



Southwest Independent School District

District of Innovation Plan

Final Draft

May 16, 2017 *

Updated May 25, 2017 *

Date	Event
March 21, 2017	DOI Public Hearing
March 29, 2017	DOI Committee Meeting
April 3, 2017	DOI Committee Meeting
May 15, 2017	DOI Committee
May 16, 2017	SWISD Board of Trustees
May 24, 2017	Principals' Meeting
May 25, 2017	Parents' Meeting
May 25, 2017	District Committee Meeting/Vote
June 13, 2017	Board Meeting/Vote



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Mission

Southwest Independent School District will identify and develop the potential of all individuals.

Beliefs

- People take ownership in their learning when they are given flexible choices.
- Positive and meaningful relationships are key to success.
- Authentic learning takes place in an engaging and positive environment.
- We all lead by example.
- Learning is continuous and life-long.
- With education and guidance, there are no limits to what we can become.
- Persistence is key to achieving goals.
- Open and honest communication allows for success.



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Introduction

For years, Texas school board members and administrators have complained about the ever-increasing number of state mandates and prescriptive laws and bemoaned the continual erosion of local control. Now there is a realistic process for districts to do something about this. Take advantage. Investigate the possibilities and potential of becoming a District of Innovation.

The District of Innovation concept passed by the 84th Legislative Session in HB 1842 gives traditional independent school districts most of the flexibilities available to Texas' open-enrollment charter schools.

James B. Crow
Executive Director of TASB

SWISD Process

- In 2015, the 84th Texas Legislature passed HB 1842 which included provisions to allow Texas school districts to become Districts of Innovation (DOI). Under a DOI Plan, a traditional school district may access many of the flexibilities available to Texas open-enrollment charter schools.
- In the Southwest Independent School District, on March 21, 2017, a Public Hearing was held during which the audience heard the purpose, history, and benefits that being designated a District of Innovation could



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bring to the students, the District and to the entire community. Following the Public Hearing, the SWISD Board of Trustees adopted a Resolution to direct the Administration to explore pursuing Southwest ISD's designation of a District of Innovation. At the same meeting, the Board of Trustees then approved the members of the District of Innovation Planning Committee.

The DOI Planning Committee included representatives from multiple stakeholder groups which included Board members, Senior Staff, Central Office administration, teachers, parents, campus administrators, and community representatives. The DOI Committee began its work on March 29, 2017 and reviewed the mission, values, and Strategic Plan for the Southwest Independent School District. The Committee then heard a review of the purpose, structure and process for becoming a District of Innovation. Finally, the Committee heard the challenges and barriers presented by existing laws and the proposed Exemptions that provide flexibility with the adoption of those exemptions.

The DOI Committee was divided into five separate groups that analyzed the exemptions, identified the benefits and concerns and then reported out to the Committee as a whole. The Committee decided to ask for a working draft and meet in a week to analyze the new draft.

At the second meeting held on April 3, 2017 the DOI Committee, again in five separate groups reviewed the proposed draft and, as groups, proposed feedback, changes, and support that would go into the final draft of the plan. The District of Innovation Committee voted to move forward with the current draft after the proposed revisions were made and posted it on the District website. The goal of the DOI Plan is to enhance local control and give the District greater flexibility to implement strategies and





innovations that support the Board’s mission, vision, and goals, based on community and internal stakeholders.

District of Innovation Planning Committee

- ▶ Dr. Lloyd Verstuyft - Superintendent
- ▶ Florinda Bernal - Board Member
- ▶ Yolanda Garza - Lopez-Board Member
- ▶ Ida Sudolcan - Board Member
- ▶ Dr. JoAnn Fey - Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction
- ▶ Brandon Crisp - Assistant Superintendent of Business and Finance
- ▶ Homero Rodriguez - Deputy Superintendent
- ▶ Janice Carpio-Hernandez - Director of Communication
- ▶ Paul Black - Southwest High School Principal
- ▶ Anita Chavera - Legacy High School Principal
- ▶ Aracelie Bunsen - Southwest High School Academic Dean
- ▶ Christina Barbosa - Sky Harbour Elementary Teacher
- ▶ Odilia Martinez - Resnik Middle School Principal
- ▶ Darin Kasper - Scobee Middle School Principal
- ▶ Sylvia Acuna - Sky Harbour Elementary School Principal
- ▶ JJ Perez - Southwest Academy Principal
- ▶ Mrs. Norma Diaz - Parent
- ▶ Mrs. Rosa Gonzalez - Parent
- ▶ Mrs. Cynthia Stramoski - Parent
- ▶ Jason Migura - Executive Director Human Resources
- ▶ Valerie Maldonado - Director Health Services
- ▶ Marie Phelps - Coordinator Student Outreach Services
- ▶ Mark Figueroa - Director of Operations



