

Local Innovation Plan
Santa Gertrudis Independent School
District
District of Innovation



I. INTRODUCTION

House Bill 1842, passed during the 84th Legislative Session, permits Texas public school districts to become Districts of Innovation and to obtain exemptions from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code that are available to open charter enrollment schools. On February 15, 2016, the Board of Trustees (“Board”) of the Santa Gertrudis Independent School District passed a Resolution to Initiate the Process for Designation as a District of Innovation. The Board approved moving forward with the development of a Local Innovation Plan at its meeting on February 15, 2016 and appointed a ten-member Local Innovation Committee (“Committee”) to develop the Plan.

A public hearing was held on March 25, 2017. At that time, employees, parents, students and community members had the opportunity to share their opinions regarding the District’s pursuit of a designation as a District of Innovation and review the plan designed by the committee.

On March 28, 2017, the Board of Trustees of the Santa Gertrudis Independent School District approved the Local Innovation Plan.

II. TERM of the Local Innovation Plan

The term of the Local Innovation Plan (“Plan”) is for a period of five years, beginning at the start of the 2017-18 school year and ending at the end of the 2021-22 school year, unless the Plan is terminated or amended earlier by the Board in accordance with statute.

III. A COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

The Plan’s comprehensive educational program is guided by and aligned with the Vision Statement, Mission Statement, District Goals, and Priorities of Santa Gertrudis Independent School District.

A. Vision Statement

The vision of Santa Gertrudis Independent School District is to develop successful primary, secondary and college graduates who will serve as the next generation of leaders in our country through educational innovation.

B. Mission Statement

The mission of Santa Gertrudis Independent School District is to engage in unique educational experiences and opportunities for students’ success. Through classroom technology, rigorous instruction, hard work, and focused dedication, Santa Gertrudis Independent School District produces scholars ready for the demands of high school, college and career.

C. District Goals

1. Student Growth and Success

Each student will be provided engaging, relevant and meaningful learning experiences which foster the acquisition of the Santa Gertrudis ISD Instructional Cornerstone Skills (collaboration, communication, creative thinking, critical thinking, information literacy, problem solving and social contribution) that lead to student success.

2. Safe and Orderly Learning and Working Environment

A safe, orderly, positive and quality learning and working environment will be provided for students and staff.

3. Community Engagement

Parents and community members are provided a variety of opportunities for active, collaborative involvement which support student success.

4. Effective and Efficient Operations

Resources are allocated in an efficient manner to facilitate quality learning experiences and a positive and effective work environment.

5. Organizational Improvement

Strategic data points and shared agreements are utilized to make decisions regarding planning, evaluation, and performance needs.

IV. Innovations The District's Vision and Mission and the alignment of local practices and operations require flexibility in local control to ensure the following:

1. The instructional calendar supports the continuous improvement of student learning;

2. Increased opportunities for professional learning and growth;

3. There are opportunities to work in high performance, collaborative teams;

4. Students and staff will have a safe and secure learning environment; and

5. Family and community needs are considered as part of the District's focus on quality internal and external customer service.

Requirements of the Education Code that inhibit the District's ability to develop an instructional calendar that best meets the needs of students and the community:

1. First Day of Instruction

TEC Code Requiring Exemption: Section §25.0811 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. A school district may: (1) begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August if the district operates a year-round system under Section 25.084. Current Status: Texas Education Code Section §25.0811 inhibits

Santa Gertrudis ISD's ability to establish an instructional calendar that best meets the instructional needs of students and the priorities of the community by prohibiting the District from beginning instruction before the fourth Monday in August. The fourth Monday in August is an arbitrary start date that does not meet the needs of the Santa Gertrudis ISD community. The District has historically ended classes for the first semester before the Winter Break to better align with college and university schedules in the area and to best accommodate high school students taking dual credit courses.

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. Waiver of the required school start date will allow time at the conclusion of the school calendar for instruction prior to summer administration of state assessments required for graduation. Finally, it will also enable the District to give a full week off at Thanksgiving to alleviate the loss of funding due to student absenteeism. There are several different countries and languages represented in Santa Gertrudis ISD's student population. Many of these parents and others often take their children out of school the full week of Thanksgiving and before the end of the school year in June in order to visit family members in other states and/or to take long trips to their home countries. Besides the loss of instructional time, student absences result in a significant loss of ADA funding that could be used to support the attainment of the District's mission and vision.

By having the flexibility to end school earlier, parents will be less likely to take their children out of school prior to the last day of instruction. Graduating seniors will also be able to enroll in college courses that normally begin the first week of June to further their college and career readiness. Likewise, teachers who wish to pursue advanced college degrees or additional certifications will complete the school year in time to attend summer classes.

