

El Paso Independent School District

# Local Innovation Plan

April 15, 2016

**Local Innovation Committee Members:**

| Name                      | Appointment                     |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Dr. Royce Avery           | Superintendent                  |
| Jaime Barceleau, LMSW     | Board Vice President Al Velarde |
| Karen Blaine              | Superintendent                  |
| Ingrid Brown              | Board Secretary Trent Hatch     |
| Dr. Tamekia Brown         | Superintendent                  |
| Norma De La Rosa          | Board Secretary Trent Hatch     |
| Dr. David DeMatthews      | Superintendent                  |
| Michael Devine            | Trustee Diane Dye               |
| Ivonne Durant             | Superintendent                  |
| Laila Ferris              | Superintendent                  |
| Lynn Gill                 | Trustee Charles Taylor          |
| Scott Gray                | Superintendent                  |
| Nancy Hanson              | Trustee Diane Dye               |
| Dana Hamilton             | Board President Dori Fenenbock  |
| Dr. Elena Izquierdo       | Trustee Susie Byrd              |
| Ross Moore                | Board Vice President Al Velarde |
| Melanie Mullings          | Board President Dori Fenenbock  |
| Elizabeth O'Hara Williams | Trustee Susie Byrd              |
| Amy O'Rourke              | Trustee Bob Geske               |
| Debbie Trexler            | Trustee Charles Taylor          |
| Dr. Michael Warmack       | Trustee Bob Geske               |

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

House Bill 1842, passed during the 84<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session, permits Texas public school districts to become Districts of Innovation and to obtain exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. On December 15, 2015, the El Paso Independent School District's Board of Trustees ("Board") passed a Resolution to Initiate the Process of Designation as a District of Innovation in order to increase local control over District operations and to support innovation and local initiatives to improve educational outcomes for the benefit of students and the community. In its resolution, the Board clarified that it did not desire the District to be exempted from any existing laws relating to teacher contracts or teacher benefits.

On January 19, 2016, the Board appointed a twenty-one member Local Innovation Committee ("Committee") comprised of diverse leaders representing a cross-section of the District's various stakeholders, including teachers, principals, parents, community members, and administrators. The Committee met on February 4, 11, 18, 23, and March 3, 2016, to discuss and draft this Local Innovation Plan ("Plan"). The Committee sought and considered input on the Plan through a survey distributed to teachers, principals, administrators, other District employees, parents, high school students, and community members. Based on direction provided by the Board and input from various District stakeholders, the Committee proposes this Plan.

## **II. TERM**

The term of the Plan is for five years, beginning at the start of the 2016-2017 school year and ending at the end of the 2021-2022 school year, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. The Committee will continually monitor the effectiveness of the Plan and recommend to the Board any suggested modifications to the Plan.

## **III. A COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM**

The Plan's comprehensive educational program is guided by and aligned with the Board's Vision, Mission, Strategic Priorities, and Strategic Plan for the District.

## **A. Vision**

The Board has adopted the following Vision to guide the District:

*El Paso Independent School District will be a premier educational institution, source of pride and innovation, and the cornerstone of emerging economic opportunities producing a twenty-first century workforce.*

## **B. Mission**

The Board has adopted the following Mission to guide the District:

*The El Paso Independent School District graduates every student prepared for higher learning and careers to empower them as knowledgeable and engaged citizens, innovators, and drivers of a robust, bicultural economy.*

## **C. Strategic Priorities**

The Board has articulated the following strategic priorities:

- Active Learning
- Great Community Schools
- Community Partnerships
- Lead with Character and Ethics

## **D. Strategic Plan**

The Board recognizes that for students to succeed in today's world, schools must go beyond what has historically been limited to a set of credits that comprise graduation requirements. The Board believes that in addition to supporting students as they meet core credit requirements, there is a need to focus on college and career readiness, dual language, entrepreneurial mindsets, character development, social and emotional learning, and employability. Accordingly, the Board developed a Strategic Plan for the District including strategic priorities, focus areas, and initiatives pointing toward a broader set of outcomes that focus on powerful learning experiences

and continual forward-looking growth for every student. In other words, the Strategic Plan is designed to create a system that puts learners at the center.

The Strategic Plan signals a transition from test preparation as the primary focus to meaningful, student-centered learning as a core design principle. The Strategic Plan emphasizes a commitment not only to established student priorities such as active learning, but also to offering quality options for every family and providing development opportunities to staff so that they can best support students.

