



MANSFIELD INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
A Destination District Committed to Excellence.

Mansfield ISD District of Innovation
District Advisory Committee Minutes

Wednesday, April 23, 2025

Time: 5:30 PM

Location: MISD Great Room

605 E Broad St., Mansfield, TX 76063

Facilitator: Fernando Benavides, MISD Associate Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction, & Accountability

Time Keeper: David Wright, MISD Associate Superintendent of Student Services

Minutes: Kathleen Garza, Admin Asst. - Associate Superintendent of Mr. Benavides

Discussion Items

The MISD District of Innovation Advisory Committee Meeting started at 5:30 PM with a welcome message from Associate Superintendent Mr. Fernando Benavides.

Fernando Benavides briefly explained when and why the original District of Innovation (DOI) Advisory Committee was formed in 2016. He shared that the current DOI Plan began in March 2016, and the most recent updates were adopted in 2021. He explained that updates are necessary for continued success within our district and for our students.

Dr. Leighann Tamplen, Director of CTE & CCMR, was introduced to discuss TEC 21.003. She explained the current DOI exemption and how it applies to hiring non-traditional staff to support the district's current CTE certification programs. Dr. Tamplen recommended we revise the wording within the drafted policy presented today on page 3. She suggested amending the first bullet point in subsection A, *Certification Required*, to read, "Industry certified and/or trade professionals to teach Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses."

David Wright, Associate Superintendent of Student Services, followed that statement by sharing that the district will never use this exemption to hire a non-certified teacher and place them in a general education classroom. This exemption is intended to hire industry-based specialists to support CTE courses. Fernando Benavides asked if committee members had any questions. There were none regarding this exemption.

Fernando Benavides introduced Dr. Georgie Swize, Area Superintendent, to discuss TEC 25.0811 and TEC 25.0812. Dr. Swize reviewed the logistics behind creating the calendar so

that it continues to support the strong programs offered to students. Fernando Benavides asked if committee members had any questions. There were none regarding this exemption.

Dr. Jennifer Stoecker, Associate Superintendent of Human Resources, explained the TEC 33.002(b) exemption to the committee. The current adoption allows the district flexibility to use social workers instead of certified counselors on campuses where their specific services would better serve families. She mentioned that social workers were utilized when opening the Jandrucko Academy due to its specific family population. This exemption allowed families to receive wrap-around services and specific supports that a general counselor could not provide as efficiently.

Community member Nigel Lewis requested clarification on why the campus has since transitioned back to counselors from social workers. Dr. Stoecker and Dr. Swize both clarified the rationale behind that decision.

Dr. Matthew Brown, Executive Director of Student Services, was introduced to discuss the current exemption pertaining to TEC 37.0012. Dr. Brown stated that the current law requires one campus discipline coordinator. On campuses with over 600 students, this would look very strenuous. However, with the current exemption, campus administrators are provided with the flexibility to assist with student discipline. He recommends that the current exemption remain in place. It allows administrators to build relationships with students and families in smaller ratios.

A committee member asked how this flexibility affects decision-making processes. David Wright explained how the statute is interpreted and implemented on campus. Furthermore, Mr. Wright reinforced Dr. Brown's statement by confirming that having one coordinator per campus would ultimately hinder meeting students' needs. To make the process more equitable for all students, we utilize the exemption to address issues promptly and provide the necessary support.

Community member Nigel Lewis asked a follow-up question about how discipline is maintained uniformly across the district. Mr. Wright confirmed that MISD has established and posted guidelines on the website. Ultimately, campus administrators undertake various actions based on specific offenses. Should a unique situation arise, executive directors and associate superintendents are always available for guidance.

Community member Dale Ramirez asked if the district plans to keep the current plan. Dr. Brown confirmed that the recommendation for a vote is being put forth tonight.

Fernando Benavides then discussed TEC 25.092 and the current exemption in place. Mr. Benavides recommends maintaining this exemption. He introduced the principal of Phoenix Academy, Miguel Garza, to provide further explanation. Mr. Garza spoke about how this exemption affects his campus. Many of his student population completes coursework virtually due to personal or family obstacles they currently face. He briefly reviewed the three specialty programs at Phoenix Academy and how they each serve a unique purpose for at-risk families.

Community member Mr. Lewis asked if there are alternative ways this exemption can be utilized to support students who are not considered at risk. Fernando Benavides confirmed that the exemption may be applied to meet the needs of other high school students throughout the district.

Fernando Benavides informed the committee of the school board's recent policy revision of the FDA (local) and the need to add an amendment to the current innovation plan.