Local Guidelines: The Santa Gertrudis Superintendent Round Table Council, comprised of teachers, administrators, support personnel, parents, and business and community leaders, serves as the District's calendar committee. This Council will develop several instructional calendar options and recommend a preferred option for Board consideration. In developing calendar options, we will utilize the flexibility of having more local contract on the school start date. Exemption from the Texas Education Code Section §25.081 will require revisions in the District policies at EB (LEGAL) and (LOCAL).

2. **Teacher Certification** (except as required by federal law)

TEC Code Requiring Exemption: Section §21.003 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 or permit issued as provided by Subchapter B. Current Status:

The Texas Education Code Section §21.003 dictates that all district teachers be certified in accordance with rules adopted by the State Board of Education Certification (SBEC).

Benefit of Exemption: In order for Santa Gertrudis ISD to hire personnel for Career and Technical Education hard to fill positions, the District must seek exemption from the law requiring certification. This would allow Santa Gertrudis ISD to hire nontraditional candidates who bring authentic field and industry knowledge and skills which would provide students with unparalleled learning experiences. Although it is the District's intent to limit the use of this exemption, the current statute inhibits the District's ability to recruit and employ highly qualified professionals with industry and field experience to successfully teach Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses. Potential areas of local certification may include, but are not limited to: culinary arts, automotive technology, cosmetology, criminal justice, engineering, Cisco networking, veterinary science, manufacturing, and media courses. These individuals often hold multiple certifications in their areas of expertise that would be far more beneficial in their ability to prepare students for success in these areas than would a Texas teaching certificate. Local Guidelines: The Superintendent, after consultation with campus leadership, the Human Resources and Career and Technical Education departments, will certify candidates that meet local credential guidelines. The Superintendent will notify the Board prior to the individual beginning employment. Exemption from the Texas Education Code §21.003 will require the District to review its policies at DBA (LEGAL) and (LOCAL) as well as the policies at DK (LEGAL) and (LOCAL). Candidate Qualifications may include a combination of: • Professional work experience; • Formal training and education; • Relevant industry licensure, certification, or registration; and/or • Any combination of work experience, training and education, or industry credentialed related to the subject matter he/she will be teaching.

Criminal History: All candidates must complete the criminal background check in compliance with State Board for Education Certification (SBEC) rules mandated by TEC §22.0833 for a non-certified employee. Teachers employed under this certification program will receive pedagogy and classroom management training.

3. Teacher Contracts

TEC Code Requiring certain contracts: Section §21.002. A school district shall employ each classroom teacher, principal, librarian, nurse, or school counselor under: (1) a probationary contract, (2) a continuing contract, or (3) a term contract.

Current Status: The teachers of Santa Gertrudis ISD receive term contracts and probationary contracts. A term contract is for a time certain, usually 1 year. If a teacher is proposed for termination during the contract term, the employee is entitled to the subchapter F proceeding. If a term contract teacher is proposed for nonrenewal at the end

of the contract term, he or she is entitled to written notice from the board of the proposed nonrenewal at least 45 days before the last day of instruction. If the board does not timely provide this notice, the teacher is automatically renewed for the next school year. Upon receipt of the notice, the term contract teacher has 15 days to request a hearing before the school board concerning the nonrenewal.

A teacher new to a district, and a teacher who was previously employed by a district who returns to the district after a two-year lapse, must be employed on a probationary contract for at least one year. However, the district may employ an experienced teacher or principal on a term contract. For brand new teachers, the probationary period can actually last up to four years. For a teacher who has taught in five of the last eight school years, the probationary period can only last one year.

After the probationary period, the school district must place the employee on a term or continuing contract, or else dismiss the employee.

Benefit of Exemption: Removes unnecessary individuals outside of the district and allows all district personnel to discuss and collaborate internally. Appraisal conferences will occur earlier to allow employees to discuss proposed actions before they are taken to the board. The process of non-renewal and termination will be streamlined, thus reducing the amount of money and time being spent by all parties involved. It also allows all parties sever the agreement after the one-year contract is fulfilled without any additional conflict.

Local Guidelines: Non-Chapter 21 contracts shall be provided for positions that do not require SBEC Certification and are on the professional pay grade level and above. A non-Chapter 21 contract shall not be governed by chapter 21 of the education Code. An employee may appeal discharge during the contract period in accordance with DCE(LEGAL). An employee whose contract is not reissued at the end of the contract period may appeal to the Board in accordance with DGBA(LOCAL).

4. Teacher and Principal Appraisal System

TAC code Section §149.1001. (1) Standard 1--Instructional Planning and Delivery.

Teachers demonstrate their understanding of instructional planning and delivery by providing standards-based, data-driven, differentiated instruction that engages students, makes appropriate use of technology, and makes learning relevant for today's learners.

