

Sheldon Independent School District



District of Innovation >>>

Every Child, Every Day

I. Introduction

House Bill 1842, passed during the 84th 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 January 17, 2017, the Sheldon Independent School District Board of Trustees passed a resolution to initiate the process of seeking a designation as a District of Innovation. The purpose of this plan is to increase local control over district operations and support local initiatives that improve educational outcomes for the students of Sheldon Independent School District. In 2017, the Sheldon ISD Board of Trustees approved the District of Innovation (DOI) Plan, which is set to expire on May 31, 2022. To continue to utilize the exemptions and to review new ones, a committee of parents, guardians, community members, and campus and district leaders was convened to begin the process of reviewing the district's current DOI plan for renewal.

Timeline

May 2017	Original DOI Plan approved by Board of Trustees
February 16, 2022	DOI Committee convened to review current plan for renewal
March 23, 2022	District Level Committee convened to revise plan for renewal
March 31, 2022	Draft plan completed and distributed to committee for feedback
April 5, 2022	Board of Trustees notified of renewal process and proposed innovations
April 14, 2022	Proposed plan available on website for 30 days for public feedback
April 19, 2022	Proposed plan presented to Board of Trustees
April 20, 2022	Notify commissioner of intent to vote on renewal
April 28, 2022	Public meeting to consider the final version of the proposed plan and to approve by a majority vote of the committee
May 17, 2022	Board of Trustees adopts the proposed local innovation plan by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the membership
May 20, 2022	Notify the commissioner of approval of the plan along with a list of approved TEC exemptions
May 27, 2022	Post a copy of the local innovation plan on the district website for the term of the designation
May 27, 2022	Provide a link to the current local innovation plan to the Texas Education Agency for posting on the agency website

Board of Trustees

Eileen Palmer, President

Erika Martinez, Secretary

Ken Coleman, Member

Fred Rivas, Member

Angela Cormier, Vice President

Latricia Archie, Member

Devora Myles, Member

District of Innovation Committee

NAME	POSITION
1. Dr. King Davis	Superintendent of Schools
2. Karen Gallow	Deputy Superintendent of Academics
3. Christie Gates	Deputy Superintendent of Administrative Services
4. James Webster	Assistant Superintendent of Student Services
5. Dr. Keith Brooks	Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction
6. Dr. Donald Stewart	Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning
7. Marcia Herrera	Assistant Superintendent of Administration
8. Juan Duenas	Assistant Superintendent of Support Services
9. Rebecca Zalesnik	Executive Director of Innovative Programs
10. Dr. Brenda Dearmon	Executive Director of Federal Programs and Grants
11. Brooke Douget	Executive Director of Special Education
12. Dr. Denise Mustin	Director of Early Childhood
13. Dr. Rachelle Ysquierdo	Director of Teaching and Learning
14. Jennifer Williams	Director of Guidance and Counseling
15. Bonita Taylor	Director of Career and Technical Education
16. Kelechi Bradley	Director of Research, Assessment, and Data
17. Suzanne Caballero	Director of Multilingual Services
18. Leroy Bradley	Director of Transportation
19. Eugene Williams	Director of Safety and Security
20. Tacarra Williams	Principal, Garrett Elementary
21. Roberto Gonzalez	Principal, Null Middle School
22. Maria Vives	Principal, Cravens Early Childhood Academy
23. Jesus Altamirano	Principal, Royalwood Elementary
24. Ashley Sampson	Principal, C. E. King Middle School
25. Raffat Saeed	Principal, C.E. King High School
26. Joel Leal	Principal, Sheldon Early Childhood Academy
27. Jana Rolling	Principal, Sheldon Elementary
28. Cheri Dixon	Principal, Monahan Elementary
29. Solmaria Benavides	Principal, Carroll Elementary
30. Jacqueline Herrera	Principal, Sheldon Lake Elementary
31. John McGee	Principal, KASE Academy
32. Lucero Aguilar	Campus Instructional Specialist, Carroll Elementary
33. Joy Blackey	Community Member
34. Cherisse Boganny	Community Member, King High School PTO Secretary
35. Francine Carter	Ney Administration, DWIIC Council Secretary
36. Diana Estrada	Teacher, Sheldon Elementary
37. Missie Kimble	Teacher, Monahan Elementary
38. Selina Mancha	Teacher, Cravens Early Childhood Academy
39. Tamara Morgan	Assistant Principal, Sheldon Early Childhood Academy
40. Heath Dear	Coordinator of Advanced Academics
41. Koleen Reynolds	Teacher, C.E. King Middle School
42. Lisa Sprehe	Teacher, Sheldon Elementary
43. Lori Stidhum	Parent
44. Jessica Stewart	Parent

