prior to the annual review, to ensure the recommendations are continuing to meet the needs of the District as intended and are in line with the SMSD Strategic Plan efforts.

As part of the annual review process, the membership of the Local Innovation Plan Committee will be renewed and/or modified by a majority vote of the Board. Outside of the annual review/renewal process, if a member of the Local Innovation Plan Committee is unable to fulfill his/her duties, the Board may appoint a replacement by majority vote.







The Local Innovation Plan is aligned with the beliefs, vision, mission and motto of Stafford MSD and is guided by the strategies and objectives of the Strategic Design, which is the framework for the comprehensive educational program for the District and focuses the work and the daily operations of the SMSD employees in meeting the needs of the students.

# Beliefs

-  Individuals learn from both success and failure.
-  Learning is more meaningful when connections are made through relationships and life experiences.
-  Learning is fueled by curiosity and exploration.
-  Learning is a reflective process enhanced by the development and pursuit of personal goals.
-  Success is achieved by addressing the unique learning styles of the individual.
-  Learning is a shared responsibility.



# Our Goals



-  We will promote student achievement by attracting, retaining, and continuously developing highly effective individuals.
-  We will increase hands-on activities and real-world experiences for students that support learning and inspire critical thinking.
-  We will optimize learning for all students by removing barriers and utilizing flexible communication with all stakeholders.
-  We will positively impact learning and behavioral expectations by establishing an optimal student/teacher ratio and district-wide discipline system.
-  We will maximize academic performance for students and teachers through the use of state-of-the-art facilities and industry standard equipment that enable students to further enhance their ability to succeed.
-  We will create long lasting, impactful relationships within the community that help students experience new opportunities through immersion and reflection.

# Our Learner Profile







The SMSD learner.....

1. Applies critical-thinking skills to analyze and solve problems.
2. Adapts to global and diverse environments.
3. Approaches learning tasks with confidence, self-motivation, and self-discipline.
4. Enhances his or her learning with literacy skills in media, technology, and finances.
5. Appreciates diverse surroundings and engages in leadership, community services, and social justice.
6. Effectively communicates through various forms of linguistic expression and technological mediums.
7. Exhibits life skills that foster critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and effective communication which contributes positively to the community.

# Our Learner Outcomes

-  All learners will engage in meaningful, relevant, hands-on learning experiences.
-  All learners will be exposed to various fields of interest to cultivate a deeper understanding and passion for a successful future.

# Our Learner Outcomes cont.

-  All learners will be involved each day in collaborative, challenging, and engaging classroom experiences.
-  All learners will demonstrate personal and academic progress in a variety of ways.
-  All learners will take ownership of their educational experience in an environment that enables them to do so.
-  All learners will be prepared for the college or career pathway of their choice.
-  All learners will be able to effectively communicate through various methods.
-  All learners will thrive in an environment where they demonstrate interpersonal skills.

## Innovations

The SMSD vision and goals, alignment of local practices, and operations require flexibility in local control to ensure the following:

1. The instructional calendar positively impacts learning and maximizes student's academic performance;
2. Increased opportunities for professional learning and growth;
3. Ensure a platform is developed that will provide opportunities to cultivate a safe and secure learning environment; and
4. Provide students with relevant, real-world, personalized learning opportunities while ensuring their social and emotional needs are addressed.

### 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.*

#### **Proposed Flexibility**

SMSD seeks to utilize the flexibility of having more local control on the school start date, as well as explore non-traditional scheduling options that allow for flexibility. This will allow the district to determine annually, what best meets the needs of the students and community, and balance the number of instructional minutes each semester.



## **Benefits of Exemption for SMSD**

The flexible start date will allow the district to 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. In addition, this flexibility would allow the district to align with more college calendars, in the area. An earlier start date would result in an earlier end date, which will assist in creating opportunities for summer enrichment (i.e. credit recovery, Extended School Year (ESY), summer academic camps, etc.).