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District of Innovation Planning Committee

- ▶ Cesar Garcia - Director of Career Technology Education
- ▶ Rob Robinson - Executive Director Special Education
- ▶ Velia Terrazas - Director Multi-Language & Migrant Program
- ▶ Jennifer Ellison - Coordinator Advanced Academics
- ▶ Stephanie Garza –Toyota Community Representative
- ▶ Dr. Mike Flores - Alamo College Representative
- ▶ Jefferson Johnson - SWISD Teacher
- ▶ Arthur Celestin- CTE Specialist
- ▶ Johnathan Cruz - SWISD Teacher
- ▶ Denisse Hernandez - SWISD Teacher
- ▶ Vicki Mata - SWISD Teacher
- ▶ Yara Schutter - SWISD Teacher
- ▶ Belinda Cisneros - Director of Advanced Academics
- ▶ Dr. Patty Escobedo - Executive Director Pupil Services
- ▶ Dr. Sara McAndrew-Assistant Superintendent Administration & Human Resources

Southwest Independent School District District of Innovation Plan

The local District of Innovation Plan (DOI Plan) presented is directly aligned with the Mission, Beliefs, and Strategic Plan for the Southwest Independent School District. In addition, it is aligned with the District Improvement Plan and will live in the Campus Improvement Plans. The DOI Plan basically applies District-wide, but also applies at different times to the elementary and/or the secondary schools.

In reviewing each exemption, the DOI Planning Committee carefully reviewed the relevant statutory or regulatory authorities that presented barriers which interfere with the achievement of the Goals of the Strategic Plan. The DOI Committee



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worked in meetings to analyze and place certain exemptions by design that would mitigate these barriers and move SWISD students to college/career readiness as successful adults and effective community and global citizens. The DOI Plan that follows is the result of the work of the Committee of district and community leaders.

Southwest Independent School District’s Local Innovation Plan is as follows:

1. School Calendar

SWISD Strategic Plan

- 1.2 Provide opportunities for self-exploration of career possibilities connected to education or training requirements, so students make informed decisions about achieving their future visions.
- 1.5 Create multi-faceted learning experiences focused on developing/honing students’ 21st Century Skills and their ability to grow into global citizens.
- 2.3 Provide school experiences that empower individuals to develop leadership and ownership of personal success.
- 2.4 Provide targeted social experience to groups with specific programs.

Exemptions

(TEC 25.0811) (EB Legal)

Under current Texas statute, “a school district may not begin instruction for a school year before the fourth Monday in August” (TEC 25.0811).

With the increasingly later start date for the first day of school, many challenges have risen that do not support SWISD students as they move forward with their academic plans. Problems continue to arise that include unbalanced semesters, divided semesters with later final exams, and lack of continuity for Dual Credit courses because of differences with colleges and universities. SWISD attempts to



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align its calendar with surrounding districts, but this is becoming increasingly difficult with the state mandates and the continuous changes in the start date.

SWISD believes the school start date should be determined locally by the District, and on an annual basis, by considering what is best for the students and community. Having the ability to modify the start date of school allows SWISD the flexibility to balance semester days, align high school classes to college courses, ease transitions by beginning school on a shortened week, and having more opportunities to align with other districts that are already districts of innovation.

Note: SWISD will begin instruction for students no earlier than the third Monday in August. Southwest ISD is committed to considering the effect of the start date on the families in the District.

2. Probationary Contracts

SWISD Strategic Plan

- 6.2 Cultivate the expertise of teachers to provide an effective mentoring model and ensure growth of the learner through collaboration.
- 6.3 Provide data-driven, research-based, goal-focused staff development targeted for specific learners.
- 6.5 Provide staff development targeting individual goals based on collaboration with the learner.
- 6.6 Utilize a variety of training methods or modalities centered on the objectives of the individual's training and learning style needs.