Dr. Matthew Brown took the floor to speak about the new revision regarding interdistrict transfers and what that looks like going forward. He summarized the current intra vs interdistrict transfers policy and how they differ. The current interdistrict transfer statute outlines that acceptance into a district is for an entire calendar school year. The Students Services Department requested that an exemption be included in the DOI plan to provide flexibility in the revocation of an interdistrict transfer. Dr. Brown reviewed how the proposed exemption would hold these approved interdistrict transfers to specific conditions while attending MISD schools. The Student Services Department, with the recommendation of the principal, could revoke the interdistrict transfer if conditions are not met throughout the school year.

A question was raised about when the new interdistrict policy will take effect. Dr. Brown confirmed that it will take place in the Fall of 2025.

Concerns were raised by campus staff inquiring about the term dates of a potentially revoked transfer. David Wright confirmed that, depending on the rationale for the revocation, it can ultimately result in an immediate removal from the district. Ideally, should an issue arise, the campus would begin a process with student services to work with the families until the end of the semester.

Miriam Kagaso, principal at Cross Timbers Intermediate, asked about attendance support plans and whether the process with student services would be similar to that. Dr. Brown confirmed that that was correct. Dr. Brown also confirmed that the district will always provide due process to support families as much as possible before removing a student from the district.

Miko Rhines, principal at Jones Elementary, asked if local assessments and state-level testing will be considered when the district reviews potential and current transfers' academics. Dr. Swize replied that the guidelines will consider not only state assessments but also the review of other systems for the academic requirement.

Campus-level staff questioned student services about how transparent they will be about the behavior expectations of an interdistrict transfer. Dr. Brown confirmed that the district has procedures for current students and that the same procedures will be applied to interdistrict students.

Allison Blackwell, a teacher at Worley Middle, shared that her campus has been the recipient of transfers being revoked and current MISD students being sent back to their home campuses.

Michael Thomas, principal at Danny Jones Middle, asked for clarification regarding the classification of safety concerns. Dr. Brown confirmed that they would fall under the threat assessment process. David Wright confirmed that the level of the safety concern might also be listed under immediate revocation.

A committee member asked what a transfer to a home campus would look like if it involved an interdistrict student who has demonstrated behavioral issues such as bullying. Dr. Brown confirmed that the interdistrict transfer would be revoked in that situation. The district will not move a student on an interdistrict transfer to another campus if they violate the bullying policy.

The committee member also asked about what, if any, math assessments are being included in the academic review for inter-district students. Dr. Swize confirmed there is a current list of approved assessments the district will consider.

David Wright clarified why the district is asking for exemptions with the new adoptions. The exemptions are meant to work with families and positively impact students. However, if these accepted families falsify documents or misrepresent themselves in the application process, MISD can revoke their transfer. The district has and will continue to give families due process.

Community member Nigel Lewis asked if a family that lives within the MISD attendance zone and chooses to enroll their student outside of the district returns will be considered interdistrict. Fernando Benavides replied that students returning to MISD from another district would fall under standard district enrollment guidelines. Dr. Brown concurred with that response.

A committee member asked if this current policy would apply to other grade levels, such as pre-kindergarten. David Wright confirmed that only kindergarten to 4th grade are currently being considered. However, the policy allows future expansion into other grade levels and campuses based on board approval.

A committee member asked if inter-district transfers would automatically accept siblings who met the criteria for each sibling. Dr. Brown confirmed that if both siblings meet the requirements and space is available on the same campus, they will both be accepted.

Community member Amado Flores requested clarification on the vetting process for student acceptance. Does this policy make it easier for families to be transferred into MISD? Fernando Benavides stated that the guidelines from our Student Services department will provide the standards for processing interdistrict transfer requests.

Miriam Kagaso asked if interdistrict students would have the opportunity to apply to select choice programs within the district. Dr. Brown confirmed that choice programs will not be available for interdistrict transfer students.

Fernando Benavides asked if there were no other questions and provided a draft of the proposed renewed DOI plan. He explained the advisory committee's voting procedures and the next steps for board approval.

A committee member questioned whether the plan could be amended within five years. Fernando Benavides confirmed that, according to the law, the committee may meet anytime before the expiration date to make any necessary amendments.

At this time, Fernando Benavides asked for a motion to accept the current plan as proposed. Jennifer Stoecker, Associate Superintendent of HR, made the motion, and Michael Thomas, principal of Danny Jones Middle School, seconded it.

A vote to accept the current plan as proposed was taken and passed;
20 (affirmative), 0 (against), 3 (abstained)

The meeting adjourned at 7:02 PM.