



## South San Antonio Independent School District Local Innovation Plan Proposal



| <b>2022-2023 District of Innovation Committee Members</b> |  |
|---|--|
| Millicent Marcha  | Chief Academic Officer                           |
| Joel Gaines   | Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction |
| Rita Uresti   | Executive Director of Human Resources            |
| Sandra Sandoval   | Principal, Hutchins Elementary School            |
| Donna Gomez   | Principal, Zamora Middle School                  |
| Erika Almendarez  | Principal, South San Antonio High School         |
| Daniela Munoz   | Teacher, Benavidez Elementary School             |
| Conrad Antoon   | Teacher, Kazen Middle School                     |
| Ryan Paredes  | Teacher, South San High School                   |
| Gwen Villarreal   | Teacher, West Campus High School                 |
| Kandy Amaro   | Community Member                                 |
| Leslie Cantu  | Community Member                                 |
| Cynthia Guerra  | Community Member                                 |
| Rosalinda Tsheulin  | Community Member                                 |
| Ad Hoc Members  |  |
| Henry Yzaguirre   | Superintendent of Schools                        |
| Tony Kingman  | Chief Financial Officer                          |



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## I. Introduction

House Bill (HB) 1842, passed during the 84th Legislative Session, allows Texas public school districts to pursue the designation of District of Innovation. This designation allows local school districts to obtain exemptions from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. In turn, the district would have more flexibility and provide local control to the district's Board of Trustees. On August 22, 2022 the South San Antonio Independent School District's Board of Trustees passed a Resolution to begin the process of becoming a District of Innovation to support local innovative initiatives and to improve educational outcomes for all students and the school community as a whole. The District's Board of Trustees also held a public hearing on the decision to become a District of Innovation on September 19, 2022.

On October 12, 2022, the Board of Trustees, working with the input of the Superintendent of Schools, took action to appoint a fourteen-member District of Innovation Committee. The Committee, composed of school district leaders, teachers, and community members, represented a diverse cohort of the District's stakeholders.

The District of Innovation Committee met on October 25, November 3 and November 9 to prepare a Local Innovation Plan to address the needs and challenges of the District. On November 17, 2022, The Board of Trustees notified the Texas Commissioner of Education of the District's intent to become a District of Innovation. The plan was posted online for public viewing and feedback on November 17, 2022, and remained online for the required 30 days. On January 17, 2023 the Local Innovation Committee held a public meeting and approved the final version. The plan was adopted by the Board of Trustees on January 18, 2023.

## II. Term

The term of the Local Innovation Plan will begin January 19, 2023 and end at the end of the 2026-2027 school year, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. The Committee will revisit the Plan annually to ensure that the recommendations are still in line with the needs of the District. If, within the term of the Plan, other areas of operations are to be considered for flexibility as part of HB 1842, the Committee will meet to discuss and approve any proposed additional exemptions in the form of an amendment. Any and all amendments adopted by the Board of Trustees will adhere to the same term as the original Plan.



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### III. Continual Improvement

The South San Antonio ISD Local Innovation Plan is a testimony to the school community's commitment to the District's Call to Action, Core Beliefs, Goals/ Strategies, Learner Outcomes and Strategic Plan.

#### MISSION

Think big, think positive, think forward.

#### VISION

Together, igniting action, inspiring growth.

#### Core Values

- All of us must be bold, student-focused advocates, making collaborative decisions to ensure a united vision that enhances educational opportunities.
- Trust is an active process and essential to ensure the academic wellness, safety, and success of our students, staff, and community.
- All of us deserve to be cherished, challenged, and stretched to reach our highest level of contribution.
- All of us must take responsibility for our learning journey to achieve the goals we set for ourselves.
- Authentic transformation requires being comfortable with being uncomfortable.

#### GOALS

- SSAISD will increase academic achievement for all students and thus closing the gap between student populations in pursuit of advanced performance.
- SSAISD will recruit, develop, support, and retain effective teachers, principals, and other instructional staff.
- SSAISD will implement program initiatives and activities that reflect a commitment to preparing 100% of students for post-secondary educational or career paths.
- SSAISD will ensure all students are provided a learning environment centered on their well-being that impacts their learning and success.
- SSAISD will collaborate with parents and the community to ensure all students receive a gold standard education.
- SSAISD will provide supplemental support and resources to low performing campuses.



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## LEARNER OUTCOMES

- All learners will develop learning goals, track their progress, and adjust based on feedback and reflection.
- All learners will be able to demonstrate creative and innovative thinking in a productive manner.
- All learners will demonstrate integrity and honorable citizenship.
- All learners will develop reading, writing, thinking, and speaking skills that will allow them to communicate and collaborate effectively in academic and non-academic environments.
- All learners will employ digital skills to demonstrate literacy and comprehension of multiple forms of technology.
- All learners will develop leadership skills that enable them to act independently when necessary and give them the confidence to take appropriate risks.



