MATHIS INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
"DISTRICT OF INNOVATION"

WHAT IS A DISTRICT OF INNOVATION?

During the 84th Legislative Session, House Bill 1842 was passed by the Legislature, giving traditional independent schools flexibility through a concept known as "Districts of Innovation" (DOI). Essentially, an innovation plan allows the Mathis Independent School District the ability to exempt themselves from particular requirements of the Texas Education Code, thus gaining greater local control. As a "District of Innovation", MISD gains flexibility in areas of district-level & site-based decision-making, teacher certification requirements, teacher contracts, teacher & principal appraisal instrument, school start date, minimum minutes of instruction, class size ratio, student attendance rules, teacher certification and employment contracts, teacher appraisal system, student discipline and depository contracts. The innovation plan will address the needs, goals, and values that are unique to the students of the Mathis.

In order to be designated as a "District of Innovation", the District must comply with two components before approval is granted. First, the District's most recent academic performance rating must have a "Met Standard" on the state's accountability system and secondly, the District's financial accountability rating must be at least acceptable. A DOI designation is granted for five years provided all requirements are met.

TIMELINE

March 20, 2017	**Adopt a Resolution** The Board of Trustees approved a resolution to explore the opportunity for Mathis ISD to become a District of Innovation at the regular March Board meeting.
March 20, 2017	**Have a Public Hearing** The Mathis ISD Board of Trustees held a public hearing for public input on the District of Innovation Opportunity.
March 20, 2017	**Appointment of a Committee** The Mathis ISD Board of Trustees appointed a District Local Committee to develop an innovation plan.
March 23 & 31, 2017 **April 5, 2017**	**Develop an Innovation Plan** The District-Level Committee met on three separate occasions to discuss and develop an Innovation Plan.
April 12, 2017	**District-Level Committee Approves Innovation Plan** The District-Level Committee held a public hearing and unanimously approved the Innovation Plan.
April 13 – May 15, 2017	**Plan Posted Online/Commissioner Notified** The Mathis Innovation Plan was posted on the school district's website and the Commissioner of Education was notified
May 15, 2017	**Board of Trustees Approves Innovation Plan** The Innovation Plan was presented and approved by a unanimous vote of the MISD Board of Trustees

MATHIS ISD
DOI DISTRICT-LEVEL COMMITTEE

NAME	**RELATIONSHIP TO MISD**
Francis Alaniz	Parent – Mathis Middle School
Yvonne Alfaro	Teacher – Mathis Intermediate School
Christina Alvarado	Director - Special Programs & Assessment
Albert Arismendi	Principal - Mathis High School
Luis Barrera	Teacher – Mathis Learning Center
Leo Cano	Principal – Mathis Learning Center
Alejandro Serna	Parent – Mathis Elementary School
Irene Coronado	Instructional Aide – Mathis Learning Center
Casey Cox	Teacher – Mathis Intermediate School
Jesse Dolin	Principal – Mathis Elementary School
Yolanda Dominguez	Teacher – Mathis Middle School
Gloria Garcia	Teacher – Mathis High School
Veronica Garza	Director – Special Education
Carl Gibson	Parent – Mathis High School
Benny Hernandez	Superintendent – Mathis ISD
Patti Lea	Teacher - Mathis Elementary
Anita Leija	Teacher – Mathis Elementary
Camille McCoy	Director – Federal Programs & Social Services
Marissa Montemayor	Parent – Mathis Intermediate School
Sally Moreno	Community Member – HEB
Terry Moreno	Community Member – Retired Educator
Diana Sanchez	Teacher – Mathis Intermediate School
Walter Scott	Teacher – Mathis High School
Rebecca Smith	Teacher – Mathis Middle School
Randy Tiemann	Principal – Mathis Middle School
Francis Thomas	Community Member – Retired Teacher
Cynthia Westbrook	Principal – Mathis Intermediate School

Mathis Independent School District
District of Innovation Plan

Chapter 11 – School Districts

Texas Education Code 11.251, 11.252, 11.253, 11.255

"Requirements and Configuration of the District/Site Based Management Committee"

Current Status

"Site-based decision making is a process for improving the educational outcomes at the campus and district level. Through a collaborative effort of a team of principals, teachers, campus staff, district staff, parents, and community representatives, educational outcomes are reviewed and evaluate to determine goals, strategies, and interventions to ensure improvement in student achievement. The education code and board policy require members to address areas of planning, budgeting, curriculum, staffing patterns, staff development, school organization as well as a host of other responsibilities identified in additional sections of the education code.