Exemptions

(TEC 21.102) (DCA Legal)

The Texas Education Code states that experienced teachers new to the district have a probationary period that may not exceed one year. This also applies to persons



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who has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the previous eight years. Beginning teachers in their first year have a probationary period of three years

In order to ensure excellent instruction for SWISD students and to support teacher growth and gather performance data, a one-year time period is not always sufficient to evaluate a teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. In addition, the TTESS is a growth model and requires more than one year to implement well. Beginning teachers new to Southwest ISD have a three-year probationary period, which provides more time for improvement by design.

Experienced teachers new to Southwest ISD that have been employed in public education for at least five of the previous eight years may be issued a probationary contract for up to two years from the date of employment. The stakeholder input stressed that this is an important change because SWISD has to work toward instructional excellence for our students.

3. Campus Behavior Coordinator

SWISD Strategic Plan

- a. Create a “we” culture that fosters involvement and social interactions across all stakeholders throughout the community with a focus on anti-bullying and anti-harassment.
 - b. Establish school norms that value a safe and positive social environment.
 - 2.4** Provide targeted social experiences to groups with specific programs.
 - 4.2** Provide a classroom culture/climate in which all individuals are valued, appreciated and celebrated.

Exemptions

(TEC 37.0012) (FO Legal)

Recent legislation stipulates that a person at each campus must be designated to serve as the Campus Behavior Coordinator and is responsible for maintaining student discipline.



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Each one of the Southwest ISD campuses serves a large number of students and employs multiple administrators. Having one person responsible for student discipline is not effective or practical at these campuses. Exemption from this requirement will allow the District to promote a more collaborative, team-like approach to discipline. In addition, Southwest as a district is committed to implementing the restorative discipline model in which the schools will better support the behavior of the students but also the social and emotional needs of all students.

4. Class Size Waiver

SWISD Strategic Plan

- 1.1 Establish PK-12 systems that ensure every student is prepared to arrive and thrive in a college and/or career with a focus on literacy.
- 4.1 Ensure a quality learning environment for all.

Exemptions

(TEC25.111, 25.112, 25.113) (EEB Legal)

State law requires that a school district may not enroll more than 22 students in a Kindergarten, first, second, third, or fourth grade class. If classes are going to exceed this cap, a waiver is required from the Texas Education Agency. If approved, the district must notify the parents by specifying the class for which an exception from the limit was granted.

Southwest ISD has experienced situations that make this requirement problematic, and not just for administrators, but for students and their families also who have to change classes, teachers and sometimes schools. In one situation, there was a decrease in enrollment after the waiver process had been initiated but before the actual filing of the waiver. One class added a student and subsequently had 23 students. While within the time frame to file the waiver, a different class had a student withdraw. Because of mobility, the District faces the dilemma of moving a student after he had become familiar with his teacher and classrooms, just to



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balance classes. Flexibility with class size will give local control to the District to determine the timing of adding staff while considering what is in the best interest of the students. The District has a much better idea of which teachers need less than 22 to 1 and which teachers can handle one or two more students.

Southwest ISD will continue to staff all Kindergarten through fourth grade classrooms at a student to teacher ratio of 22 to 1 and cap the ratio at 23 to 1. SWISD wishes to calculate an average across the district specific to each grade level Kindergarten through 4th grade with a ratio of 22 to 1; with no class ever exceeding 23. However, should ratios ever exceed the cap of 24 to 1, notification letters would immediately be mailed home to parents.

5. Teacher Certification

SWISD Strategic Plan

- 1.1** Establish PK-12 systems that ensure every student is prepared to arrive and thrive in a college and/or career, with a focus on literary.
- 1.2** Provide opportunities for self-exploration or career possibilities connected to education or training requirements, so students make informed decisions about achieving their future visions.
- 1.3** Engage students to independently create personal learning paths using a variety of technology and pedagogy.
- 1.5** Create multi-faceted learning experiences focused on developing/honing 21st Century Skills and their ability to grow into global citizens.
- 1.6** Provide rigorous learning experiences for authentic, complex, problem-solving that require the application of deep and broad thinking skills, nurturing, and refining students' abilities to assume their roles as global citizens.
- 2.3** Provide school experiences that empower individuals to develop leadership and ownership of personal success.
- 4.1** Ensure a quality learning environment for all.
- 6.4** Cultivate the expertise of teachers to provide an effective mentoring model and ensure the growth of the learner through collaboration.



