

# SWEETWATER INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT



***Purpose. People. Pride.***

## **DISTRICT OF INNOVATION PLAN**

(Effective August 1, 2018 through August 1, 2023)

### **SISD VISION STATEMENT**

*Sweetwater ISD leads in providing a relationship focused environment that empowers students to realize their potential. We embrace diversity, equip for the global environment and encourage responsible citizenship.*

## District of Innovation Committee

### **JP Cowen (Head Start / Early Head Start)**

Alexander, Kianna  
Bax, Dianne  
Cudd, Tina  
Meneses, Crystal

### **Southeast Elementary**

Bibb, Crystal  
Alvarez, Angela  
Elliott, Peggy  
Foster, Jody

### **East Ridge Elementary**

Bennett, Jimmy  
Mayberry, Vicki  
Mullican, Carolyn

### **WCTSSA (Special Education Co-op)**

Tipton, Donna

### **Sweetwater Intermediate School**

Brooks, Chrystal  
Morris, Tammy  
Neff-Leonard, Janie  
Reed, Tifnee  
Welch, Mandy

### **Sweetwater Middle School**

Ashford, Whitney  
Price, Danette (Sweetwater Middle School)  
Withrow, Jeff (Sweetwater Middle School)

### **Sweetwater High School**

Doak, Deborah  
Gee, Brandie  
Ordway, Paula  
Petty, Terri  
York, Stephany

### **Central Office**

Melinda McCarty

## DISTRICT COUNCIL

### NAME

### POSITION

George McFarland	Superintendent
Melinda McCarty	Assistant Superintendent
Jessica McKinney	Teacher, JP Cowen, Pre-K
Judy Nelson	Teacher, Southeast, Kindergarten
Angela Alvarez	Teacher, Southeast, Grade 1
Stacey Marlett	Teacher, East Ridge, Grade 2
Carolee Hardin	Teacher, East Ridge, Grade 3
Tammy Morris	Teacher, SIS, Grade 4
Lou Ann Cumbie	Teacher, SIS, Grade 5
Irene Armstrong	Teacher, SMS, Soc. Studies
Scott Whittenburg	Teacher, SHS, Science
Larry Hopple	Teacher, SMS, Math
Amanda Hall	Teacher, SHS, ELA
Jenny Doggett	At-Large
Tina Melendez	At-Large
Kirk Stroman	WCTSSA
Crystal Bibb	Counselor, Southeast
Jimmy Bennett	Counselor, East Ridge
Pam Lawrence	Librarian
Mike Marlett	Technology Director
Tammi Stafford	District Testing & Federal Programs
Steve Holcomb	Business Representative
Matt McGowen	Business Representative
Russ Petty	Community Representative
Carolyn Lawrence	Community Representative
Kere Hoover	Parent Representative
Merry Laine Wetsel	Parent Representative

## DISTRICT OF INNOVATION PLAN

Sweetwater ISD is driven by goals developed to ensure that all students of Sweetwater ISD receive the appropriate education to enable success academically, socially, and emotionally.

**\*Learning Organization:** We will create a sound and efficient learning organization that supports learning and prepares all students for success.

**\*Learning Standards:** We will implement researched based curriculum through relevant, engaging and innovative instruction that meets the needs of all students.

**\*Learning Environment:** We will create a diverse learning environment developed to meet the needs of all students focusing on student growth and engagement.

**\*Assessment:** We will use formative and summative assessments that encourage learning, mastery, and growth.

**\*Digital Literacy:** We will integrate technology into the curriculum that trains students to be able to adapt responsibly and effectively in the digital world.

In order to provide all students of Sweetwater ISD with the appropriate education to meet the district goals and to ensure student growth, we have developed a District of Innovation Plan (DOI), effective August 1, 2018.

This plan will provide opportunities that allow the Sweetwater ISD Board of Trustees the ability to make decisions concerning the students of Sweetwater ISD, using their best judgment. Sweetwater ISD is a community with a diverse student population and unique challenges. By allowing the board local control of these decisions, opportunities will be provided opportunities which will enhance student learning and growth and create positive impacts on our community.

**Goal I:** *The Sweetwater ISD Board of Trustees and Sweetwater ISD will make governance decisions based on the unique needs of the district's students and community.*

### 1. Calendar, Professional Development, & Dual Credit:

**Exemption from:** TEC 25.0811, TEC 25.0812

#### **Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of plan:**

**TEC 25.0811** states that a school district may not begin student instruction before the 4th Monday of August. **TEC 25.0812** states that a school district may not schedule the last day of school before May 15.