Benefit of Exemption

Mathis ISD shall determine the processes and memberships of its site-based management committees. Mathis ISD acknowledges the importance of developing district and campus improvement plans based upon a comprehensive needs assessment. The district feels that claiming exemption from the specific mandates of these sections is a local issue and not a state mandate. The district also feels that it will provide for greater parental involvement and better informed parents.

Chapter 21 - Educators

Texas Education Code 21.003, 21.051, 21.053, & 21.057

"State Certification Requirements for Teachers and Other Educators"

Current Status

These provisions of the Texas Education Code Section dictate that all district teachers be certified in accordance with rules adopted by the State Board of Education Certification (SBEC).

Benefit of Exemption

This will allow Mathis ISD the opportunity to hire nontraditional candidates who bring specific field experience, knowledge, and skills which would provide students with unparalleled learning experiences. It will allow flexibility to hire professionals in certain trades and vocations to teach the crafts which are more beneficial to our students than what a standard teaching certificate could accomplish. The flexibility to hire credentialed community college instructors will expand the opportunity for the dual credit courses outside of the norm. As a rural district, it will allow teachers to teach outside of their field/grade level in situation where vacancies are not filled. Although it is the District's intent to limit the use of this exemption, the District will always seek to hire certified and highly qualified teachers. All special education and bilingual teachers will continue to be SBEC certified. The District will move to establish its own local criteria/qualifications for hard to fill positions.

Chapter 21 - Educators

Texas Education Code 21.102 & 21.211

"Certified Employee Contract Rights" (specifically second probationary year for teachers hired under 5 of 8 rule) and suspensions without pay"

Current Status

A probationary contract may not be for a term exceeding one school year. The probationary contract may be renewed for two additional one-year periods, for a maximum permissible probationary contract period of three school years, except that the probationary period may not exceed one year for a person who has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment by the district.

Benefit of Exemption

The exemption will allow the opportunity for administrators to perform a fair and thorough evaluation of the employee prior to making a decision on a probationary contract. A year is not sufficient time to properly evaluate a teacher and does not allow for teacher improvement as well. It will also allow the District to make employment and financial decisions that are in the best interest of the district when an employee is alleged to have violated serious provisions of the Educator Code of Ethics or law, including crimes against children. Allows for the flexibility to best meet the needs of the district and to take immediate action to protect our students when deemed necessary.

Chapter 21 - Educators

Texas Education Code 21.352, 21.3541

"T-TESS & T-PESS Appraisal Instrument"

Current Status

In appraising teachers, each school district shall use the appraisal process and performance criteria developed by the commissioner or an appraisal process and performance criteria developed by the district- and campus-level committees established under Section 11.251; containing the items described by Sections 21.351(a)(1) and (2); and adopted by the board of trustees.

Benefit of Exemption:

While the district intends to use both the T-TESS and T-PESS in the 2017-2018 school year, the district would like the option to exercise local control of decisions regarding certain criteria within the appraisal instrument for teachers and administrators.

Chapter 21 - Educators

Texas Education Code 21.404

"450 Minutes Within Each Two-Week Period for Planning/Preparation"

Current Status

Classroom teacher is entitled to at least 450 minutes within each two-week period for instructional preparation, including parent-teacher conferences, evaluating students' work, and

planning. A planning and preparation period under this section may not be less than 45 minutes and a classroom teacher may not be required to participate in any other activity.