## **2. Teacher Certification**

TEC Code Requiring Exemption: §21.003

*A Person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern or a 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.*

### **Proposed Flexibility**

SMSD seeks to hire candidates who qualify for placement in assignments outside their traditional certification areas and to retain them. In addition, the district seeks to establish its own local certification requirements and its own requirements for training of professionals and experts to teach such courses in lieu of state requirements. These exemptions are particularly important for hard-to-fill and high-demand courses (i.e. teachers providing instruction in “Languages Other than English” (LOTE), CTE, and other hard-to-fill high demand courses). The Superintendent and/or designee, after consultation with campus leadership, Personnel Services, and the Career and Technical Education department, will certify candidates that meet local credential guidelines. The Superintendent will notify the Board prior to the individual’s employment start date. Exemption from §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). The candidate’s qualifications may include a combination of the following:

- 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 credential(s) related to the subject matter the individual will be teaching.

All candidates must complete the criminal background check in compliance with the State Board of Education Certification (SBEC) rules mandated by TEC§22.0833 for a non-certified employee. Teachers hired under this certification program will be assigned a mentor, receive content specific pedagogy and classroom management training.

## **Benefits of Exemption for SMSD**

By exempting the district from Section §21.003, the district will:

1. Have the flexibility to hire experts in their field even if they do not yet have a teaching certificate
2. Have the flexibility in hiring hard-to-fill positions
3. Have the flexibility to hire those with industry expertise, community college instructors or internal applicants seeking assignments outside of their traditional certification area.

## **3. Minimum Minutes of Instruction**

TEC Code Requiring Exemption: Section §25.081 & §25.082

*For each school Year, each school district must operate so that the district provides for at least 75,600 minutes of instruction, including intermissions and recesses. The bill also allows school districts and charter schools to add minutes as necessary to compensate for minutes of instruction lost due to school closures caused by disaster, flood, extreme weather conditions, fuel curtailment, or another calamity. A school day shall be at least seven hours each day, including intermissions and recesses.*

### **Proposed Flexibility**

SMSD seeks to adjust minutes of instruction within a school day to assist with the personalization of student's learning platform in order to address the needs of the individual student.

### **Benefits of Exemption for SMSD**

The flexibility to adjust minutes of instruction and hours within a school day will allow the district to consider unique schedules for students (i.e. altered length of a school day, later start/early release time, accelerated credit attainment and credit recovery plans for students with unique challenges and/or personal goals and plans that are not available via the traditional school day structure. The district's goal to prepare all students to be college and career ready without remediation while addressing the needs of the "whole student" (i.e. social, emotional, physical, and academic), coupled with the diverse SMSD student population, compels us to offer individualized pathways to graduation and post-secondary success. Research on naps, meditation, nature walks and the habits of exceptional scholars reveal how mental breaks increase productivity, replenish attention, solidify memories and encourage creativity. Downtime replenishes the brain's stores of attention and motivation, encourages productivity and creativity and is essential to both achieve our highest levels of performance and form stable memories in everyday life.

## 4. Class Size Ratio

TEC Code Requiring Exemption: Section §25.112

*Kinder-4<sup>th</sup> grade class sizes are to remain at or below a 22:1 student/teacher ratio according to state law. When a class exceeds this limit, the district must complete a waiver with the Texas Education Agency. These waivers are completed at the start of a school year as well as anytime a child enrolls in an elementary school at a grade level where the ratio is already maintained according to staffing projections the previous year.*

### **Proposed Flexibility**

SMSD seeks to maintain continuity for students by eliminating forced balancing due to student/teacher ratio requirements. By seeking an exception from TEC §25.112 the District would have flexibility for all campuses and classrooms for the duration of the District of Innovation designation and would not be required to submit waivers annually. While SMSD intends to remain within the guidelines of the current education code as much as possible, the district seeks flexibility to provide the best learning environment for our K-4 students.