The Strategic Plan has the following three focus areas:

1. Providing Engaging & Challenging Learning
2. Building Strong Supports for Students, Schools, and the Community
3. Modernizing Facilities to Create Great Learning Environments

In addition, the Strategic Plan has five student learning goals:

1. Critical, Knowledgeable & Creative Thinkers
2. Informed Problem Solvers
3. Effective Bilingual Communicators
4. Responsible Leaders & Productive Citizens
5. Socially & Emotionally Intelligent Individuals

#### **E. Innovations**

To achieve the District's Vision and Mission, to align the District's practices and operations with the District's strategic priorities, and to meet the Strategic Plan's five student learning goals, the District needs the flexibility to exert local control, at both the District and campus levels, to:

- Promote innovative curriculum
- Promote innovative instructional methods
- Promote innovative ideas regarding community participation
- Promote innovative ideas regarding campus governance
- Promote innovative ideas regarding parental involvement
- Modify the school day
- Modify the school year

The District needs local flexibility in the areas listed above to improve student outcomes by focusing on college and career readiness, dual language, entrepreneurial mindsets, character development, social and emotional learning, and employability; to explore new ways of offering quality enrichment and engagement options for every family; and to expand the potential for providing more high-quality, meaningful professional development opportunities for staff so that they can build their professional capacity and collaborate regarding best practices so that they can best support students.

The promotion of innovative curriculum and instructional methods will help the District provide more engaging and challenging learning to meet the student learning goals of developing critical, knowledgeable, and creative thinkers; informed problem solvers; effective bilingual communicators; responsible leaders and productive citizens; and socially and emotionally intelligent individuals. Promoting innovative ideas regarding community participation, campus governance, and parental involvement will help build strong supports for students, schools, and the community by increasing community partnerships which bring together education, business, and civic agencies so that every school, family and student will feel supported and the community will support the District. Finally, modifications in the scheduling of the school year and the school day will allow for more time for innovative student enrichment opportunities as well as more time for professional development of staff.

Two key goals identified by the Committee as critical to achievement of the District's Vision, Mission, strategic priorities and Strategic Plan are innovative expansion of dual language and Pre-Kindergarten ("Pre-K") programs.

#### **F. Dual Language**

The Committee recommends expansion of dual language to produce students who are bilingual, biliterate, and bicultural with the knowledge and skills to succeed in postsecondary education, careers, business, and the global society. Dual language educates all children, English speakers, Spanish speakers, and speakers of other languages.

Dual language education provides an enriched learning experience by teaching students core academic content through two languages: English and Spanish. Its uniqueness from all other forms of bilingual education is two-fold: (a) it is an enrichment model that utilizes the first language and the second language in developing biliteracy across the curriculum, and (b) it is an opportunity for all students; English language learners and native English speakers learn together, learn from each other, and use each other as language and cultural resources. (Izquierdo, 2012). All students in dual language education serve as first language models and second language learners, and in the process they are acquiring both English and Spanish academic proficiency across the curriculum. (Izquierdo, 2014). Dual language education is an inclusive school reform for all students, and all students benefit from participating. National, state and local data continues to show these promises.

During the spring of 2014 the Board of Managers approved dual language as the required program model for all English language learners District-wide initiating in Pre-K in 2014-2015, and adding a new grade level each year.

Over the next five years, flexibility and innovation in curriculum, instructional methods, community participation, campus governance, parental involvement, scheduling of the school year, and scheduling of the school day will be critical in order to achieve the Board's goal of providing the opportunity for all District students to become bilingual, bicultural, and biliterate by 2020.

Research indicates that learning two languages provides a more resilient cornerstone for cognition and a more diversified body of mental abilities by: (1) increasing creativity and problem solving skills; (2) heightening metalinguistic and metacognitive skills; (3) improving overall school performance; and (4) promoting higher performance on standardized tests. In addition, the socio-cultural benefits to students in dual language education include: (1) development of positive cross-cultural attitudes; (2) cultivation of a deeper understanding of other cultures; (3) nurturing respect for other people and cultures; and (4) increased self-esteem and pride in the heritage language. Expanding dual language education will help the District achieve all five of the student learning goals identified in the Strategic Plan: (1) critical, knowledgeable, and creative thinkers; (2) informed problem solvers; (3) effective bilingual communicators; (4) responsible leaders and productive citizens; and (5) socially and emotionally intelligent individuals.

## **G. Pre-K**

In order to provide the significant cognitive and socio-cultural benefits of dual language education to as many students as possible, as early as possible, the Committee recommends using innovation to find a way of providing universal all-day Pre-K District-wide. The Committee recommends exploring an innovative partnership with Region 19 ESC to be housed in District buildings; including the construction of early childhood development labs in the District's facilities plan; and assembling an advisory committee comprised of university, parents, community members, teachers, administration, and English language learner experts to recommend sound, research-based dual language/English language learner schooling for Pre-K-16 (Pre-Kindergarten through college) students.