Benefit of Exemption
Will allow for local control to determine how best to use staff time for collaborative planning and professional development in order to best meet the needs of the students. It allows the flexibility surrounding days such as student educational trips, student field days, state testing, etc. The intent is not to reduce the time but to effectively utilize the time when deemed necessary for student/teacher benefit.

Chapter 25 – Admission, Transfer, and Attendance
Texas Education Code 25.081 & 25.082

"Minimum Minutes of Instruction and School Day"

Current Status
Each school district must operate so that the district provides for at least 75,600 minutes of instruction, including intermissions and recesses, for students. A school day shall be at least seven hours each day for 180 instructional days, including intermissions and recesses.

Benefit of Exemption
Allows for the individual independence and creativity per campus thus allowing the reduction of minutes for specific grade-levels. It creates additional opportunity for professional development and collaboration of those specific grade levels.

Chapter 25 – Admission, Transfer, and Attendance
Texas Education Code 25.0811.

"First Day of Instruction"

Current Status
A school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August.

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. Opportunity for continuous effective horizontal/vertical planning and professional development among the campuses. It allows the opportunity to attend college classes during the summer and prevents summer student regression. It allows for more instructional days prior to state assessment.

Chapter 25 – Admission, Transfer, and Attendance

Texas Education Code 25.092.

"Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Final Grade"

Current Status

A student in any grade level from kindergarten through grade 12 may not be given credit or a final grade for a class unless the student is in attendance for at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered.

Benefit of Exemption:

The exemption will eliminate large student classes and potential discipline problems due to students re-taking the class. It allows flexibility for accommodating scheduling conflicts and provides opportunities for different time structures. It also allows for additional avenues in assistance working student or students who are parents. The exemption will be another factor to assist in the reduction of the drop-out rate.

Chapter 25 – Admission, Transfer, and Attendance

Texas Education Code, Sec. 25.112 & 25.113

"Class Size, Notice of Class Size"

Current Status

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. A school district may not enroll more than 22 students in a kindergarten, first, second, third, or fourth grade class. Granted class size limits will provide written notice to parents.

Benefit of Exemption

The exemption will allow flexibility for smaller class size in efforts to better meet the needs of our struggling students. Should the situation arise where the classes get over the 22:1 ratio, it will allow the flexibility for adjustments within the campus. It alleviates the issue of finding quality teachers during the school year. The intent is to maintain a maximum of 24:1 for K-4. The exemption will also help by eliminating the "notice of class size: paperwork requirements.

Chapter 37 – Discipline; Law and Order

Texas Education Code 37.0012

"Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator"

Current Status

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. The campus behavior coordinator is primarily responsible for maintaining student discipline and the implementation of this subchapter.

Benefit of Exemption
An exemption from this requirement will provide campuses the opportunity to allow campus administrators to share in the workload and get to know their students instead of one employee handling the entire campus discipline. This will allow for better communication between the administrators, parents, and students and assist in building better relationships. Each campus should have the freedom to designate more than one campus behavior coordinator to best meet the needs of their students and teachers.

Chapter 37 – Discipline; Law and Order
Texas Education Code 37.005

"Suspension"

Current Status
The principal or other appropriate administrator may suspend a student who engages in conduct identified in the student code of conduct adopted under Section 37.001 as conduct for which a student may be suspended. A suspension under this section may not exceed three school days.

Benefit of Exemption
Exemption from this requirement will avoid excessive discretionary DAEP placements and provide campuses with the option of keeping students on campus. This will allow the opportunity to provide direct instruction from the teacher for all core classes. This will help in meeting the academic needs and services of our students.

Chapter 37 – Discipline; Law and Order
Texas Education Code 37.007(c)

"Expulsions for Serious Offenses"

Current Status
A student may be expelled if the student, while placed in a disciplinary alternative education program, engages in documented serious misbehavior while on the program campus despite documented behavioral interventions. For purposes of this subsection, "serious misbehavior" means: (1) deliberate violent behavior that poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others; (2) extortion, meaning the gaining of money or other property by force or threat; (3) conduct that constitutes coercion, as defined by Section 1.07, Penal Code; or (4) conduct that constitutes the offense of: (A) public lewdness under Section 21.07, Penal Code; (B) indecent exposure under Section 21.08, Penal Code; (C) criminal mischief under Section 28.03, Penal Code; (D) personal hazing under Section 37.152; or (E) harassment under Section 42.07(a)(1), Penal Code, of a student or district employee.