II. Term

The term of the Local Innovation Plan is for five (5) years. The first term ends at the conclusion of the 2021-2022 school year. The renewal term will begin in May 2022 and will end in May 2027 unless terminated or amended earlier by the Sheldon Independent School District (ISD) Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. The implementation of the plan will be monitored to ensure it meets the goals and expectations established by the district leadership team. The committee will also make recommendations to the Board of Trustees of any modifications required to the plan.

III. A Comprehensive Education Program

The Local Innovation Plan is guided by and aligned with the Board's Vision, Mission, Core Values, and Goals to maximize the level of achievement for all students.

Sheldon ISD Vision:

Sheldon ISD aspires to be a premier district recognized for educational excellence that empowers all students to be college and career ready in a changing world.

Sheldon ISD Mission Statement:

Sheldon ISD will provide personalized learning opportunities to ensure all students graduate college and career ready.

Value Statement:

Our core values remain constant in an ever-changing world. They provide the foundation for our work and influence how we conduct ourselves and engage with others.

- All students can and will learn
- Respect and embrace our diverse community
- Nurture positive relationships
- Provide a safe and orderly environment
- Make data-driven decisions
- Ensure ethical behavior

District Goals:

1. Sheldon ISD will maximize student learning for all.
2. Sheldon ISD will attract, develop, and retain highly effective staff.
3. Sheldon ISD will continue to build positive relations with parents and community members.
4. Sheldon ISD will ensure a safe and positive learning environment.
5. Sheldon ISD will maintain and monitor systems to ensure financial accountability across the district.

Innovations:

The District of Innovation committee reviewed current innovations, investigated innovations used in comparable and surrounding districts, and explored additional innovations.

The district seeks to achieve its mission of providing personalized instruction for all learners by providing parents, families and students a choice of where and how they receive instruction by creating a cadre of specialized schools. In order to make our vision a reality, Sheldon ISD seeks to remove barriers by:

- ❖ focusing on strategies and methods to increase college and career readiness by providing programs tailored to student interests and needs;
- ❖ offering high quality professional development during the school day to improve learning outcomes while promoting critical thinking and problem-solving;
- ❖ improving student learning by developing a systemic process to monitor individual student progress over time while responding to individual student barriers that might inhibit performance;
- ❖ offering engaging opportunities for families to explore ways to contribute to student learning; and
- ❖ involving community members in meaningful ways to promote, influence, and support student achievement.

It is the district's goal to ensure an on-going partnership between families, communities, and schools. We believe such a partnership is fundamental to the academic and social success of students. This partnership will have a positive effect on student achievement and will produce a cooperative responsibility in ensuring excellence in the educational process. Sheldon ISD will continue to facilitate a decision-making model where administrators, teachers, parents, and community members work collectively and collaboratively to improve teaching and learning.

1. Teacher Evaluation

(DNA Legal, DNA Local) (TEC 21.352)

Statutory Requirement:

The adopted Texas teacher evaluation instrument is T-TESS.

All campus principals and assistant principals are required to complete three 30-minute walk-throughs and one formal 45-minute observation. Appraisers must complete a second 45-minute formal observation for all teachers on an improvement plan. The current T-TESS system works effectively when appraising content teachers; however, the instrument is difficult to adapt to specialized and support teachers (i.e. Special Education, FineArts, CTE, Athletics, etc.).

