



Valley Mills Independent School District

District of Innovation Plan

Date of Board Approval: March 15, 2017

Introduction

House Bill 1842, of 84th Legislative Session allows Texas Independent School Districts the opportunity to be designated as a District of Innovation allowing local control and flexibility from state-level regulations similar to those enjoyed by charter schools. These flexibilities adopted by the district are set forth in Texas Education Code Chapter 12A.

The purposes of this chapter are to:

- 1) improve student learning;
- 2) increase the choice of learning opportunities within the public school system;
- 3) create professional opportunities that will attract new teachers to the public school system;
- 4) establish a new form of accountability for public schools; and
- 5) encourage different and innovative learning methods.

Vision

Valley Mills ISD intends to use this opportunity to develop a plan that focuses on the District's vision of, "Soaring for Excellence", and recognizes the unique needs of our students and community.

Term

The five year plan will take effect August 2017 and end August 2022 unless rescinded or terminated by the Board of Trustees. To ensure success of all VMISD students, the committee is committed to constantly monitoring and making necessary amendments to be presented to the Board of Trustees for approval.

The mission of Valley Mills ISD is to educate each student to the highest levels of academic achievement and enable students to become successful in a global society.



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District Innovation Team

Dr. Judi Whitis	Superintendent
Melissa Bosley	Director of Curriculum & Instruction
Chris Dowdy	Elementary Principal
Joanie Moody	Elementary Assistant Principal
Jason Sansom	High School Principal
Eric Halfmann	Assistant Principal for Academics & Instructional Technology
Josh Jones	Elementary Teacher
Jason Massengale	JH/HS Teacher
Jennifer Boles	Parent
Jennifer Pliscott	Business/Community Member

Timeline

Resolution to the Board of Trustees	November 16, 2016
Public Hearing	December 14, 2016
Committee Appointments	December 14, 2016
Committee Meeting Review and Revise Plan	January 26, 2017
Plan Posted on Website	January 27, 2017
Resolution to Notify Commissioner	February 23, 2017
District Level Meeting	February 28, 2017
Final Version Proposed Plan Posted	March 1, 2017
Board Approval of Plan	



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The Requirements Imposed by the Education Code from which Valley Mills ISD Seeks Exemption:

Class size waivers and Notice of Class size

(EEB Legal) TEC 25.111) (TEC 25.112) (TEC 25.113)

TEC 25.112 addresses the number of students that may be in a single kindergarten, first, second, third or fourth grade class and limits that number to 22. The intent of this statute was to ensure that classrooms maintained a small teacher/student ratio under the belief that smaller classes led to improved achievement for students who benefited from more individualized teacher attention. While the maximum number of students in K-4 classrooms may be addressed by a state waiver, said waivers must be applied for annually and must be applied for by each district. By seeking an exemption from 25.112 the District would have the flexibility for all campuses and classrooms for the duration of the District of Innovation and would not be required to seek waivers annually. Historically the District does not have to seek waivers and will strive to maintain a ratio of 22-1 or less.

Valley Mills ISD will begin each school year with enough teachers to establish a student to teacher ratio of at least 22:1 or less in each K-4 homeroom class. In the event that any class size exceeds this ratio during the school year, the superintendent will report this information to the Board of Trustees. Decisions regarding appropriate student to teacher ratios will be made at the local level, taking into consideration the age and grade level of the students, the subject matter of the class, the needs of individual teachers and student groups, and the availability of additional instructional staff members.

A TEA waiver request will not be filed when a K-4 classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio.

Parents of students in K-4 classrooms that exceed a ratio of 22:1 will continue to be notified as per TEC §25.113.



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Probationary Contracts

(TEC §21.102)

Under current guidelines, probationary periods for newly hired teachers who have been in public education for at least five of the previous eight years cannot exceed one year. This limited time period is insufficient in some cases to fully determine the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. Relief from Texas Education Code 21.102 will permit the District the option to issue a probationary contract for a period of up to two years for experienced teachers, counselors or nurses newly hired in Valley Mills ISD.

School Start Date

(EB Legal) (EB Local) (TEC 25.0811) (TEC 25.0812)

TEC 25.0811 states that a school district may not begin instruction before the fourth Monday in August. TEC 25.0812 states that a school district may not schedule the last day of school before May 15. To allow for a calendar that fits the needs of our local community, we would like to have an earlier start date. The start date for teachers would be no earlier than the 1st Monday of August and the student start date would be no earlier than the 3rd Monday of August.

The District is not seeking an exemption to modify the end date of the school year.



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Teacher Certification

TEC 21.003

Current law requires that a person may not be employed as a teacher by a district unless the person holds an appropriate certification or permit issued by the appropriate state agency. This statutory certification requirement limits the District's ability to hire professionals with industry experience to teach Career and Technical Education (CTE) and STEM courses. With this exemption, the District could recruit teachers from the field, including individuals from certain trades or vocations with industry knowledge and real world experience and/or community college instructors to offer dual credit and career preparation opportunities within the CTE courses.