



Milford Independent School District

P.O. Box 545, Milford, TX 76670



Vernon Orndorff – Superintendent

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District of Innovation Plan (HB42)

June of 2022 – May of 2027

House Bill 1842, passed during the 84th Legislative Session, allows for greater local control at the district area in certain areas. HB 1842 was created to allow public schools exemptions in Educational Law that charter schools are currently entitled. This opportunity will allow for Milford ISD to create a plan that best suits the needs of our students and community. Once in place, the plan will be effective for five consecutive school years.

Vision of Milford ISD: The vision of Milford Independent School District (ISD) is that all students will be challenged, successful, motivated to learn, independent thinkers, and problem solvers. Milford ISD envisions a learning facility where students will achieve academically, explore their interests, and grow mentally, morally, and physically through the school's academic, fine arts, athletic and vocational programs.

The Milford ISD administration and the entire school staff along with the community will act as mentors, guides, and advisors to the learning process in order to achieve excellence in all fields of study. Students will strive for excellence in all classes and extracurricular activities and be proud of the school they represent. Parents will be a part of their child's education process in a positive and supporting manner at each grade level and all areas of endeavor.

In order to better serve the students of Milford ISD, the District Advisory Committee has developed a five-year District of Innovation Plan to allow greater opportunities for the Milford ISD Board of Trustees to use their best judgment to make decisions concerning the students of Milford ISD. The plan includes the following:

First Day of Instruction

Exemption From: TEC §25.0811

Law: Except as provided by this section, a school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August.

Proposal: Milford ISD recognizes that this law restricts the flexibility in designing calendars annually to fit the needs of the school district and community. The district seeks to start school based on the needs of the students, school and community. This will provide the district the following opportunities:

1. Increase the number of student instructional days before state assessments.
2. Alignment of the school calendar with the local community college that provides dual credit instruction for our high school students.
3. Balancing the number of instructional days during the fall and spring semesters.
4. Ending the school year before June to allow more days of remediation during summer school before state assessment retesting.
5. Allow for qualifying students to be able to enroll in summer courses through the local community college without overlap of district instructional days and college instructional days.

Teacher Contract Days (Minimum Service Required)

Exemption From: TEC §21.401

Law: (a) A contract between a school district and an educator must be for a minimum of 10 months' service. (b) An educator employed under a 10-month contract must provide a minimum of 187 days of service.

Proposal: Milford ISD seeks to better align the number of contractual days 10-month contract employees work with the required 75,600 minutes of instruction for students. Milford ISD will reduce the required days of service from 187 days to 182 days with no effect on 10-month contract employee's salary. In addition, this will also:

1. Increase the daily rate of pay for teachers.
2. Allow teachers more time during the summer to seek out individualized professional development that better relates to the needs of their fields of employment.
3. Assist in teacher retention and recruitment.

Teacher Contracts (Probationary Contracts)

Exemption From: TEC §21.102(b)

Law: (b) A probationary contract may not be for a term exceeding one school year. The probationary contract may be renewed for two additional one-year periods, for a maximum permissible probationary contract period of three school years, except that the probationary period may not exceed one year for a person who has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment by the district.

Proposal: Milford ISD looks to increase the length of the probationary contract for teachers who have been employed at least five of the eight years from a maximum of one year period to a three year period. This will allow the district the following:

1. A longer evaluation period of the teacher to also include assessment data from the end of the first year of employment since contractual decisions have to be made prior to the end of the first academic year of employment.
2. These employees will also be subject to the probationary period set out in TEC §21.102(c) in order to allow more time to fairly and thoroughly assess an employee's performance.

Class Size

TEC §25.112 Current: Texas Education Code limits the number of students in grades Kindergarten through 4th grade to 22. While the maximum number of students in K-4 classrooms may be addressed by a state waiver, the waivers must be applied for annually.

Proposed: By seeking the exception from TEC §25.112, the district would have flexibility for all campuses and classrooms for the duration of the District of Innovation Designation and would not be required to seek waivers annually. While the District intends to remain within the guidelines of the current education code as much as possible, the District seeks flexibility to provide the best learning environment for our K-4 students, including more flexibility when teaching, creative ways of delivering instruction, different types of instructional delivery and the ability to manage increases in class sizes.

Notice of Class Size TEC §25.113

Current: Texas Education Code requires districts to notify each parent in the class section that exceeds the 22:1 ratio, and inform them when a waiver has been submitted.

Proposed: In the event a classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio in grades K-4, the class sizes will be reviewed by appropriate district and campus administration. The Board of Trustees will be informed of K-4 classes that exceed 22:1. TEA waivers and parent notification for class sizes in grades K-4 exceeding 22 will not be required.

Teacher Certification

Exemption From: TEC §21.003(a)

Law: A person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern or teacher trainee, librarian, educational aide, administrator, educational diagnostician, or school counselor by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued as provided by Subchapter B.

