

EIC Meeting Minutes:
November 12, 2024

1. Welcome (4:59-5:01)

Amy Pena and Efrain Garza

Welcome and introduction from Mr. Efrain Garza. Mr. Garza shared that he has been appointed as the EIC lead, with Mrs. Pena continuing in her role as EIC President. Mr. Garza will share the vision he and Dr. Lara have outlined for our district during EIC meetings. Throughout the year, EIC will convene to address key topics impacting our students.

2. Approval of EIC Minutes from October 9, 2024 (5:01-5:04)

Amy Pena and Efrain Garza

All EIC members received a copy of the EIC October 9th Meeting Minutes and reviewed them.

Adjust EIC Minute Dates for the 2024-2025 school year (5:04-5:08)

First Change: November 12- dates changed to Tuesday

Second Change: Dates changed for upcoming EIC Meetings to fit for Tuesdays:

- Nov 12
- Jan 14
- Feb 4
- March 4

Motion 1: Diego Leal

Motion 2: Elizabeth Arredondo

Revisions to October 9th Meeting Minutes:

EIC Members were misspelled in the list of committee members present and/or when motions were documented.

Changes:

Joshua Zamora and Jacqueline Hinojosa

Motion 1: Diego Leal

Motion 2: Rene Lerma

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3. Academic Calendar Minutes Adjustments for the 24-25 school year (5:08-5:13)

Eric Gutierrez and Efrain Garza

Our current school calendar includes a 4 p.m. release time for final exams during both the first and second semesters. Science Academy has received feedback from students, staff, and parents regarding the reasoning behind this schedule. During a semester exam review, Science Academy surveyed 66 teaching staff members and discussed the pros and cons of a 4 p.m. versus a 1:30 p.m. release time.

Pros of the 4 p.m. Release Time:

- Aligns with our current school calendar.
- Ensures students attend every class, allowing for two-hour semester exams followed by an hour in their non-testing classes.

Pros of the 1:30 p.m. Release Option:

- Supports students' social-emotional wellness during challenging semester exams, giving them time to rest and prepare for exams the following day.
- Reduces the likelihood of extra assignments after exams, as teachers often need to keep students engaged to minimize discipline issues.
- Allows students who miss an exam to complete it sooner rather than waiting until the next semester during the 1:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. window.
- Provides teachers with additional time to grade exams and complete required documentation within regular working hours.

Transitioning to a 1:30 p.m. release time for semester 1 exams would remove 150 instructional minutes from our calendar each day of exams. STISD's approved 2024-25 school calendar includes a total of 78,568 instructional minutes, which is 3,000 minutes above the TEA-required minimum of 75,600. Adjusting to a 1:30 p.m. release during exam days would reduce our total minutes by 1,200, leaving us with a 2,000-minute surplus according to TEA requirements. This change would still allow STISD's calendar to maintain four surplus days, preserving our designated weather make-up days and holidays. Mr. Gutierrez reports that all 66 teaching staff members voted in favor of the 1:30 p.m. release option in his survey.

Motion to change the district's semester exam release time to 1:30 was initiated by Mrs. Pena.

Motion 1: Elizabeth Arredondo

Motion 2: Rene Lerma

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Comment made by Mr. Garza: He emphasized the importance of teachers' input and shared his commitment to gathering feedback from staff. Mr. Garza noted that the current calendar allows limited flexibility and reminded the group that the 2024-25 school calendar was approved by the EIC committee last year. He encouraged EIC members to carefully consider their upcoming decisions with the students' best interests in mind.

Questions/Comments from EIC Members:

- Rene Lerma – Supports a 1:30 p.m. release time, as it provides students with extra time to study and helps alleviate stress.
- Jazmin Garza– Agrees from a student's perspective, noting that having time after 1:30 p.m. to make up any missed semester exams is beneficial, as it eliminates the need to wait until the following semester.
- Diego Leal – Shared that in his previous district, anxiety levels were high among students and teachers during semester exams when students were required to attend classes all day.

Motion: All 13 committee members voted “Yes.”

4. Review/Possible action for the 25-26 school year calendar (5:13-5:53)

Efrain Garza

2025-2026 School Year Calendar Review

Professional Development (PD): Concerns about timing and effectiveness of front-loaded PD days. Suggestion to redistribute PD days to avoid burnout, particularly moving some from May to January.

Dual Program Participation: Addressing the impact of dual enrollment on the calendar.

Compliance Training: Increased requirements for training in special education, safety, and other areas.

Flexibility as a District of Innovation: Discussion of options such as starting school earlier or adjusting the number of instructional days.

Feedback: Meet-the-Teacher night is preferred after a workday for better classroom preparation. Additionally, calendar changes need to balance preparation time for teachers and compliance with instructional time requirements.

Professional Development Feedback

Suggestions made by Committee members and Mr. Garza: Incorporate more collaborative workdays for teachers to plan within subject groups. Allocate time during or immediately after PD sessions for implementation planning. Adjust timing of STAR and EOC preparation sessions to earlier in the semester.

Concerns: Teachers report difficulty transitioning directly from vacation into PD and teaching. End-of-year PD days are seen as less effective due to fatigue.

Adjustments to Work and Instruction Days

Proposal: Start the school year earlier to allow for additional preparation and workdays before students arrive.

Concerns: Balancing compliance with federal and state requirements for instructional minutes. Impact on summer plans and teacher morale.

Feedback and Proposals

Teacher Well-being: Suggestion for a monthly day off to manage long stretches like September. Acknowledgment of increased compliance and training demands on teachers.

Long-term Calendar Considerations: Ideas such as a fall break were discussed but deemed challenging to implement. Continuous emphasis on the importance of enrollment for district funding and resources.

5. Closing of Minutes (5:53-6:02)

Amy Pena & Efrain Garza

Next Discussion Points

- **Calendar Development:** Incorporate teacher feedback into finalizing the 2025-2026 academic calendar.
- **Bell Schedule Review:** Evaluate the current schedule for relevance and effectiveness in current educational needs.

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- **Future Meetings:** Discuss PD structures and school day designs in the upcoming CIC meeting.

Mrs. Pena initiated the motion of closing meeting minutes.

Motion 1: Elvis Reid

Motion 2: Janie Sanchez