

# Sands CISD District of Innovation Plan 2023-2028

House Bill (HB) 1842, passed during the 84<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session, permits Texas public school districts to become Districts of Innovation and to obtain exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. To qualify, an eligible school district must adopt a five-year innovation plan according to the Texas Education Code.

Sands CISD is utilizing HB 1842, of the 84<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session, to have more local control in certain areas. HB 1842 allows traditional public schools to have some of the same local flexibility that public charter schools have always been allowed. We feel this is an opportunity for our district to modify certain areas based upon the needs of our students and community.

Once approved by the Commissioner of Education, the Board of Trustees and the District of Innovation Committee, this plan will be in effect starting May 1, 2023 through May 1, 2028 school year. This plan may be amended at any time by the committee with approval of the Board of Trustees.

## Sands CISD District of Innovation Timeline:

<u>January 25, 2023</u>	Commissioner notified that the Sands CISD Board of Trustees intends to renew the DOI plan.
<u>January 26, 2023</u>	District of Innovation Committee meeting to discuss DOI Plan.
<u>February 7, 2023</u>	District of Innovation Committee meeting to hold public hearing on a finalized version of the DOI plan.
<u>February 8, 2023</u>	Post the District of Innovation Plan on the SCISD website for 30 days.
<u>March 21, 2023</u>	Recommend final DOI plan to Board of Trustees.
<u>March 23, 2023</u>	Board of Trustees formally notifies Texas Commissioner of Education of approved plan.
<u>April 20, 2023</u>	Update all policy changes with TASB

**District of Innovation Committee Members**

Wayne Henderson	Superintendent
Lenny Morrow	Principal
Tana Howard	Counselor/Fine Arts
Dustin Wall	UIL/Secondary Staff
Brian Reed	Agricultural Science/FFA
Katie Walker	Reading Specialist
Jessica Martinez	Elementary Staff
Kari Reese	Special Education Director
Amy Grumbles	Business Manager
Susan Henderson	PEIMS Coordinator
Cody Sandlin	Parent/Business Owner
Shelli Barnes	Parent/Business Owner

**Board of Trustees**

Jody Howard	President
Robin Barraza	Vice-President
Michael Wigington	Secretary
Wes Higgins	Member
Cole Walker	Member
Matt Snell	Member
Dustin Gaskins	Member

# Sands CISD District of Innovation Plan

## **First and Last Day of Instruction**

### Exemption:

- TEC 25.0811 and 25.0812, EB(Legal), EB(Local) First Day of Instruction (Starting before the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday in August) and Last Day of Instruction (Ending before May 15<sup>th</sup>).

### Plan:

- The flexibility of a start date and end date allows the District to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of the students and local community.

### Benefit:

- This will allow the first and second semester to be somewhat equal in the number of days of instruction.
- Increased instructional time prior to Fall administration of End of Course exams and Spring STAAR exams.
- Students participating in dual enrollment opportunities will work with a balanced semester, which align with our local colleges.

## **Length of School Day**

### Exemption

- TEC 25.081 Operations of Schools and TEC 25.082 School Day, Pledges, Minutes of Silence. Current state law requires that a district shall provide at least 75,600 minutes of instruction, including intermission and recesses. State law also requires that a school day be at least 7 hours each day, including intermissions and recesses.

### Plan:

- Exempting completely from the 75,600 annual minutes/420-minute day requirement would give Sands CISD the ability to shorten a given day without being limited to the 6-day waiver limitation that the status quo requires. This would give the district local control in order to make up for missed annual minutes due to sickness, inclement weather, unforeseen interruptions in required utilities (water, gas, electricity, wind issues) and other emergency situations that arise without having to schedule a full 420-minute make-up days in the absence of a waiver.

