MATHIS INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
"DISTRICT OF INNOVATION"
Originally Approved by Board of Trustees on May 15, 2017
Amended by the Board of Trustees on October 15, 2018
Renewed by Board of Trustees on May 15, 2022
Amended by the Board of Trustees on May 20, 2024
Amended by the Board of Trustees on December 9, 2024

WHAT IS A DISTRICT OF INNOVATION?

During the 84th Legislative Session, House Bill 1842 was passed by the Legislature, giving traditional independent school districts 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 certain requirements of the Texas Education Code, thus gaining greater local control.

The Mathis Independent School District has been a "District of Innovation" since May of 2017. As a "District of Innovation" (DOI), MISD gained flexibility in the 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, depository contracts, and group health benefits for school employees. The District's innovation plan has been instrumental in addressing the values, needs, and goals that are essential for the success of the students at the Mathis independent School District.

A DOI designation is granted for five years provided all requirements are met and may be renewed at any time during the term of the plan. In doing so, the renewed plan (19 TAC §102.1311) takes effect only after the term of the district's current innovation plan expires. Since the district intends for the term of a renewed plan to begin prior to the expiration of its current plan (May 2017), the renewed plan supersedes the district's current plan at that time and the current plan is considered void

Mathis Independent School District DOI Plan

Chapter 11 TEC §11.251, §11.252, §11.253, §11.255 – School Districts *"Requirements and Configuration of the District/Site Based Management Committee"*	
Current Status	**Benefit of Exemption**
"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 evaluated 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.	Mathis ISD shall determine the processes and membership of its site-based management committees. Mathis ISD acknowledges the importance of developing district and campus improvement plans based upon 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.

Teacher Certification (TEC §21.003, §21.051, §21.053, §21.057) Relevant Board Policies: DK (Legal and Local)	
Current Law	**Proposed**
TEACHER CERTIFICATION. TEC 21.003 states that a person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern or teacher trainee, librarian, educational aide, administrator, educational diagnostician, or school counselor by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate issued by the appropriate state agency. The current certification requirement severely limits the district's options to hire professionals with work related experience or degrees to teach a variety of courses, including Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Science Technology Engineering and related courses.	Mathis ISD will maintain its current expectation for employee certification and will make every attempt to hire individuals with appropriate certification for the position in question; however, where that is not possible, the District will have flexibility to: • Allow certified teachers to teach classes outside of their certification in a related area or field. The principal must make such a request to the superintendent and must specify in writing the reason for the request and document the credentials the certified teacher possesses qualifying him/her to teach the proposed subject. • Hire individuals with skills in CTE, including industry professionals, post-secondary instructors, and trade-related professionals to teach vocational classes. The principal must submit a request for local certification to the superintendent. The principal must specify the reason for the request and list any credentials the applicant possesses that would qualify that individual to teach the proposed subject. Qualification criteria would include professional work experience, formal training and education, relevant industry license, certification, or registration; or any combination of these. The Superintendent will notify the Board prior to employment. • Hire candidates who have not met certification requirements in non-CTE areas, critical shortage areas, and who transfer from out-of-state. All candidates would be carefully considered to ensure the individual has sufficient education and expertise to provide instruction necessary to meet the TEKS for the course to be taught. Additionally, all non-certified teachers (except for CTE teachers) will be on a non-Chapter 21 contract (employment agreement). The Superintendent will notify the Board prior to employment. • All non-Chapter 21 contract teacher positions will be posted 10 days prior to the last day of school. If the position is not filled by a certified teacher, the principal may request a new non-Chapter 21 contract to be offered for the subsequent year.

Transfer Students (25 TEC §25.036) Relevant Board Policies: FDA (Legal and Local)	
Current Law	**Proposed**
Under Texas Education Code, a district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district. Under TEC 25.036, a transfer is interpreted to be for a period of one school year. Mathis ISD maintains a transfer policy under FDA (Local) requiring non-resident students wishing to transfer to file a transfer application each school year.	Mathis ISD is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one-year commitment in accepting transfer applicants. On rare occasions, student behavior warrants suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion. In addition, student attendance may fall below the TEA truancy standard. Nonresident students who have been accepted as inter-district transfer may have such transfer status revoked by the superintendent at any time during the year if the student is assigned discipline consequences of suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion. In addition, students not meeting the State's 90% attendance standard may also be subject to immediate revocation of the transfer status.

Chapter 21 TEC §21.102 – Educators *"Certified Employee Contract Rights" (specifically second probationary year for teachers hired under 5 of 8 rule)*	
Current Status	**Benefit of Exemption**
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.	The exemption will allow the opportunity for administrators to perform a fair and thorough evaluation of the employee prior to deciding 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 TEC §21.352, §21.3541– Educators *"T-TESS & T-PESS Appraisal Instrument"*	
Current Status	**Benefit of Exemption**
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.	While the district intends to use both the T-TESS and T- PESS for the coming school years, 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 TEC §21.404 – Educators *"450 Minutes Within Each Two-Week Period for Planning/Preparation"*	
Current Status	**Benefit of Exemption**
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.	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 TEC §25.0811 – Admission, Transfer, and Attendance *"First Day of Instruction"*	
Current Status	**Benefit of Exemption**
A school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August.	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.
Absences for College Visits (TEC §25.087 (b-2)) Relevant Board Policies: FEA and FEC (Legal and Local)	
Current Law	**Proposed**
EXCUSED ABSENCES. A school district may excuse a student from attending school to visit an institution of higher education accredited by a generally recognized accrediting organization during the student's junior and senior years of high school for the purpose of determining the student's interest in attending the institution of higher education, provided that: 1. The district may not excuse for this purpose for more than two days during the student's junior year and two days during the student's senior year; and 2. The district adopts: (A) a policy to determine when an absence will be excused for this purpose; and (B) a procedure to verify the student's visit at the institution of higher education.	Currently students are only allowed to have two excused school days to visit college or universities as college days. In some cases, where students are visiting colleges out of state, students need more than the two days that are currently allowed to safely visit a college they are interested in attending or doing comparative visits to multiple colleges. Mathis ISD is seeking flexibility for an exemption from the two-day excused absence limit for students visiting institutions of higher education. Students would be allowed more than the current two-day excused absence limit. Each request and situation would be evaluated by the high school counselor on a case-by-case basis and approved by the principal.

Chapter 25 TEC §25.112, §25.113 – Admission, Transfer, and Attendance *"Class Size, Notice of Class Size"*	
Current Status	**Benefit of Exemption**
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.	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 TEC §37.0012 – Discipline; Law and Order *"Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator"*	
Current Status	**Benefit of Exemption**
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.	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 TEC §37.005 – Discipline; Law and Order *"Suspension"*	
Current Status	**Benefit of Exemption**
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.	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 TEC §37.007(c) - Discipline; Law and Order *"Expulsions for Serious Offenses"*	
Current Status	**Benefit of Exemption**
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.	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 TEC §37.008 – Discipline, Law, and Order *"Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs"*	
Current Status	**Benefit of Exemption**
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.	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 TEC §45.205 – School District Funds *"Term of Contract"*	
Current Status	**Benefit of Exemption**
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.	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.