

**Santa Maria Independent School District
District of Innovation
May 2025**



Board Adopted on May 14, 2025

Strategic Planning Committee Membership

Member Name	Role in Strategic Planning Committee
Dr. Joseph Villarreal	Superintendent of Schools
Rene Salinas	Student Services Director
Yliana Gonzalez	Business Manager
Elizebeth Stenhouse	HR Supervisor
Doralee Rivera-Munoz	District Project Manager
Yadira Flores	High School Principal
Jay Viera	Middle School Principal
Dr. Jacob Camacho	TGE Principal
Mary Moreno	Middle School Counselor
Rosalinda Aguayo	TGE Counselor
Ana Vega	Fam & Comm Engagement
Claudia Davila	Teacher
Maria Rodriguez	Teacher
Fernando Ybanez	Teacher
Aldo Fonrouge	Teacher
Maria Saldivar	Special Ed Teacher
Jose L. Ramirez	Community Business
Lucia Perez	Parent
Karla Cardenas	Parent
Lidia Aguirre	Parent
Jonathan Torres	Technology Supervisor
Baudelio Castillo	Chief of Police

I. Introduction

House Bill 1842, passed during the 84th Texas Legislative Session provides public school districts the opportunity to seek designation as a District of Innovation to obtain exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. On Monday, January 20th, the Board of Trustees adopted a resolution to initiate the process of designation as a District of Innovation.

II. Term

The term of the District of Innovation Plan, as outlined by the Texas Education Agency, is five years; therefore, the plan would commence with the 2025-2026 academic year and conclude at the end of the 2029-2030 school year, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. The Strategic Plan Committee (SPC) would continually monitor the effectiveness of the Plan and recommend to the Board any suggested modifications as needed to address innovative disruptions.

III. Innovations

To achieve the District's Mission and Board Goals, to align the District's practices and operations and to meet the expectations of the Strategic Plan, flexibility is required to exert local control, at both the District and campus levels to create the following benefits:

- An academic calendar to address the needs of students. This innovation will guide the decision making process for future academic calendar development.
- An innovative practice for addressing teacher certification so as to enhance CTE instruction.

The District requires local flexibility in the areas listed above to support each student in attaining the skills needed to succeed in the college/career pathway of their choice through personalized learning and to ensure a system aligned to the needs of our graduates as they enter the post-secondary world.

IV. Established Vision Guiding the Strategic Plan

- SMISD will encourage and challenge students to reach their full educational potential to meet College and Career Readiness Standards and graduate from high school.
- SMISD will provide for the recruitment, development, support and retention of qualified staff.
- SMISD will provide training in instructional applications utilizing up-to-date technology equipment to meet the needs of students, educators, and administrators.
- SMISD will continue to provide parents with access to academic information and campus stakeholders to work collaboratively as partners in the overall education of students.

- SMISD will provide modern facilities, support services and maintain a safe and drug-free environment for students and employees.

IV. Inhibiting Statues for Implementation of the Strategic Plan

- **A. Flexibility with Calendars and Attendance**

Sec. 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.

- By allowing the first day of school to be before the fourth Monday in August, classroom instruction will begin sooner and have positive impacts, in particular with instruction time related to preparation for college entrance and state exams.

- **B. Teacher Certifications**

- House Bill 5 has added significant support for the need to expand college and career opportunities for students. However, this call for increased opportunities does not adequately accommodate the special challenges faced by school districts as they seek to find individuals with the education or work-related experience needed to adequately educate students in specialized areas of instruction. Districts must often compete with industries that pay substantially more than education. In addition, industry professionals interested in education often face increased costs from participation in alternative certification programs.
- An exemption from TEC 21.003 would allow our district to issue a school district teaching permit to individuals who do not hold a teaching certificate but who the district deems qualified to teach based on a determined set of criteria.
- At the present time, SMISD would focus on academic and non-academic CTE courses. However, in the future, the district may choose to exercise this option in other courses. Our local board of trustees would be able to issue the school district teaching permit for an individual teaching these courses based on qualifications certified by the superintendent. The individual qualifications would include demonstrated subject matter expertise, such as
 - Professional work experience
 - Formal training and education
 - Relevant industry license, certification, or registration

- Any combination of work experience, training and education or industry credential related to the subject matter he or she will be teaching.
- All candidates would be carefully considered to ensure the individual has sufficient education and expertise to provide instruction necessary to meet the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for the course(s) to be taught.

A bachelor's degree would not be a requirement for CTE courses. Before issuing a school district teaching permit to an individual, the district would ensure that the individual completed the criminal background check in compliance with the State Board of Education (SBEC) rules. This would require the superintendent to certify to the board of trustees that the individual has undergone a criminal history background check and is capable of proper classroom management. In addition, the individual would be required to obtain a set number of hours in classroom management training. Any school district permit would only be valid in the Santa Maria Independent School District.