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Statutory Exemption(s):

Texas Education Code 21.003(a): A person may not be employed as a teacher... by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit as provided by Subchapter B; 21.003(a) . An employee’s probationary, continuing, or term contract under this chapter is void if the employee:

- (1) Does not hold a valid certificate or permit issued by SBEC,
- (2) Fails to fulfill the requirements necessary to renew; fails to comply with any requirements under Chapter 22 if the failure results in suspension or revocation of the employee’s certificate;

Texas Education Code 21.057: A school district that assigns an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher to the same classroom for more than 20 consecutive instructional days during the same school year shall provide written notice of the assignment to a parent or guardian of each student in that classroom. (Board Policy Ref: DBA Employment Requirements and Restrictions: Credentials and Records)

Southwest ISD will continue to seek traditionally certified candidates for all teaching positions. However, there are certain courses which demand teachers that are not available, thus students are not able to take the courses. This problem will continue to exacerbate as Southwest ISD prepares to open a new high school in 2017 – 2018, and adds more CTE programs. This same challenge applies to the teacher of dual credit courses who has the appropriate advanced degree in content but not the Texas Teacher Certificate. These individuals are eligible to teach at the college level and the District desperately needs them at the high schools to teach dual credit courses. In addition, in two years, SWISD will be the host District for an innovative CTE campus called CAST (Center for Applied Science and Technology) which will offer CTE courses to students from all over Bexar County.

Again, Southwest ISD will continue to seek traditionally certified candidates for all teaching positions. However, for those career and technology education courses and dual credit courses for which a traditionally certified, qualified candidate is not identified, the District will develop minimum required qualifications for persons hired for such positions and also will identify required professional development in areas of student management, instructional strategies, curriculum, and parent





engagement. SWISD considers the persons hired for these positions to be appropriately qualified and thus will not provide special notification to parents of students in their classes that state the instructor does not hold a traditional teaching certificate.

Offering access, enrollment, and quality in college/career readiness courses with strong instructors is one of the key pieces of the District Strategic Plan. The exemption in these areas will greatly facilitate SWISD to consider a broader applicant pool and broaden its learning networks for traditionally hard to fill courses. These career and technology education classes and dual credit classes must maintain a high quality of instruction designed to create that global citizen and problem solver that must have real-world, practical knowledge and experience as well as courses with the necessary rigor to qualify for higher education.

6. Minimum Attendance for Class Credit

SWISD Strategic Plan

- 1.2** Provide opportunities for self-exploration of career possibilities connected to education or training requirements, so students make informed decisions about achieving their future visions
- 1.3** Engage students to independently create personal learning paths using a variety of technology and pedagogy.
- 1.4** Establish PK-12 systems that ensure every student is prepared to arrive and thrive in a college and/or career, with a focus on literacy.
- 1.5** Create multi-faceted learning experiences focused on developing/honing 21st Century Skills and their ability to grow into global citizens.
- 1.6** Provide rigorous learning experiences for authentic, complex, problem-solving that require the application of deep and broad thinking skills, nurturing, and refining students' abilities to assume their roles as global citizens.
- 4.1** Ensure a quality learning environment for all.



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Statutory Exemption

Texas Education Code 25.092 (a) except as provided by this section: A student in any grade level from Kindergarten through grade 12 may not be given credit or a final grade for a class unless the student is in attendance for at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered. (Board Policy Ref: FEC Attendance for Credit).

Innovative courses that have flexible times are nothing new. The colleges and universities have had these courses for a decade. The need to meet the needs of different kinds of students is the critical consideration. Southwest ISD serves a diverse community of students, and these students need different settings in order to be successful. These settings include the increased use of blended learning, Texas Virtual School Network, and new technologies that can accelerate learning opportunities in order for students to be ensured of graduation.

