Sabine Pass ISD
District of Innovation Plan



2022-2023 through 2026-2027
*expires May 31, 2027

Board Approved: June 13, 2022
Board Amended: October 14, 2025

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INTRODUCTION

House Bill 1842, passed in the 84th Texas Legislative Session, provides an opportunity for Texas public school districts to modify state requirements at the local level to better meet the needs of their unique populations and to help prepare them for success. As a district of Innovation, Sabine Pass ISD will be able to facilitate the overall goal and mission of the district with flexibility and to personalize student experiences for a successful learning environment.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Sabine Pass School is to guarantee our students are empowered with the skills necessary to make transitions from one grade level to the next and ultimately become productive members of society. This will be accomplished by providing our students with enthusiastic, supportive and competent facilitators teaching relevant and flexible curricula in a positive, technologically-advanced environment.

VISION STATEMENT

Every individual deserves to be treated with dignity and respect
Every individual deserves to learn
Every action has a consequence
Learning is a lifetime experience

DISTRICT OF INNOVATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Kristi Heid, Superintendent
Andrew Bates, High School Principal
Troy Gragg III, Elementary/Middle School Principal
Kathleen Finn, Administration
Randa Hurtado, Special Education
Ashleigh Deslatte, Counselor
Isabel Harvey, Counselor
Jason Thibodeaux, Athletic Director
Anne Singleton, Elementary Teacher
Scott Hagedorn, Middle School Teacher
Kelsey Bates, High School Teacher
Alicia Rodriguez, Parent Representative
Tammie Blood, Business Representative
Scottie Ray, Community Representative

DISTRICT OF INNOVATION TIMELINE

Date	Activity
February 2022	Meet with DOIC/DAC to update plan Notify TEA of intent to vote Post plan to SPISD website for 30 days Hold public hearing to review renewal of plan DOIC approves plan by a majority vote
March 2022	SPISD Board of Trustees will vote to approve the Renewal of the District of Innovation Plan SPISD Board of Trustees must approve the District of Innovation Plan by a ⅔ majority If approved: The Commissioner of Education will be notified of the Board of Trustees' approval of the renewal of the SPISD District of Innovation Plan. Plan will be implemented upon adoption by the Board of Trustees

A. First and Last Day of Instruction

Requirement: Texas Education Code Section 25.0811 states that a school district may not begin instruction prior to the fourth Monday in August.TEC 25.0812 states that a school district may not schedule the last day of school before May 15.

Rationale: The flexibility of start date and end date will allow the district to determine on an annual basis what best meets the needs of the students and local community. Having the flexible start date and end date will allow the district to balance the amount of instructional time in each semester. A flexible start will also allow the district to go back to the tradition of starting the school year with a short week, which has previously proven to foster a smoother, less tiring transition back to the school year.

B. Class Size

Requirement: Texas Education Code Section 25.112 states that districts must maintain a student to teacher ratio of 22:1 or less for pre-kindergarten through fourth grade classes, and districts must complete and file a waiver with the agency if a class exceeds this limit. Section 25.111 requires districts to employ a sufficient number of certified teachers to maintain an average ratio of not less than 1 teacher for each 20 students in average daily attendance. TEC 25.113 requires districts to notify parents of waivers or exceptions to class size limits.

Rationale: Sabine Pass ISD supports the class size ratio and makes every effort to comply with the state's mandate. However, the flexibility to add a student or two in extenuating circumstances will provide ease in changing each student. If this situation were to occur in grades Pre-K-4, the superintendent will report to the Board of Trustees. This exemption only allows the district local control of class size ratios in special circumstances and does not disregard the intent of the state's ratio requirements.

C. Certification Required

Requirement: Texas Education Code Section 21.003 mandates that districts that wish to hire an uncertified staff member must submit a request to TEA and wait on approval or denial. Section 21.0031 provides that an employee's probationary, continuing, or term Chapter 21 contract is void for failure to maintain certification in certain circumstances. Section 21.051 provides that before a school district may employ a candidate for certification as a teacher of record, the candidate must complete at least 15 hours of field-based experience in which the candidate is actively engaged in instructional or educational activities. TEC 21.053 requires a teacher to present his or her certificate to the district before their employment contract will be binding and prohibits the district from paying an educator for teaching if the educator does not hold a valid certificate at the time. TEC 21.057 requires that the district provide written notice to parents if an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher is assigned ot a classroom for more than 20 consecutive instructional days. TEC

37.008(a)(7) requires teachers assigned to the District's Alternative Education Program be certified in accordance with Chapter 21 of the education code.