- a) Alter the school day schedule on selected days whenever it is locally determined to be necessary or beneficial to the District and its stakeholders
- b) Obtain an amount of local control over scheduling without the fear of diminishing state funding or losing credit for instructional time that might cause the District to fall out of compliance with annual minute requirements. Sands CISD does not have any intention to shorten the school day on a regular basis, or without specific purpose. To the greatest extent possible, “early release” days would be planned and noted in the district calendar, which is approved by the Board of Trustees and published and distributed to stakeholders in advance of the school year and continuously published using school media. Sands CISD will strive to meet the minimum requirement of 75,600 total instructional minutes.

**Benefit:**

- This will allow Sands CISD to have flexibility in responding to unforeseen issues that arise throughout the year.

**Teacher Certifications**

**Exemption:**

- TEC 21.002, 21.003, 21.051, 21.053, and 21.057 Teacher Employment Contracts and Certification Required (DK Legal, Local)

**Plan:**

- To best serve the students of SCISD, decisions on certifications will be determined locally.
- The Principal may submit in writing to the superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach subjects out of their field(s) of certification.
- The principal must specify the reason for the request and must show what credentials the teacher possesses that would qualify the individual to teach the subject.
- An individual with experience in CTE field could be eligible to teach a vocational skill or course through a local teaching certificate.
- The principal will submit the request to the superintendent with all the individual’s credentials.
- The superintendent will then approve the request if he/she feels the individual could be an asset to the students and program.
- The superintendent will then report this action to the Board of Trustees prior to the individual beginning any employment.
- This employee will be at-will.
- The superintendent may approve teaching certifications from other states.

- The superintendent will report this action to the Board of Trustees prior to the individual beginning any employment.
- The teacher will be given a probationary contract until they have received a Texas Teaching Certification.
- Sands CISD will work diligently to hire certified teachers.

Benefit:

- Provide more flexibility in scheduling.
- Provide more options for students in class offerings.
- Provide industry certified and or trade professionals to teach specialized certification courses.
- Provide opportunity to employ part-time professionals to teach special courses.
- Streamline hiring process for out-of-state teachers.

**Teacher Probationary Contracts**

Exemption:

- TEC 21.102(b), DCA(Legal) - TEC code 21.102(b) states that a probationary contract 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 proceeding employment with the district.

Plan:

- This period may not be enough to evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom since the timeline demands that employment decisions must be made prior to the availability of end-of-year classroom and student data.
- Probationary contracts for a person who has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment with the district may be extended up to two years including those employees with dual contracts.
- The superintendent will make contract recommendations to the Board of Trustees as per policy.

Benefit:

- This will provide the District more flexibility in determining the teacher's ability to teach effectively, see if they are a fit for the community, and to see how they interact with the students.

## **Teacher Contract Days**

### **Exemption:**

- TEC 21.401 Minimum Service Required (teachers on 10-month contracts must provide a minimum of 187 days of service) (DCB Legal and Local)

### **Plan:**

- Reduce teacher contract days to match the adopted school calendar.
- It will be part of the calendar planning process to reduce the number of teacher contract days, contract days will not exceed the 187 but may be lessened based upon the needs of the district.

### **Benefit:**

- Provide teachers more flexibility during the summer months to seek out beneficial staff development that relates to their field.
- Daily rate will be consistent with a 187-day calendar.
- Improve teacher morale.
- Enhance teacher retainment and recruitment.

## **Inter-District Transfers**

### **Exemption:**

- TEC 25.036 District transfers are for an entire school year. (FDA Local)

### **Plan:**

- SCISD would follow FDA Local policy requiring nonresident students to file a transfer application each school year.
- In approving transfer requests, the availability of space and instructional staff, availability of programs and services, the student's disciplinary history, records, and attendance records will be evaluated. The parent's willingness to cooperate with Sands CISD teachers, coaches, and administration in a positive manner will also be a determining factor.
- Transfer students are required to follow the attendance requirements, rules, and regulations of the district.
- Transfer status may be revoked by the superintendent at any time during the school year if the student is assigned disciplinary consequences such as suspension (in school or out of school), placement of the DAEP, or expulsion. In addition, students not meeting the State's 90% attendance standard may also be subject to immediate revocation of the

student's transfer status. Furthermore, the student's transfer may be revoked by the superintendent if the parents or legal guardians fail to support the District in a positive manner.