The proposed innovation benefits are important in this area. Southwest ISD will establish minimum requirements for attendance, course completion and mastery in its college-based dual credit courses and other innovative learning opportunities offered to students. SWISD believes strongly that a student's mastery of learning outcomes should be the determining factor in earning credit and a grade rather than measures such as "seat time" that do not consider the real objectives of the educational experience. Exemption from the requirement of TEC 25.092 will allow the district to provide increased active learning opportunities at all levels to its students by providing flexibility in time, location, and instructional methods. SWISD believes this opportunity will empower both students and parents by providing them with voice and choice in determining how their educational needs can be best met. Honoring student choice in instruction also enhances student success.

Note: This innovation and the proposed exemption do not apply to standard credit-bearing courses offered in the traditional classroom setting, but would be appropriate to apply to nonstandard, non-traditional courses offered outside of the campus classroom, such as an off-site internship or a dual credit course taken on a college campus.





Term of Innovation Plan

The Southwest ISD Local Innovation Plan will become effective upon approval by a 2/3 majority vote of the Board of Trustees. It is designed to be implemented between the 2017-2018 school year and continue for five years, through the end of the 2021-2022 school year, unless terminated, or amended earlier by the SWISD Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. The DOI committee will review the plan annually to ensure that the recommendations continue to support the needs and goals of the District. If the DOI Committee recommends changes, the Innovation Plan will be amended in the manner required by law that requires public the posting and approval of the DOI Committee, the District Planning Committee, and the Board of Trustees.

Southwest Independent School District Strategic Plan

Call to Action: Southwest ISD will provide opportunities for all learners to be confident, resilient, and successful global citizens.



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Our Learner Profile

SWISD students...

- are empowered
- are curious
- are problem-solvers
- are self-disciplined
- set goals
- have interpersonal skills
- have strong character

Learner Outcomes

SWISD students are/will...

- Be empowered through technological literacy, leadership opportunities, mentoring, and relevant real-world application to achieve greatness.
- Be engaged in meaningful, inquisitive, and problem-solving learning in every course.
- Achieve individual SMART goals with a personal success plan.
- Have interpersonal skills including collaboration, communication, and adaptability.
- Be empathetic, collaborative, and demonstrate continuous personal growth.



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Southwest Independent School District Strategic Plan Goals

1. Southwest ISD will provide a comprehensive framework of learning that is engaging, flexible, rigorous, supportive, and relevant to college/career readiness for all students.
 - 1.1 Establish PK systems that ensure every student is prepared to arrive and thrive in a college and/or career, with a focus on literacy.
 - 1.2 Provide opportunities for self-exploration of career possibilities, connected to education or training requirements, so students make informed decisions about achieving their future visions.
 - 1.3 Engage students to independently create learning paths using a variety of technology and pedagogy.
 - 1.4 Implement a new principal and teacher appraisal system that incorporates practices focusing on planning, instruction, learning environment, progress monitoring, and goal-setting.
2. SWISD will foster an environment in which social and emotional support is a priority for all.
 - 2.1 Create a “we” culture that fosters involvement and social interaction across all stakeholders throughout the community with a focus on anti-bullying and anti-harassment.
 - 2.2 Establish school norms that value a safe and positive social environment.
 - 2.3 Provide school experiences that empower individuals to development leadership and ownership of personal success.
 - 2.4 Provide targeted social experience to groups.





3. SWISD will constantly utilize timely multi-faceted communication that reaches all members of the SWISD Community.
 - 3.1 Write specific guidelines to establish communication protocols districtwide.
 - 3.2 Diversify the distribution of information to the community through numerous platforms of communication.
 - 3.3 Inform the community about and promote the district's advances in a positive light, creating a sense of pride in the community.
4. SWISD will create a safe, nurturing and engaging environment where all students (learners) succeed.
 - 4.1 Ensure a quality learning environment for all.
 - 4.2 Establish a classroom culture/climate in which all individuals are valued, appreciated, and celebrated.
 - 4.3 Incorporate and expand meaningful family and community engagement as a key component to successful learning.
5. SWISD will capitalize on the strengths, resources, and abilities of our diverse community to support students in becoming successful, global citizens.
 - 5.1 Establish a Parent/Community Engagement Committee to create and implement a joint vision of parental engagement activities that will identify and utilize school/community resources to increase a family and community presence.
 - 5.2 Provide engaging opportunities for parental involvement through collaboration between district and community partners.
 - 5.3 Create a survey/evaluation at the campus and district level.
 - 5.4 Review and assess the evaluation and implement the Campus Improvement Plans' part of targeted on-going successful and consistent





engagement opportunities for parent and community members at the campus and district levels.