(2) Standard 2--Knowledge of Students and Student Learning. Teachers work to ensure high levels of learning, social-emotional development, and achievement outcomes for all students, taking into consideration each student's educational and developmental backgrounds and focusing on each student's needs.

(3) Standard 3--Content Knowledge and Expertise. Teachers exhibit a comprehensive understanding of their content, discipline, and related pedagogy as demonstrated through the quality of the design and execution of lessons and their ability to match objectives and activities to relevant state standards.

(4) Standard 4--Learning Environment. Teachers interact with students in respectful ways at all times, maintaining a physically and emotionally safe, supportive learning environment that is characterized by efficient and effective routines, clear expectations for student behavior, and organization that maximizes student learning.

(5) Standard 5--Data-Driven Practice. Teachers use formal and informal methods to assess student growth aligned to instructional goals and course objectives and regularly review and analyze multiple sources of data to measure student progress and adjust instructional strategies and content delivery as needed.

(6) Standard 6--Professional Practices and Responsibilities. Teachers consistently hold themselves to a high standard for individual development, pursue leadership opportunities, collaborate with other educational professionals, communicate regularly with stakeholders, maintain professional relationships, comply with all campus and school district policies, and conduct themselves ethically and with integrity.

TAC code Section §149.2001.

(1) Standard 1--Instructional Leadership. The principal is responsible for ensuring every student receives high-quality instruction.

(2) Standard 2--Human Capital. The principal is responsible for ensuring there are high-quality teachers and staff in every classroom and throughout the school.

(3) Executive Leadership. The principal is responsible for modeling a consistent focus on and commitment to improving student learning.

(4) School Culture. The principal is responsible for establishing and implementing a shared vision and culture of high expectations for all staff and students.

(5) Strategic Operations. The principal is responsible for implementing systems that align with the school's vision and improve the quality of instruction.

Current Status: The district currently uses the T-TESS and T-PESS provided by the state.

Benefit of Exemption: A committee of teachers, staff and administrators will develop an Appraisal and Development System that incorporates the requirements of the state but also incorporates the uniqueness and additional expectations of the district.

Local Guidelines: All teachers and administrators will be properly trained. The expectations for the teachers will be aligned with the expectations of administrators. The criteria will include both instructional practice criteria and professional expectations.

5. **Campus Behavior Coordinator**

TEC Code Requiring Exemption: Section §37.0012 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.

Current Status: The District is required, by Texas Education Code §37.0012, to appoint a person at each campus to serve as campus behavior coordinator with the primary responsibility for maintaining student discipline. The campus behavior coordinator is also required to promptly notify parents, by telephone and in writing, when a student is suspended, removed to an Alternative Education Program (AEP) or Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program (JJAEP), or taken into custody by a law enforcement officer. The requirement to designate a single employee to maintain student discipline and make all required parental notifications inhibits the District's ability to implement an effective and systematic approach to student discipline.

Benefit of Exemption: The shared responsibility of discipline among campus principals and assistant principals will minimize the loss of instructional time and ensure the safety of all students as well as provide increased opportunities to build relational capacity with parents and students. All campus administrators engage in comprehensive professional learning to support the implementation of the Santa Gertrudis ISD Discipline Management Plan and Student Code of Conduct. Assigning existing professionals, the responsibility for maintaining discipline and for notifying parents of disciplinary removals and/or arrests is a much more cost effective means of fulfilling the duties of the campus behavior coordinator. Since Santa Gertrudis ISD employs behavior intervention specialists and Licensed Specialists in School Psychology (LSSP) that can assist students with behavior or discipline issues, decisions regarding student behavior and discipline are often collaborative in nature.

Local Guidelines: The District will designate all campus principals and assistant principals to fulfill discipline and behavior duties. Exemption from Texas Education Code §37.0012 will require policy revisions at FO (LEGAL) and (LOCAL) as well as the legal policies at FOA and FOC. In addition, the Student Code of Conduct will need to be revised to eliminate the reference to a campus behavior coordinator.

6. **Class Size Ratio Exemption**

Texas Education Code Sec. 25.112. CLASS SIZE. (a) Except as otherwise authorized by this section, a school district may not enroll more than 22 students in a kindergarten, first, second, third, or fourth grade class.

Current Status: Most of the classes in the district range between 15 to 21 students.

Benefit of Exemption: Santa Gertudis Independent School District is a very unique district. Many of our students are transfer students from other surrounding districts. Transfer students are forced to leave and return to their home district if a student moves into the district, thus creating possible hardships or inability to benefit from the programs offered in SGISD for the transfer student. The district is also cautiously unable to maximize enrollment without the concern of asking a student to leave.

Local Guidelines: Be allowed to go 1 or 2 students over the recommended number of students without having to request a waiver from the state or parent notification. Extra support will be provided to the all teachers in this situation. Every situation will be decided on a case by case basis.