Texas Education Code §21.003 and §21.053 outlines state certification standards for teachers. An exemption from these requirements allows Milford ISD to issue a school district teaching permit to individuals who do not hold a teaching certificate, but whom the district deems best to teach in a particular area. Milford ISD is committed to hiring the best staff available and lists “recruit, value, and retain exceptional staff to create a rewarding learning environment” as one of its district strategic goals. Occasionally, teachers are needed for positions that are difficult to fill. This exemption relates only to those positions the District identifies as difficult to fill and would be assessed on an individual basis. Staff hired under a school district teaching permit will benefit from the same rights and responsibilities as certified teachers within the district. After the required posting period and candidate interviews, the principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what specific credentials (i.e. education, experiences and expertise) the prospective teacher possesses that would qualify the individual to teach that subject(s). The superintendent must approve the selection and report the action to the Board at the first board meeting following the assignment. The District and local campus will assess appropriate training needs for any teacher hired under this exemption. Finally, this is a local certification only and does not transfer to another school district. Teachers hired under this profession must possess a bachelor’s degree, enroll in an alternative certification program and demonstrate active progress towards the completion of the alternative certification program. The Teacher will obtain state certification within three years of their first day of employment. **Special education and bilingual/ESL teachers must continue to be SBEC certified.**

Teacher Certification for Dual Credit and Career and Technical Education Instructors

(TEC §21.003; §21.053) Texas Education Code Sections 21.003, 21.053, limits the ability to hire teachers in highly specialized or hard-to-fill areas. Through an exemption from existing teacher certification requirements for dual credit and career/technical teachers, Milford ISD will be granted the flexibility to hire professionals in specialized trades and vocations to teach identified career and technical courses if certified teachers are not available. This exemption permits these professionals to meet the Highly Qualified designation for the State and permits the District to obtain the same weighted funding as would be available should the professional hold a traditional teaching certification for the course. The District will also have the flexibility to hire credentialed community or university college instructors in specific content areas to afford more students the opportunity to take dual credit courses if certified teachers are not available to teach those courses.

Teacher Evaluation

Exemption From: TEC 21.352

Proposal: Milford ISD will use the T-Tess Appraisal system to evaluate teachers and will use appropriate instruments to evaluate all other staff members. All teachers are subject to and fall under the guidelines of the state code of ethics. As the T-Tess appraisal system is a growth-model, all teachers will be evaluated every year. Every teacher will receive a minimum of four informal walk-throughs per calendar school year; usually two in the fall and two in the spring. There will be at least one formal observation. Probationary contract teachers should expect their formal observation in the fall, and term teacher should expect their evaluation in the spring. Additional formal observations and walk-throughs may be added at the teacher request or at administrator discretion. See the T-Tess Teacher Appraisal Calendar at the back of this handbook.

(Revision: August 27, 2020 Board Approval.)

Teacher Mentors

Texas Education Code §21.458 requires that teacher mentors have three or more years of experience in the field. This limits the number of teachers who are allowed to serve as mentors and restricts teachers with exceptional skill or experience in the subject matter from sharing their knowledge with novice teachers. This is a need for MISD because of the rapid growth of the district.

Campus Behavior Coordinator

Texas Education Code §37.0012 constrains campus governance by requiring one person at each campus to be designated to serve as the campus behavior coordinator. Milford ISD utilizes a collaborative approach to discipline to foster the social and emotional learning of the student. This collaborative approach includes the parent, student, school administrator and counselor. Exemption from Texas Education Code §37.0012 allows Milford ISD campus principals to divide and/or delegate campus behavior coordinator duties to assistant principals as needed and appropriate designees.

Removal of Unwanted Visitors

Unauthorized Persons: Refusal of Entry, Ejection, Identification (Ed. Code 37.105) Current Law A district must maintain a record of each verbal warning issued under Section 37.105 (a)(2)(A), including the name of the person to whom the warning was issued and the date of issuance. At the time a person is refused entry to or ejected from a school district's property under Section 37.105, the district must provide the person a written information explaining how to appeal. Each school board must adopt a policy that uses the district's existing grievance process to permit a person ejected or denied entry to address the Board of Trustees in person within 90 days of the commencement of the appeal, unless the appeal is granted sooner.

Proposed Texas Education Code section 37.105 includes a process for ejecting or denying entry to a visitor who presents a substantial risk of harm or behaves in a manner inappropriate for the school setting. To better ensure the safety and security of students and staff in Milford ISD, we propose that the District not be required to maintain a record of each verbal warning of potential removal from district property/facilities, nor be required to provide written information explaining the appeal process to those who have been refused entry to district property/facilities or removed from district property/facilities. The District currently attempts to provide written notice to persons who are subject to potential refusal for entry or for removal from district property/facilities. Should an exemption from TEC §37.105 be granted, the District shall continue to provide written notice to persons who are subject to potential refusal for entry or for removal from district property/facilities in situations where the administrator on site feels it is reasonable and safe to do so. Campus and District administrators, as well as school resource officers and District police officers if applicable, may refuse to allow a person to enter or may eject a person from property under the District's control in accordance with law. An appeal notice must be filed with the Superintendent, in writing, and submitted to the Administration Office for review.