6. SWISD will provide relevant professional development to meet the needs of all learners in a timely manner.
 - 6.1 Establish and monitor the expectations of district staff development for utilization and implementation.
 - 6.2 Cultivate the expertise of teachers to provide an effective mentoring model and ensure the growth of the learner through collaboration.
 - 6.3 Build the capacity of leadership in curriculum and instruction.
 - 6.4 Provide data-driven, research-based, goal-focused staff development targeted for specific learners.
 - 6.5 Provide staff development targeting individual goals based on collaboration with the learners.
 - 6.6 Utilize a variety of training methods or modalities centered on the objectives of the individual's training and learning style needs.





Glossary

DOI - District of Innovation – Concept passed by the 84th Legislative Session in HB 1842 which offers traditional independent school districts many of the same flexibilities available to Texas’ open enrollment charter schools.

TTESS – Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System; the new state appraisal instrument for teachers.

TPESS – Texas Principal Evaluation and Support System; the new state appraisal instrument for principals.

CTE – Career Technology Education

CAST – Center for Applied Science and Technology; to be housed at SWISD Legacy High School beginning in 2018.

ES-Elementary School

MS-Middle School

HS-High School

Questions regarding the SWISD District of Innovation Plan may be directed to Dr. Sara McAndrew at 210-622-3719 or at 210-842-4730 or by sending an email to smcandrew@swisd.net



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Southwest Independent School District

District of Innovation Amendment

District Committee Approved April 23, 2020

Board Approved June 2, 2020

Area of Innovation:

Within our current local innovation plan, with regard to each area of innovation, the District declares exemption from the listed statutory provisions, as well as any implementing rules or regulations promulgated pursuant to those statutory provisions by any state agency or entity, including but not limited to the Commissioner of Education, Texas Education Agency, State Board for Educator Certification, and State Board of Education.

Southwest ISD has determined a need to apply for an amendment to our District Innovation Plan to allow exemptions to allow us extended flexibility under:

Texas Education Code: §22.004(i)

Preclusion from providing alternative Uniform Group Coverage Program once the program of coverages under Chapter 1579, Insurance Code is implemented.

Related Board Policies: CRD (LEGAL) and CRD (LOCAL)

Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan:

TEC §22.004 (i) states that a school district may not make group health coverage available to its employees pursuant to TEC 22.004(b) after the date a District implements the program of coverages provided under Chapter 1579 of the Texas Insurance Code. The





current process allows no flexibility in the design of group health insurance benefits to fit the needs of all Southwest ISD employees. This provision also prohibits the District from procuring group health insurance benefits that may provide better coverages for its employees and at a lower cost. This provision limits the District's ability to be innovative in employee recruitment and retention, as well as limiting the District's ability to implement innovative health and wellness programs designed to reward employee who exercise good wellness preventive practices and better self-care. Such programs would improve employee attendance and wellbeing, which would also allow Southwest ISD to provide higher quality and more innovative instructional opportunities to its students. The current provision regarding healthcare is in direct contradiction to the wishes of the Southwest ISD Board of Trustees, who represent community interests in this matter.

Texas Education Code 22.004 is not in any of the prohibited exemptions that can be included in a District's local innovation plan pursuant to Texas Education Code 12A.004 and the list of the Commissioner's prohibited exemptions in Texas Administrative Code Title 19, Chapter 102, subchapter JJ, Section 102.1309.

Innovation Strategies:

Increased local control of the group health benefits plan will allow the District to be responsive to employee and community needs. The ability to design and offer better and more uniquely tailored group health benefits will allow the District greater latitude in recruitment of high quality faculty members, as well as allowing the District to create more effective health and wellness programs to improve employee attendance, which will enhance the District's ability to deliver quality innovative educational opportunities for our students.