### **Benefits of Exemption for SMSD**

Flexibility from the student/teacher ratio statutes will allow principals to make decisions about reasonable class sizes based on local factors such as the needs and interactions of the particular students involved, the age of the students, the subjects to be taught, and the teacher's skill and experience. The administration will continue to consider the timing in the school year, available space and the need for another teacher or teacher aide to ensure decisions about class size continue to be made in the best interest of the students. This exemption would provide relief from the reporting encumbrances currently required by state law.

## 5. Campus Behavior Coordinator Provisions

TEC Code Requiring Exemption: Section §37.0012

*SB 107 requires the designation of a campus behavior coordinator on each campus. This designee is responsible for maintaining student discipline and the implementation of Chapter 37, Subchapter A.*

### **Proposed Flexibility**

The proposal for SMSD is to seek exemption from the statute requiring each school to have a designated campus behavior coordinator. The relationships established between the campus administrator, students, and parents are the foundation for promoting and maintaining positive behavior. Utilizing a local process allows the administrator, who currently has a relationship with the parent and student, to be the person to make parental contact. The administrator notifies the parent of discipline or behavioral concerns, rather than having contact made by a designated behavior coordinator, who may or may not know all the students, providing a more individual and personalized approach.

## **Benefits of Exemption for SMSD**

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 communities to support the implementation of the Stafford MSD 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 Stafford MSD 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.

## **6. Teacher Appraisal System**

TEC Codes Requiring Exemption: Section §21.352, §21.354, §21.356

*In appraising teachers each school district shall use:*

- (1) The appraisal process and performance criteria developed by the commissioner; or*
- (2) An appraisal process and performance criteria*

*21.354 (a) The commissioner by rule shall establish and shall administer a comprehensive appraisal and professional development system for principals.*

*(f) In appraising principals, each school district shall use either:*

- 1. the appraisal system and school leadership standards and indicators developed or Established by the commissioner under this section; or*
- 2. a appraisal process and performance criteria:*

*21.356 The commissioner shall develop and periodically update a job description and an evaluation form for use by school districts in evaluating school counselors. The commissioner shall consult with state guidance counselor associations in the development and modification of the job description and the evaluation form.*

### **Proposed Flexibility**

SMSD proposes to allow a district committee of administrators and teachers the option to develop an alternative appraisal instrument for non-core instructional area staff (i.e. Special Education Life Skills, Inclusion, Fine Arts, Athletics, Career Technical Education (CTE) instructors, Assistant Principals, Counselors, Instructional Specialists, and Instructional paraprofessionals). SMSD proposes to have locally developed criteria for waiving the annual appraisal. The criteria for eligibility includes teachers who are probationary teachers who are certified via SBEC and who have previous evaluation results.

### **Benefits of Exemption for SMSD**

SMSD's locally developed appraisal system will benefit the district by aligning the system with job performance expectations and student learning expectations.

## 7. Transfer Student Provision

TEC Code Requiring Exemption: Section §25.036

*Under TEC 25.036, (a). 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. (b). A transfer agreement under this section shall be filed and preserved as a receiving district record for audit purposes of the agency. The board or its designee must make transfer decisions on an individual basis and may not consider as a factor in arriving at any decision regarding assignments any matter relating to the national origin of the student or the student's ancestral language. Education Code 25.032 [See also FD]*

### **Proposed Flexibility**

SMSD maintains a transfer policy under FDA (LOCAL) requiring non-resident students wishing to transfer, to file a transfer application each school year. SMSD is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one year commitment to transfer students when they violate district attendance, discipline and/or falsify documentation.

### **Benefits of Exemption for SMSD**

Stafford MSD will uphold the philosophy that SMSD students will graduate as experienced and empowered critical thinkers equipped to be productive citizens in a global and diverse society. On rare occasions student behavior warrants suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative education (DAEP) program or expulsion. In addition, student attendance may fall below the TEA truancy standard. This flexibility would allow the district to have the option of immediate revocation of student's transfer status by the Superintendent or designee at any time during the year, if the student is assigned discipline consequences of suspension, placement in a DAEP, or expulsion. In addition, students not meeting the State's 90% attendance standard may also be subject to immediate revocation of the transfer status.