**Purpose and Proposal of Innovative Strategies:** These laws restrict the flexibility in the development of the annual calendar to fit the needs of the students, the school district, and the community. The flexibility to begin instruction earlier in August will enable SISD to develop a calendar that will meet the needs of all students in SISD by balancing the number of days in

each semester. This will allow teachers to better pace and deliver instruction before and after winter break and allow for more instruction time before the state mandated assessments and re-testing. Professional development can be provided during the academic year on days when students are not present, reducing the usage of substitute personnel, and allowing personnel to collaborate and review data across grade levels to better improve student outcomes.

Further, this exemption will provide relief at the secondary level for students who are enrolled in dual credit courses. The earlier start and end dates will allow alignment with the calendars of local colleges and universities we partner with. Additionally, upon graduation, students and teachers will be able to register and attend the first summer sessions at institutions of higher learning.

Upon implementation of the DOI Plan, the district will determine an appropriate start date annually that does not occur before the third Monday in August for students, and an appropriate end date that does not exceed the last day of May (unless the first administration of state assessments should be scheduled on that day).

*NOTE: Changing the first day of instruction does not alter the University Interscholastic League (UIL) restrictions for the first day of practice for athletic and fine arts programs. Sweetwater ISD will continue to comply with the UIL calendar for summer practices and will not move summer practices earlier, despite potentially moving up the start date of school.*

## **2. Modification to Contract Service Days**

**Exemption from: TEC 21.401**

### **Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of plan:**

**TEC 21.401** states that educators employed on a 10-month contract must provide a minimum of 187 days service. The passage of **TEC 25.081** changed the required days of instruction to minutes but did not address contract days for 10-month contract employees.

**Purpose and Proposal of Innovative Strategies:** This proposal will reduce teacher contract days from 187 days to 182 days with no effect on teacher salaries, resulting in a pay neutral status. This will better align the teacher days of service to the 75,600 minutes required of students, and it will enhance teacher recruitment thus improving teacher morale.

# Amendments

Amendments to the Sweetwater ISD District of Innovation Plan have been approved unanimously by the Board of Trustees

## **Transfer Students: Amended 5/18/2020**

### **TEC Code Requiring Exemption:**

TEC 25.036: A district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district, and this code has been interpreted to require a transfer to be for a period of one school year.

### **Benefit of Exemption for SISD:**

- Discipline and character expectations can be better enforced and upheld while providing all students the opportunity to join and attend SISD.
- Attendance guidelines and classroom participation can be enforced without using additional resources and keeping personnel from other duties and responsibilities.
- Streamline the student registration process for returning transfer students

### **Local Guidelines:**

- Board Policy FDA (Local)
- Nonresident student inter-district transfer requests will only need approval from the superintendent prior to initial enrollment in SISD
- Nonresident students who have been accepted as inter-district transfer students may have such transfer status revoked by the superintendent at any time during the year if:
  - The student is assigned a discipline action resulting in suspension, placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion
  - The student is truant
  - The student's attendance does not meet the State's 90% attendance standard for earning class credit

## **Teacher Certification: Amended 6/20/2020**

### **TEC Code Requiring Exemption:**

TEC 21.003 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.

### **Benefit of Exemption for SISD:**

- The statutory certification requirements inhibit the District's ability to hire professionals in certain core content areas and industry experience to teach Career and Technical Education (CTE), STEM Courses and non-core electives.

- Local Qualifications allow the district to:
  - Recruit teachers from the field, including individuals from certain trades and/or vocations with industry knowledge and real world experience
  - Offer additional dual credit opportunities in CTE courses
  - Hire community college instructors
  - Allow teachers to teach a course in an area they have qualified knowledge

**Local Guidelines:**

- Board Policies DK (Local) & DBA (Local)
- The District will establish local criteria, such as years of experience, content knowledge, qualifications, and/or industry certifications to qualify for a local (district) teaching certificate
- All Special Education and/or Bilingual teachers will continue to meet all State and Federal mandated guidelines
- Principals will submit candidates to the Superintendent with credentials
- The Superintendent will determine whether it is in the best interest of the district to certify the individual.
- The Superintendent will notify the Board prior to beginning employment.
- The Board of Trustees would be able to issue the school district teaching permit for an individual teaching courses based on qualifications certified by the superintendent. The individual qualifications would include demonstrated subject matter expertise, such as:
  - Professional work experience
  - Formal training and education
  - Qualified knowledge in a particular content area
  - Relevant industry license, certification, or registration
  - A combination of work experience, training, and education or industry credential related to the subject matter he or she will be teaching

All candidates would be carefully considered to ensure the individual has sufficient education and expertise to provide instruction necessary to meet the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for the course(s) to be taught. Before issuing a school district teaching permit to an individual, the district would ensure that the individual completed the criminal background check in compliance with the State Board of Education (SBEC) rules. This would require the superintendent to certify to the Board of Trustees that the individual has undergone a criminal history background check and is capable of proper classroom management. In addition, the individual would be required to obtain a set number of hours in classroom management training.