Principals are evaluated annually using the T-PESS.

Proposed Innovation:

A committee of administrators and teachers may develop a teacher evaluation system for all teachers (including fine arts, CTE, Athletics) that would be a combination of T-TESS and other best practices to create a local instrument and/or process that fits the needs and goals of Sheldon ISD.

- a. Sheldon ISD will continue to use the T-TESS evaluation system for core content teachers.
- b. SISD may utilize a locally developed teacher evaluation tool for other teachers such as fine arts, CTE, Athletics, Special Education etc. This instrument may be developed with input from central administration, campus administration, and teachers.
- c. All teachers will have an annual summative conference to discuss the year and to set classroom goals and a staff development plan.

Principals will continue to be evaluated annually using T-PESS. These locally developed plans may reflect the Sheldon ISD strengths, areas of opportunity, and goals.

Rationale:

A teacher evaluation system that accurately evaluates the competencies of our teachers will better align to their respective teaching assignment and reflect their daily teaching.

2. Teacher Certification

(DK Legal, DK Local, DK Exhibit) (TEC 21.057, 21.003)

Statutory Requirement:

In the event the district cannot locate a certified teacher for a position, or a teacher is assigned to a subject outside of his/her certification, the district must submit a request to the Texas Education Agency and wait for an approval or denial to be issued.

Proposed Innovation:

Decisions regarding certification will be handled locally. The district's goal is to continue to hire certified teachers; however, flexibility is needed in areas that are difficult to find highly effective candidates with the required teacher certification. Sheldon ISD would implement the following process:

- a. The campus principal may submit to the superintendent or superintendent's designee a request to allow a certified teacher to teach one subject that is not in the individual's certified field. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document the certified teacher's credentials that qualify the individual to teach this subject.
- b. An individual with experience (certified by the Deputy Superintendent or designee) in a CTE field could be eligible to teach a vocational skill or course through a local teaching certificate. The principal will submit the request to the superintendent or designee with the individual's certified credentials. The superintendent or designee will approve the request if the individual would be an asset to instructing the students. The employee will be at-will.
- c. An individual with experience in a highly specialized field who has industry certification/recognition may be eligible to teach a vocational skill or course. The principal will submit the request to the Superintendent or designee with the individual's credentials. The superintendent or designee will approve the request if the individual would be an asset to instructing students. Local teaching certificates will be for one year. The employee will be at-will.
- d. The campus principal may submit a request to the superintendent or designee to allow an individual with appropriate experience or credentials to teach a Language Other than English (LOTE). The district will establish a local process for verifying qualifications of these employees. The superintendent or designee will approve the request if the individual would be an asset to instructing students. Local teaching certificates will be for one year. The employee will be at-will.

Rationale:

Sheldon ISD would like to create a more diverse pool of candidates with the skills and abilities to impact student achievement in specialized areas of instruction as we continue to grow our CTE program and specialty schools. The new process will afford the district the flexibility to hire professionals in certain trades, vocations, and other specialized areas, such as

welding, health sciences, architecture and construction, LOTE, fine arts, and other academic and/or career and technical courses.

3. Probationary Contracts

(DCA Legal) (TEC 21.102 (b))

Statutory Requirement:

The probationary period for experienced teachers new to the district may not exceed one year if the person has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the previous eight years.

Proposed Innovation:

Sheldon ISD is proposing to extend the probationary period for this category to two full years of employment, which would require a person who begins employment after the school year begins to work two full years of probationary employment.

Rationale:

A one-year probationary period for a new district employee is not sufficient to evaluate the employee's effectiveness in the classroom since employee contract timelines require employment decisions to be made prior to the date all performance indicators are available. A change in this requirement would allow employees new to Sheldon a potential second year to adjust to district requirements.

