

Martin's Mill ISD

District of Innovation Plan

1/14/2019

Martin's Mill ISD is using HB 1842, of the 84th Legislative Session, to establish more local control in certain areas. HB 1842 allows a traditional public school to have some of the same local flexibility that public charter schools have been allowed. Martin's Mill ISD believes this is a great opportunity for our local district to establish plans based on the unique needs of our students and community.

This plan will be in effect from January 14, 2019 through January 14, 2024. This plan may be amended at any time by the committee with approval of the Board of Trustees.

District Innovation Team

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|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. James Oliver | Superintendent |
| 2. Suzzette Stringer | Elementary Principal |
| 3. Don Layton | JH/High School Principal |
| 4. Casey Swain | Special Education Director |
| 5. Robin Gandy | High School Counselor |
| 6. Jan McFarland | Elementary Teacher |
| 7. Angela Dubose | Junior High Teacher |
| 8. Meredith Daniel | High School Teacher |
| 9. Cindy Ball | Board of Trustees |
| 10. Jennifer Burcham | Parent Representative |
| 11. Jack Mewbourn | Business Representative |
| 12. Honorable Dan Flynn | Texas House of Representative |

1. Submitting waivers for Kindergarten – Grade 4 class size

(EEB LEGAL) (Ed. Code 25.112, 25.113)

Current Policy

Kindergarten – 4th Grade classes are to be kept at a 22 student to 1 teacher ratio according to state law. When a class exceeds this limit, the district must complete a waiver with the Texas Education Agency. These waivers are never rejected by TEA. This is a bureaucratic step that serves no purpose.

Along with the waiver, it is required that a letter is sent home to each parent in the section that exceeds the 22:1 ratio, informing them the waiver has been submitted. Many times soon after the waiver is submitted, students move out of the district and we are below the 22:1 ratio.

Plan

While we certainly believe that small class size plays a positive role in the classroom, we do not believe it has a negative effect when you only add one or two more students. Many times it is not the number of the students but the makeup and chemistry of the classroom which influence the learning environment.

- MMISD will attempt to keep all K-4th core classrooms to a 22:1 ratio. However, in the event the class size exceeds this ratio, the superintendent will report to the Board of Trustees.

- b. In the event a K-4th core classroom reaches 24:1, the campus will notify the parents of the students in the classroom and inform them of the situation.
- c. A TEA waiver will not be necessary when a K-4th classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio.
- d. This gives MMISD the flexibility without having the bureaucracy of waivers within the Texas Education Agency.

2. Teacher and Principal Evaluation

(DNA LEGAL, DNA LOCAL)(Ed. Code 21.203, 21.352)

Current Policy

The state of Texas has used the Professional Development and Appraisal System (PDAS) teacher appraisal system since 1997. The state is issuing a new teacher appraisal system in 2016-2017, that will be called the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS).

Districts currently have the option to only formally appraise teachers once every five school years. Martin's Mill ISD teachers are formally evaluated at least once every two years.

Principals must also complete one formal walk-through each 9-week grading period. New staff members will have two additional formal walkthroughs throughout the year.

Principals are evaluated annually on a locally developed plan.

Plan

A committee of administrators and teachers would have the option to develop a teacher evaluation system that would be a combination of PDAS, T-TESS, and other best practices to develop a local instrument that fits the needs and goals of MMISD.

- a. Martin's Mill ISD will create and utilize a locally developed teacher and principal evaluation tool.
- b. This instrument will be developed with input from central administration, campus administration, and teachers. It will use staff input, PDAS, T-TESS, T-PESS, and any other relevant best practice.
- c. Campus's teachers must be formally evaluated at least every other year.
- d. All teachers will have an annual summative conference to discuss the year and to set personal goals and a staff development plan for the coming year.
- e. Principals will continue to be evaluated annually with locally developed instrument.
- f. These locally developed plans should reflect the strengths, areas of concern, and goals for Martin's Mill ISD.

3. Teacher certification

(DK LEGAL, DK LOCAL, DK EXHIBIT)(Ed. Code 21.003, 21.057)

Current Policy

In the event a district cannot locate a certified teacher for a position or a teacher is teaching a subject outside of their certification, the district must submit a request to the Texas Education Agency. TEA then approves or denies this request. There is a lot of bureaucracy and unnecessary paperwork involved in the process.

Plan

In order to best serve MMISD students, decisions on certification will be handled locally.

- a. The campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach one subject out of their certified field. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials the certified teacher possesses which qualify this individual to teach this subject.
- b. An individual with experience in a 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 they feel the individual could be an asset to students. The superintendent will then report this action to the Board of Trustees prior to the individual beginning any employment. Local teaching certificates will be for one year. The employee will be at-will.

4. School start date

(EB LEGAL) (Ed. Code 25.0811)

Current Policy

Students may not begin school before the 4th Monday of August. For many years this was the rule, however, districts had the option of applying for a waiver to start earlier. The vast majority of districts applied for the waiver and would begin the 3rd Monday, some even going as early as the 2nd Monday.

The Texas tourism groups lobbied to have this stopped because they believed it was hurting their tourism business. Therefore, several years ago the legislature took away all waivers and dictated that districts may not begin until the 4th Monday, with no exceptions.

Plan

To allow for a calendar that fits the local needs of our community, we would like to consider moving the mandatory start date back one week would better benefit our students.

- a. Students will begin no earlier than the 3rd Monday of August.
- b. This will allow the first and second semesters to be closer in the number of days of instruction.
- c. The goal is to improve the district attendance rate and student success through the flexibility in the calendar.

5. Teacher Contract Days

(DC Legal, DEA Legal) (Ed. Code 21.401, 25.081)

Current Policy

TEC §21.401 states that a contract between a school district and an educator must be a minimum of 10 months' service and at least 187 days.

TEC §25.081 changed the required days of instruction for students from 180 days to 75,600 minutes. The code did not address 10 month employee contract days.

Plan

Martin's Mill ISD will adjust the teacher contract days to 182 days based on the increased number of staff development days provided by our new calendar. This plan will provide the following advantages.

1. This reduction in contract days will put us closer in line to the daily rate found in our neighboring districts.
2. This contract adjustment should improve our teacher recruitment efforts.
3. This will increase teacher morale and provide additional training time for teachers over the summer months
4. These adjustments would be made to the 2018-2019 school calendar

Martin's Mill ISD would like to have the ability to determine the number of days teachers work at the local level. As mentioned, the number of days would be reduced to 182 days. Teachers would work no less than 182 days under this plan. The plan will have no effect on a teacher's salary, and would increase a teacher's daily rate of pay.

6. Probationary Contracts

(DCA Legal) (Ed. Code 21.102)

Current Policy

For experienced teachers new to the district, the probationary period may not exceed one year if the person has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight previous years. This time period is not sufficient to evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom since the teacher contract timelines demand that employment decisions must be made prior to state assessment results.

Plan

For experienced teachers, counselors, or nurses new to the district that have been employed as a teacher, counselor, or nurse in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, a probationary contract may be issued for up to two years from the last date of district employment.