## 8. Disciplinary Alternative Education Plans

TEC Code Requiring Exemption: Section §37.008

*Each school district shall provide a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP) that:*

- *Is provided in a setting other than the student's classroom*
- *Is located on or off a regular school campus*
- *Provides for the students who are assigned to the district's alternative education program to be separated from the students who are not assigned to the program*
- *Focuses on ELA, mathematics, science, history and self-discipline*
- *Summer programs provided by the District may serve students assigned to a DAEP in conjunction with other students, as determined by local policy*
- *Students in the DAEP shall be separated from students in a juvenile justice alternative education program (JJAEP)*
-

- *The school day for a DAEP shall be at least seven hours, but no more than ten hours in length each day, including intermissions and recesses; Provides not less than the minimum amount of instructional time per day required by Section §25.082 (a)*
- *Provide for student's behavioral needs*
- *A program of educational and support services may be provided to a student and the student's parents when the offense involves drugs or alcohol as specified under Education Code 37.006 and 37.007*
- *Provide supervision and counseling*
- *Employs only teachers who meet all certification requirements established under Subsection B, Chapter 21*

### **Proposed Flexibility**

The district takes exemption from Section §37.008. The SMSD DAEP will provide a combination of a computer-based and direct instruction model. This will provide students the opportunity for credit recovery and/or remain on track with the courses in which they are enrolled. The DAEP campus administrator will ensure the staff of the DAEP has the necessary support to properly supervise and educate the students assigned to the program.

### **Benefits of Exemption for SMSD**

Stafford MSD will uphold the philosophy that SMSD students will graduate college and career ready without remediation. The combined delivery of instruction will assist in addressing the varied learning styles of students assigned to the DAEP. In addition, this platform will provide an opportunity for students to recover loss credits, whereby allowing them to remain with their graduation co-hort.

## **9. Employee Benefits**

TEC Code Requiring Exemption: Section 22.004(i)

*(i) Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, a district participating in the uniform group coverage program established under Chapter 1579, Insurance Code, may not make group health coverage available to its employees under this section after the date on which the program of coverages provided under Chapter 1579, Insurance Code, is implemented.*

### **Proposed Flexibility**

SMSD proposes to offer its employees access to the group health coverage provided by the City of Stafford in addition to the uniform group coverage program established under Chapter 1579 of the Insurance Code (TRS-ActiveCare). Employees may choose to enroll in either plan.

### **Benefits of Exemption for SMSD**

Offering SMSD employees two options for group health coverage will allow SMSD to effectively recruit, retain, and develop highly effective teachers and administrative staff by enabling the LEA to compete with other employers, thereby promoting student achievement.



# 10. Mentors

TEC Code Requiring Exemption: Section 21.458(b)(3)

*(b) The commissioner shall adopt rules necessary to administer this section, including rules concerning the duties and qualifications of a teacher who serves as a mentor. The rules concerning qualifications must require that to serve as a mentor a teacher must:*

*(3) have at least three complete years of teaching experience with a superior record of assisting students, as a whole, in achieving improvement in student performance.*

## **Proposed Flexibility**

SMSD seeks flexibility in the number of years of experience required to serve as a mentor teacher. Specifically, SMSD proposes to allow teachers with a minimum of two complete years of teaching experience with a superior record of assisting students, as a whole, in achieving student performance, to serve as mentor teachers.

## **Benefits of Exemption for SMSD**

The ability to allow teachers with two complete years of teaching experience to serve as mentors will enable SMSD to ensure a high-quality mentor-mentee program for its teachers, thereby promoting student achievement by continuously developing highly effective teachers. With this exemption in place, SMSD will not have to assign mentors outside the mentee's content area or assign a mentor more than three mentees in the event that there is not a sufficient number of mentors with three years of teaching experience, thereby preserving a high-quality mentor-mentee program and avoiding overloading teachers with mentor responsibilities.