4. First Day of Instruction

(EB Legal) (TEC 25.0811)

Statutory Requirement: §25.0811

FIRST DAY OF INSTRUCTION. (a) 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.

Proposed Innovation:

Renew exemptions relating to the first and last day of student instruction to best serve the students of Sheldon ISD and to create a school calendar that serves the needs of the local community.

Rationale:

Starting school before the 4th Monday in August will enable Sheldon to meet the needs of students, families, and teachers. By front-loading professional development, we can reduce teacher absences throughout the school year and provide teachers with the necessary skills and training prior to the first day of school. The flexibility will permit increased instructional days prior to the administration of state and national assessments in the spring. An innovative calendar will also support dual credit students, as well as orientations for students in transitioning grades.

5. Class Size and Student/Teacher Ratio

(EEB Legal) (TEC 25.111) (TEC 25.112) (TEC 25.113)

Statutory Requirement: TEC 25.111

STUDENT/TEACHER RATIOS. Except as provided by Section 25.112, each school district must employ a sufficient number of teachers certified under Subchapter B, Chapter 21, to maintain an average ratio of not less than one teacher for each 20 students in average daily attendance.

Statutory Requirement: TEC 25.112

Except as otherwise authorized by this section, a school district may not enroll more than 22 students in a prekindergarten, kindergarten, first, second, third, or fourth grade class.

Statutory Requirement: TEC 25.113

A campus or district that is granted an exception under Section 25.112(d) from class size limits shall provide written notice of the exception to the parent of or person standing in parental relation to each student affected by the exception.

Proposed Innovation:

Renew exemptions relating to class size waiver. To best serve the needs of Sheldon ISD students and staff, the District will strive to maintain the 22:1 ratio in all PK-4 core classrooms. However, if the class size exceeds this ratio, the Superintendent will report the circumstance to the Board of Trustees. The District will provide a plan to support the classroom for the duration of time the class remains above the 22:1 ratio. If a PK-4th grade core classroom reaches 25:1, the campus will contact the parents of the students in the classroom and inform them of the situation. A TEA waiver request will not be necessary when a PK-4th grade classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio.

Rationale:

While the District believes small class size plays a positive role in student learning, flexibility is needed to manage the logistics and timing of adding staff. We do not believe there is a negative impact to student achievement when one or two additional students are added to a class. Most importantly, research demonstrates it is the teacher in the classroom, not absolute class size, which has the greatest impact on student learning.

6. Minimum Minutes of Instruction

(EC Legal & EB Legal) (TEC 25.081)

Statutory Requirement: 25.081

For each school year, each school district must operate so that it provides for at least 75,600 minutes of instruction, including intermissions and recesses for students. The commissioner may approve the instruction of students for fewer than the number of minutes required if a calamity causes the closing of schools. If the commissioner does not approve reduced instruction time, a school district may add additional minutes to the end of the district's normal school hours as necessary to compensate for minutes of instruction lost due to a calamity. The commissioner may adopt rules, on the basis of the minimum minutes of instruction required, that refer to a minimum number of days of instruction. A day of instruction shall be 420 minutes of instruction. A school day shall be at least seven hours each day, including intermissions and recesses.

Proposed Innovation:

Sheldon ISD will continue to meet the annual expectation of 75,600 minutes of student instruction. To meet the needs of Sheldon ISD students, we seek flexibility in the length of the instructional day as defined in the statutory requirements. Sheldon ISD has been a progressive district that facilitates Professional Learning Communities (PLC) during the school day. Not being constrained by the limitations of 420 instructional minutes per day, would allow the district the flexibility to creatively adjust bell schedules to allow PLCs to meet during the instructional day while still meeting the required number of annual minutes. The district may consider options such as early release schedules and delayed starts. For alternative programs designed to meet the needs of at-risk students, a district may submit a waiver to ADA requirements or pursue an application for an Optional Flexible Day (19 TAC Chapter 129).