Benefit of Exemption:
The exemption will allow the removal of students whose persistent misbehavior disrupts instruction and is detrimental to the educational environment. Learning will never occur without discipline.

Chapter 37 – Discipline, Law, and Order
Texas Education Code 37.008

"Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs"

Current Status
Each school district shall provide a disciplinary alternative education program that provides a setting other than a student's regular classroom. It is located off the regular campus and separated from those students not assigned to the DAEP.

Benefit of Exemption
By allowing the exemption it will provide the opportunity for learners to be able to continue in core classes while assigned to DAEP. It will provide the opportunity to maintain rigorous coursework and not lose touch with the day to day routine. The District views this opportunity as a means to keep our discipline students from regressing academically.

Chapter 45 – School District Funds
Texas Education Code 45.205

"Term of Contract"

Current Status
The depository bank when selected shall serve for a term of two years and until its successor is selected and has qualified. A school district and the district's depository bank may agree to extend a depository contract for two additional two-year terms. An extension under this subsection is not subject to the requirements of Section 45.206. The contract term and any extension must coincide with the school district's fiscal year.

Benefit of Exemption
The depository provision allows the district's existing bank contract to be extended beyond the total 6-year allowable contract term if the district determines contract pricing remains competitive. It alleviates the administrative burden related of preparing and reviewing Request for Proposals. It allows Mathis ISD to continue its strong relations with the only bank in Mathis.

Mathis Independent School District

Press Release:

April 26, 2017

Mathis ISD Superintendent Discusses Advantages of a District Innovation



The 84th Legislature passed House Bill 1842 to allow a school district to become a District of Innovation. The legislature's intent was to allow a district local control to design programs specific to community needs.

The Mathis ISD Board of Trustees appointed a committee of faculty, parents, community members, and district administrators to work with Superintendent Benny Hernandez to develop a Local Innovation Plan. The "Local Committee" has developed the 2017-2018 school year calendar, approved by district faculty, and by the Board of Trustees at their April 10 meeting.

Superintendent Hernandez met with 75 interested parents, faculty, and community members at a public hearing on Wednesday, April 13. The extended school year calendar was a framework to illustrate the changes to be implemented in the Mathis ISD District of Innovation.

The 2017-2018 school year begins July 26 instead of the state-mandated start date of August 28; the school year ends May 24. The additional instructional days allow the district to meet state mandated student instructional goals with shorter school days for students and faculty. Superintendent Hernandez said, "Our students need relief from long school days, and so do our teachers." Grading periods are changed from six weeks to nine weeks, with a week's vacation for students and faculty at the end of each nine week period.

Students will have an eight-week summer vacation during which the district can provide students enrichment, and sports camp programs.

Superintendent Hernandez discussed specific examples of how class size, flexibility in hiring teachers, faculty appraisals, discipline, attendance rules, district budgeting will produce a successful academic and sustainable Mathis public school system.

Beginning April 18 Superintendent Hernandez held meetings with parents at three campuses and on April 25 Mathis Middle School Principal Randy Tiemann met with the Middle School parents

to answer questions parents had about the 2017-2018 calendar, and the changes the District of Innovation Plan allows the district to implement.

ADD POLICY

Note: This local policy has been revised in accordance with the District's innovation plan.[1]

Persistent Misbehavior

In addition to serious misbehavior as defined by law and in accordance with the District's innovation plan and Student Code of Conduct, a student assigned to a disciplinary alternative education program (DAEP) who engages in persistent misbehavior may be expelled.

[1] Innovation Plan:
[http://www.mathisisd.org/searchResults.aspx?q=district of innovation plan]

Approved May 15, 2017