Benefit:

- Allows SCISD the flexibility to revoke transfer students who, on rare occasions violate the transfer policy.
- Allows SCISD the flexibility to revoke transfer students, whose parents do not support the district.
- Allows SCISD to better utilize school resources for the benefit of the District.

**Class Size Waiver (Kindergarten-4<sup>th</sup> Grade)**

Exemption:

TEC (25.111,25.112, 25.113) State law requires districts to maintain an average student-teacher ratio at most of 20:1 for average daily attendance. Kindergarten-4<sup>th</sup> grade classes are to be kept at a 22:1 student; teacher ratio according to state law. If the number exceeds the 22:1 ratio the parents are to be notified and a waiver must be filed with TEA.

Plan:

- Sands CISD will attempt to keep all K-4<sup>th</sup> core classrooms to a 22:1 ratio. However, in the event the class size exceeds the ratio, the superintendent will report to the Board of Trustees. A waiver will not be filed with TEA. Sands will strive to communicate with our parents to keep them informed if the number exceeds the ratio of 22:1. However, in the rare event the ratio exceeds 22:1 for a short period of time the plan will allow the district to not have to notify the parents.
- The district will strive to 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; however, the plan will allow the district to exceed this requirement based on campus or district needs.

Benefit:

- This give Sands CISD the flexibility without having to file a waiver with the Texas Education Agency in the event we exceed the 22:1 ratio.

**Teacher Appraisal System**

Exemption:

- The state issued a new teacher appraisal system in the 2016-2017 school year, called the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS) and the Texas Principal and Support System (T-PESS). (TEC 21.203, 21.352)



Plan:

- Sands CISD will continue to use a modified version of the T-TESS/T-PESS appraisal system with the exception of the provisions of the Texas Education Code 21.351 and 21.352, as they relate to student growth within teacher appraisal as clarified in the Texas Administrative Code 150.1001. The T-TESS instrument is robust enough without the addition of student achievement to the teacher evaluation. Administrators already consider student achievement whether it is through retention rates, passing rates, STAAR, or other test measures.
- All teachers will be formally evaluated once every two years.
- Probationary teachers will be evaluated annually.
- All teachers will have an annual summative conference to discuss the year and set classroom goals.
- Principals will be evaluated annually.

Benefit:

- Allow the District the option to improve teacher morale by using evaluations that are the best practices for the district.
- Allows the District the option to utilize local control of decisions regarding teacher and administration evaluations.

**Disciplinary Alternative Education Program**

Exemption:

- TEC 37.008 requires each school district to provide a disciplinary alternative education program that: (7) employs only certified teachers who meet all certification requirements under Subchapter B, Chapter 21

Plan:

- Sands CISD seldom needs the existence of a DAEP and is usually a short-term requirement since there will be a very limited number of students assigned to DAEP. Since the classes will be provided using computer-based instruction, it is not necessary to have certified teachers monitoring DAEP. The campus administrator will ensure that the staff of the DAEP has the support necessary to properly supervise the students assigned to the program and will lend assistance of teachers with specific certification as needed.

Benefit:

- This would allow Sands CISD to better utilize resources we currently have available.

**Site-Based Decision Making (TEC 11.251, 11.252, 11.253,11.255) (BQ Legal/Local, BQA Legal/Local), TEC 28.004 Local School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) and Health Education Instruction.**

Exemption:

- Sands CISD seeks exemption from the site-based decision-making process and the convening of the school health advisory committee and the many accompanying requirements falling under the governance of those two bodies. The statutory requirements as set forth in the Texas Education Code in Chapter 11 are burdensome, time consuming, and ultimately cause a misdirection of resources from the primary focus of schools: the education of students. Stakeholders will continue to be involved in the process, but one that meets the needs of the District, school, and community as opposed to the broad brush of statutory requirements leveled down from a one size fits all approach as detailed in the code. In place of the SBDM and the SHAC, a Superintendent's Advisory Council (SAC) will be established, meet, review, analyze, and respond to both qualitative and quantitative data regarding the district's success and most importantly, student's success. This council will convene at least two times per year and generate the general direction of district resources and efforts.