Out-of-School Suspensions

Out-of-School Suspension for Students Below Grade 3 (Ed. Code 37.005) Current Law Under Texas Education Code 37.005, a student who is enrolled in a grade level below grade 3 may not be placed in out-of-school suspension, unless while on school property or while attending a school-sponsored or school-related activity on or off school property, the student engages in: 1. Conduct that contains the elements of an offense related to weapons under Penal Code 46.02 or 46.05; 2. Conduct that contains the elements of a violent offense related under Penal Code 22.01, 22.011, 22.02, 22.021 3. Selling, giving, or delivering to another person or possessing, using, or being under the influence of an amount of: a. Marijuana or a controlled substance, as defined by Health and Safety Code Chapter 481, or by 21 USC Section 801 et seq.; b. A dangerous drug, as defined by Health and Safety Code Chapter 483; or c. An alcoholic beverage, as defined by Alcoholic Beverage Code 1.04.

Proposed: To best serve the students of Milford ISD and provide a high quality learning environment for all students, the District proposes that school administrators be able to exercise professional judgment and place students of any grade level in out-of-school suspension when they deem it necessary for safety and in order to maintain an orderly learning environment for all students. Specifically, the District seeks the flexibility to authorize school administrators to suspend students out-of-school below grade 3 when necessary. The District currently monitors the suspensions of all students, regardless of grade level, to ensure that District policy and the Student Code of Conduct are applied appropriately across the district. Should an exemption from TEC §37.005 be granted, the District would continue to monitor the suspensions of all students, which would now include students in grades below 3, to ensure that suspensions are appropriate. The benefits of the proposed innovation are to allow for school-based decision making, assist in maintaining an orderly learning environment for all students, and allow school administrators to more effectively ensure the safety and security of all students.

Transfer Students

(TEC §25.036) The transfer policy for non-resident students is deemed to be a one-year commitment on the part of the District. Proposal: Relief from the code governing this policy would eliminate the provision of a one-year commitment in the event of exceptional circumstances which would include, but are not limited to: student misbehavior warranting in or out of school suspension, placement in DAEP or expulsion; or attendance which falls below the TEA truancy standard including absences from school, and/or multiple instances of late arrival, early dismissal or late pickup.

Other Exemptions

Depositories Contract

(TEC §45.205) Current statute requires school districts to enter into a two-year contract with a depository bank. This two-year agreement does not provide stability which in term can cause depository banks to limit options of service, interest rates, and fees. In addition to costs and time involved in the request for proposal process, a district incurs additional costs for printing checks should the district be forced to change depositories. Proposal: Relief from this mandate would allow the District to continue with a depository bank as long as it is beneficial to the District.

Exemption From Future TEC Mandates To best serve our local Milford ISD community, staff, and students, Milford ISD hereby includes a provision in our Local Innovation Plan for the District to maintain control over any future, eligible Texas Education Code mandates, which may be exempted by a majority vote of the Milford ISD Board of Trustees.

District of Innovation Timeline:

- January 19, 2017 – Milford ISD Board of Trustees passes resolution to initiate the process of forming a District of Innovation by a margin of 6-0; Trustee Wimbish absent from meeting.
- February 16, 2017 – Milford ISD Board of Trustees holds public hearing at 6:00 pm.
- February 16, 2017 – Milford ISD Board of Trustees votes by a margin of 5-0 to proceed with District of Innovation and appoints the District Advisory Committee to work on developing the District of Innovation Plan; Trustees Griffin and Wimbish absent from meeting.
- March 3, 2017 – District of Innovation plan published on district website for the duration of 30 days ending April 2, 2017.
- March 20, 2017 – Milford ISD Superintendent Clingenpeel notifies Commissioner of Education Morath of the intent to vote on the District of Innovation Plan at the April 20, 2017 Board of Trustees meeting.
- March 30, 2017 – Milford ISD District Advisory Committee holds public meeting and passes District of Innovation plan by a majority vote. Members voted in favor of approving the District of Innovation Plan and sends the DOI to the Milford ISD Board of Trustees for final approval at the April Board Meeting.
- April 20, 2017 – Milford ISD Board of Trustees votes by a margin of 5-0 in favor of final approval of District of Innovation Plan; Trustees Cook and Wadley absent from meeting.
- August 27, 2020 – Milford ISD Board of Trustees votes by a margin of 7-0 in favor of updates to DOI teacher appraisal system.
- January 20, 2022 - Milford ISD Board of Trustees votes by a margin of 7-0 in favor of updates District of Innovation Plan effective January 21, 2022.
- January 20, 2022 - Milford ISD Board of Trustees votes by a margin of 7-0 in favor of final approval of revision of the District of Innovation Plan for August of 2022 – May of 2022
- April 21, 2022 – Milford ISD Board of Trustees votes by a margin of 6-0 in favor of final approval of a renewal of the District of Innovation Plan for June 2022.

At the time of final approval of the District of Innovation plan (updates) for Milford ISD, the plan will go into effect on June 2022. The plan will remain into effect for the remainder of the 5 consecutive school years beginning June of 2022 and ending May of 2027. If at any time the board sees necessary, the District of Innovation plan may be modified and adjusted to meet the needs of the students of Milford ISD. The board will reconvene the District Advisory Committee to make necessary changes to the District of Innovation plan.