Rationale: To adequately supply programs with qualified candidates, the district requires the flexibility to hire staff members who would qualify for placement in assignments outside of their traditional certification areas and to retain them. The district will establish local qualification and training requirements for professionals and experts to teach such courses in lieu of state requirements. The district will make decisions on certification needs for the various special programs. These exemptions are of particular importance for hard-to-fill and high-demand courses. The district will ensure that professional development plans are in place to train non-certified personnel in pedagogy and to provide needed support. In addition, students assigned to DAEP are provided instruction in conjunction with the students' regular education teachers or utilizing an online teaching platform; therefore, the students receive support from qualified employees/resources without the necessity of a certified teacher present for the small student population assigned to DAEP. The flexibility allows the District to maximize the efficiency of its resources. Employees without certification will be at-will employees.

D. Probationary Contracts

Requirement: Texas Education Code Section 21.102 mandates that experienced teachers new to the district, have a probationary period that may not exceed one year if the person has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the previous eight years.

Rationale: The current review period is not sufficient to evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom since teacher contract timelines demand that employment decisions must be made prior to the end of the school year. For experienced teachers, counselors, or nurses new to Sabine Pass ISD that have been employed in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, a probationary contract will be issued for each of the first two years of employment with the district.

E. School Health Advisory Council

Requirement: TEC 28.004(d-1) states the Board of Trustees of each school district shall establish a local school health advisory council to assist the district in ensuring local community values reflected in the district's health education instruction. The council shall meet at least four times each year. The committee consists of parents, community members, and a district liaison.

Rationale: The District SHAC will meet a minimum of two times annually, once each semester. The council may convene for additional meetings if necessary. This will allow the council to meet, review, and respond to data regarding the district's goals without creating a hardship on the membership.

F. Bank Depository Contract

Requirement: TEC 45.205 and 45.206 states that a District must renew its depository contract every two years. The two-year contract term begins and ends in odd-numbered years. In accordance with the Texas Education Code, the District must use a uniform bid or proposal blank in the form prescribed by the State Board of Education.

Rationale: The District is seeking an exemption to allow banking contracts to be extended beyond the 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 District's business. The District will only go out for bid if it is determined that contract-pricing is not competitive and there is operational or financial reason to send the District's banking services out for bid. The District will continue with two year contracts for our banking depository.

G. Transfer Students

Requirement: TEC 25.036 states that students attending a district through a district transfer may apply for a transfer annually. On rare occasions, student behavior warrants suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary

alternative plan, or expulsion or the student attendance may fall below the TEA truancy standard.

Rationale: Non-residents accepted as transfer students may have their transfer status revoked by the Superintendent at any time during the year for any lawful reason including:
-If a student has been absent without an excuse acceptable to the district for 10% or more of the number of days of school.
-If a student's behavior has resulted in a placement in the DAEP or JJAEP programs.
-If a student is charged with, convicted of, or deferred adjudication for a misdemeanor offense that contains any element of assault or is drug or gang related or is a felony offense
-If a student has consistently and/or repeatedly disrupted the learning environment, placed other(s) in harm, and/or negatively impacted the orderly operations or climate of the school and/or its programs.

H. Grievance Process
Requirement: TEC 26.011 and TEC Chapter 26A; Related Board Policy: DGBA, FNG, and GF (LEGAL)

School Districts have historically had the autonomy to structure their local grievance processes. The 89th Legislature passed SB 12, which created Chapter 26A including specific requirements to facilitate grievances. The requirements include longer timeline to file and respond to complaints, amendment of the record with submission of evidence after at any time, even after the initial decision is issued, and promotes an adversarial process, rather than a resolution-oriented structure. 26A also requires grievance data be reported through the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) with increased detail to enhance transparency and state oversight.

SPISD believes the new grievance structure removes flexibility that allows administrators to efficiently and effectively resolve concerns. The increased timelines will result in spoliation of material evidence, rendering it difficult for the school to adequately address and respond to issues. Moreover, the statutes' structure shifts the grievance process from being resolution oriented to adversarial, by prohibiting the original decision maker from hearing the complaint and attempting to propose a resolution or formally explain the rationale for the decision. Finally, due to the length of time outlined to process the grievance, the reporting structure will result in submission of data that mis-characterizes the nature of complaints and resolutions.

Rationale:
To facilitate the prompt resolution of grievances and to mitigate potential ongoing harm to grievants, SPISD has established expedited timelines for the filing of grievances and appeals, as well as for the issuance of the district’s responses. These shortened deadlines are to ensure that matters are addressed and resolved in an efficient and timely manner.

SPISD provides an opportunity for grievances to be resolved through informal means, which may result in underreporting or mis-characterization of grievance data submitted to the state. The availability of informal resolution processes facilitates promptness in addressing concerns, often prolonged by formal grievance timelines. Such mechanisms promote transparency, responsiveness, and engagement, thereby fostering a greater sense of inclusion and trust among parents, employees, and members of the community in the district’s educational practices and governance.

SPISD will continue to comply with the constitutional requirements and facilitate a grievance process that allows parents, staff, and members of the public to petition the board for redress of grievances.

TERM

The School of Innovation Plan has a term of up to five years beginning in March 2022. The plan may be amended, rescinded, or renewed by a majority vote of the District Advisory Committee, and the board of trustees in the same manner required for initial adoption.