Benefit:

- This will consolidate the number of meetings and the number of committees required by law and will better serve this community.
- This consolidation will yield greater opportunity for one council to address a multiple of needs as opposed to having one meeting after another throughout the year.

**Depository Contracts**

- TEC 45.205 term of contract, TEC 45.206 Bid request for proposal notices; bid and proposal forms, TEC 45.207 award of contract, TEC 45.208 depository contract; bond, and TEC 45.209 investment of district funds.

Plan:

- In a small district and small town, the District's choices for its depository bank are limited. This exemption is to allow the District's existing bank contract to be extended beyond the total 6 years allowable contract term if the district determines contract pricing remains competitive and there is no operational or financial reason to send the district's banking services out for bid. This exemption lessens the administrative burden related to preparing and reviewing a Request for Proposal (RFP) when there is a limited number of banking institutions available to bid on the districts business. This will further mitigate

any impact to employees that would have to change direct deposit instructions each time a new depository occurs and allows the district flexibility with respect to banking relations. With this exemption in place, none of the additional requirements related to the bid or request for proposal detailed in Sec. 45.206 through 45.209 would be applicable.

**Benefit:**

- The time saved by the administration and the board of trustees by not having to deal with the ministerial duty every two years will allow the superintendent and the board more time for studying and planning for student progress, instructional strategies, and innovative options for the district educational goals.

**90 Percent Attendance Rule (FEC LOCAL) (Ed. Code 25.092)**

- Currently Texas Education Code § 25.092 requires students to attend class for at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered in order to earn class credit or be given a final grade for the class. Proposed The 90 Percent Rule is an arbitrary standard, which means that school districts award credit based upon seat time rather than based upon content mastery.
- Abstaining from the requirement means the district will no longer be required to penalize students who miss class due to extra/co-curricular activities, academic activities, or other extenuating circumstances such as extended health issues.
- This exemption will allow the district to promote student engagement, as well as social and emotional development by encouraging more students to participate in such activities. It will also allow Sands CISD administrators to award credit to students based upon student mastery of the content rather than student attendance. The proposal would allow administration to refocus efforts on students who are truly at-risk, while simultaneously providing rigor and relevance in the curriculum.
- Exemption from this requirement will provide educational advantages to students of the district by promoting learning through innovation in the methods, locations, and times instruction may be delivered to students.
- The exemption will also accommodate students with legitimate scheduling conflicts, reduce dropouts, and increase the number of qualifying graduates. Sands CISD will also explore other innovative ways to demonstrate content mastery if granted this exemption.
- Exemption to the 90 Percent Attendance Rule supports the districts overarching goals and provides the flexibility needed to implement tools, resources, and training that support personalized learning for both students and teachers.
- Exempting Sands CISD from the 90 Percent Attendance Rule does not impact or alter existing compulsory attendance requirements or University Interscholastic League rules.
- Furthermore, opting out of Texas Education Code § 25.092 does not limit or modify a teacher's right to determine the finality of a grade in accordance with Texas Education

Code § 28.0214, and it does not restrict or alter a teacher's right to assign grades in accordance with the district grading policy adopted pursuant to Texas Education Code § 28.0216.

**TERM**

- The District of Innovation Plan will become effective May 1, 2023 and will remain in effect for five years, through May 1, 2028, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. The DOIC will monitor the effectiveness of the Plan on an annual basis and recommend to the Board of Trustees any suggested modifications to the Plan.