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### IV. Innovations

The South San Antonio ISD Board of Trustees and the District Educational Improvement Committee reflected on the current needs of the District and the desired Specific Results of the Strategic Plan and proposes flexibility in the following areas:

#### A. SSAISD Strategic Plan - Academic Calendar

##### TEC Code Requiring Exemption

***TEC §25.0811 First Day of Instruction and §25.0812 Last Day of Instruction***

##### Benefit of Exemption for SSAISD

The District desires to design a district calendar that best meets students' and the school community's needs.

The District will have the flexibility to start earlier than the state requirement. This will balance the two instructional semesters, setting exams prior to Winter Break, and allowing for more instructional time before STAAR/EOC/AP exams.

Students enrolled in the Early College High School would benefit from the balanced semesters by being able to start and end their high school courses at the same time as their college counterparts. The balanced semesters will better align with college semesters, allowing for more opportunities for summer internships, summer courses at the colleges, and industrial certification opportunities.

Mirroring the college calendar would enable SSAISD to recruit highly qualified faculty who desire to coordinate their work schedule with the local college.

##### Local Guidelines

The District Educational Improvement Council, composed of teachers, administrators, support personnel, parents, and business and community leaders, serves as the District's calendar committee. This committee will develop several instructional calendar options and recommend a preferred option to the Superintendent. The Superintendent will then make a recommendation to the Board of Trustees. In developing calendar options, the Committee will utilize the flexibility of having more local control on the school start date.



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## B. SSAISD Strategic Plan - Teacher Certification

TEC Code Requiring Exemption

***TEC §21.003 Certification and TEC §21.051 Required Field-based Experience***

### Benefit of Exemption for SSAISD

The teacher certification requirements enacted in these statutes inhibit the District's ability to hire highly-skilled individuals to teach dual credit, career and technological education courses, STEM courses, as well as courses taught in languages other than English. The availability of teachers who are certified to teach these courses is limited, which causes the District to limit course offerings that support the 21st Century Learner.

SSAISD is committed to the continuation of hiring fully certified teachers for all positions. SSAISD is seeking flexibility in hiring professionals in hard to recruit and retain areas. This would include teacher recruitment in the following areas:

- Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)
- Fine Arts and Humanities
- Career and Technology Education
- Languages Other Than English (LOTE)
- Advanced Academics

In order to best serve SSAISD students, decisions on certification will be handled locally. Henceforth, students will be afforded greater course options, fluidity in scheduling and exposure to specialized practitioners (i.e. college professors, public service professionals and other expert personnel).

### Local Guidelines

The campus principal may submit to the Superintendent a request to allow a teacher to teach a course in a highly specialized or hard-to-fill area. The superintendent will decide whether the applicant is qualified to teach such a course or vocational skill through a local teaching certificate. Local teaching certificates will be for one year. The employee will receive a non-Chapter 21 contract. The Superintendent will then report this action to the Board of Trustees.



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### C. SSAISD Strategic Plan - Class Size

TEC Code Requiring Exemption

***TEC §25.112 Class Size and §25.113 Notice of Class Size***

#### Benefit of Exemption for SSAISD

While we acknowledge the student-teacher ratio impacts the classroom and student achievement, the mobility rate of South San Antonio ISD must be considered along with the challenges of hiring quality staff in a timely manner to follow the state requirements. The addition of one or two students beyond the recommended ratio may not hinder the learning environment; moving student(s) to another campus can be detrimental to the continuity and stability of their academic and emotional growth.

#### Local Guidelines

South San Antonio ISD strives to adhere to the current Texas Education Code (TEC), §25.112 of the 22:1 ratio in grades K-4. The District requests flexibility to make the best possible decisions regarding the academic and emotional needs of our students. In the event a classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio in grades K-4, campus and district administration in collaboration with the teacher would request an exemption from the Superintendent of Schools. The Superintendent will then report to the Board of Trustees the number of exemptions granted. At any time, the Board may request the Superintendent bring the exemptions for Board approval.



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## D. SSAISD Strategic Plan - Probationary Contracts

TEC Code Requiring Exemption

***TEC §21.002 and §21.102 Probationary Contracts***

### Benefit of Exemption for SSAISD

Under current state guidelines, probationary periods for newly hired employees who have been in public education for five of the previous eight years cannot exceed one (1) year. This limited period can be an insufficient amount of time to fully determine the employee's effectiveness in their role.

### Local Guidelines

South San Antonio ISD will issue a probationary contract for a period of up to two (2) full years for experienced teachers, counselors, or nurses who are newly hired to the district. This will allow SSAISD to better evaluate the effectiveness of the employee.