Rationale:

A flexible school day benefits teachers and campus leaders who participate in Professional Learning Communities to perfect their craft, deepen their content knowledge, and analyze student data. In addition, at the elementary level, this flexible day allows teachers to conference with parents about student progress. Being exempt from the minimum daily minutes requirement will also permit the district to offer alternative programming that focuses on quality instruction specifically aligned to the needs of at-risk students. The district would pursue funding based on the actual number of minutes students are in attendance.

King Academic School of Excellence (KASE) Academy provides an alternate route to graduation for students who are more successful in a non-traditional school setting. These challenges include (but are not limited to) parenting responsibilities of students; over-age students; family economic hardships that result in the students having to

work during the school day; credit deficiencies; and/or having difficulty passing state assessments. KASE students' needs are accommodated through compacted and flexible instructional days that allow students to complete graduation requirements.

7. Minimum Attendance for Class Credit (90% Attendance Rule)

(TEC 25.083(b), (TEC 25.092)

Statutory Requirement: TEC 25.083 (b)

TEC 25.083(b) limits the removal of students from class for remedial tutoring or test preparation if students would miss more than 10 percent of the school days during which the class is offered, unless the student's parent or another person standing in parental relation to the student provides to the district written consent for removal from class for such purpose.

Statutory Requirement: TEC 25.092

TEC 25.092 provides conditions for credit or final grade for a class based on student attendance for at least 90 percent of the days a class is offered. The law also provides provisions for students who are in attendance at least 75% of the days a class is offered in that he or she may be given credit or a final grade if the student completes a plan approved by the principal that meets the instructional requirements of the class.

Proposed Innovation:

Sheldon ISD seeks exemption from this provision so that the District can implement a locally-developed attendance plan for students that further personalizes learning to their individual needs.

Rationale:

Exempting from the 90% attendance rule more accurately reflects a flexible and personalized learning environment. For example, students enrolled in an "alternative learning placement" may be counted "present" for purposes of attendance, earning class credit, and calculation of the average daily attendance outside of the traditional classroom environment and the required daily attendance time. While attendance is important, course credit should be determined by content mastery rather than seat time. Exemption from this requirement will provide additional opportunities for students to obtain and recover credits, which would reduce the dropout rate and increase the graduation rates.

The proposed process will allow students to receive help in other courses, participate fully in enrichment activities, as well as allow students that are forced to miss classes due to emergency situations to receive credit by demonstrating mastery. Additionally, students who demonstrate mastery of course content prior to the scheduled end of a course would be provided the option to pursue other personalized credit opportunities.

8. Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator

(FO Legal) (TEC 37.0012)

Statutory Requirement:

TEC 37.0012 requires that a person be designated to serve as the campus behavior coordinator who is primarily responsible for maintaining student discipline and implementation of TEC Chapter 37. This provision also allows duties imposed on a campus principal or other campus administrator to be performed by the campus behavior coordinator. Duties include, but are not limited to, promptly notifying parents by telephone and in writing when a student is suspended, removed to DAEP or taken into custody by the law enforcement.

Proposed Innovation:

To best serve the needs of students, Sheldon ISD would abstain from designating only one person as the Campus Behavior Coordinator and have the option to identify multiple team members to address these needs.

Rationale:

Sheldon ISD's elementary campuses have two administrators, while the secondary campuses have three to five administrators, who by job description, currently support disciplinary efforts. The administrators on each campus work together to ensure compliance with Chapter 37, Subchapter A. One of Sheldon ISD's core values is to nurture positive relationships with all students. As a result, Sheldon ISD believes in a collaborative approach to discipline, with multiple people (rather than just one person) providing emotional and social support to students. Social and emotional learning is inhibited by TEC Section 37.0012 because it restricts Sheldon ISD's ability to promote a collaborative discipline program in which community schools provide supports to students. By obtaining exemption from Section 37.0012, Sheldon ISD will be better able to focus on establishing relationships and classroom protocols. We will utilize school culture to foster the development of individual responsibility and positive behavioral interventions and supports, while encouraging the development of each student and his or her responsibility toward the community.