While funding is currently a barrier to the District's ability to provide universal all-day Pre-K, the Committee believes such an initiative would have widespread appeal to the community and could ultimately increase the District's overall student enrollment and revenue by attracting and retaining families who would not otherwise enroll their children in the District. An overwhelming body of evidence shows that high quality preschool opportunities give children a foundation for greater achievement in school and life (Gordon & Egbert). A noteworthy study, Abecedarian Project, conducted by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill reported that, over decades, children from poor families receiving high-quality preschool were four times more likely to graduate from college by age 30. In addition, a 2014 report found that those students were also at lower risk for cardiovascular and other diseases than students who did not receive an early childhood education. Finally, the United States Department of Education reports that 90 percent of a child's brain connections are developed by the time a child turns 5. For all these reasons, the Committee recommends exploring innovative ways of expanding all-day Pre-K to help all students in the District meet the Strategic Plan's student learning goals and become critical, knowledgeable, and creative thinkers; informed problem solvers; effective bilingual communicators; responsible leaders and productive citizens; and socially and emotionally intelligent individuals.

#### **IV. REQUIREMENTS OF THE EDUCATION CODE THAT INHIBIT THE GOALS OF THE PLAN FROM WHICH THE DISTRICT WILL BE EXEMPT UPON ADOPTION OF THE PLAN**

##### **A. Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Final Grade**

In order to provide engaging and challenging learning to all students, the District needs relief from Texas Education Code Section 25.092, which inhibits the goals of the Plan by not allowing the District to issue class credit or a final grade for a class if a student is not in attendance an arbitrary percentage of the time that a class is offered. In other words, the law currently requires the District to award class credit to students based on “seat time” rather than based on content mastery. Exemption from this requirement will provide educational advantages to students of the District by promoting active learning through innovation in the methods, locations, and times instruction may be delivered to students, thereby accommodating students with legitimate scheduling conflicts, reducing dropouts, and increasing the number of qualifying graduates.

One of the overarching goals in the Strategic Plan within the focus area of providing engaging and challenging learning is to implement tools, resources, and training that support blended and personalized learning for both students and teachers. Blended learning, where instruction is delivered through a combination of time in class and time spent learning online, is one example where exemption from Section 25.092 will likely foster greater innovation to promote active learning and improve student outcomes. In addition, exemption from this requirement will allow the District not to penalize students who miss class due to legitimate school activities and will promote student engagement, as well as social and emotional development, by encouraging more students to participate in such activities.

Relief from Section 25.092 does not in any way impact or alter existing compulsory attendance requirements or University Interscholastic League (“UIL”) rules. Moreover, opting out of Section 25.092 in no way limits or modifies a teacher’s right to determine the finality of a grade in accordance with Texas Education Code Section 28.0214, nor does it restrict or alter a teacher’s right to assign grades in accordance with Texas Education Code Section 28.0216.



## **B. First Day of Instruction**

The Strategic Plan emphasizes the importance of active learning, college and career readiness, and social and emotional learning. Texas Education Code Section 25.0811 inhibits these goals by prohibiting the District from beginning instruction before the fourth Monday in August. Flexibility to begin instruction earlier in the calendar year will enable the District to improve active learning by balancing the amount of instructional time in the semesters, which will allow teachers to better pace and deliver instruction before and after the winter break. In addition, by having the flexibility to start and end the school year earlier, students will be able to enroll in college courses that start in early June, thereby increasing college and career readiness. Finally, starting the school year earlier for students transitioning from elementary school to middle school and from middle school to high school will promote social and emotional learning by giving those students additional time and support to enable them to adjust socially and emotionally to their new campus environments.

## **C. Teacher Certification for Dual Credit and Career and Technical Education Instructors**

Within the focus area of providing engaging and challenging learning, the Strategic Plan sets forth specific goals under the initiative to improve college and career readiness options. Three of these goals – development of post high school plans, improvement of workforce skills, and expansion of dual credit programs – are inhibited by Texas Education Code Sections 21.003, 21.053, 21.044 and 19 Texas Administrative Code Chapter 231 to the extent these laws limit the District’s ability to hire teachers to teach hard-to-fill, high demand dual credit and career and technical/STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts & Mathematics) courses when high quality certified teachers are not available. In order to enable more students to obtain the educational benefit of such dual credit and career and technical/STEAM course offerings, the District seeks to establish its own local qualification requirements for such courses in lieu of the requirements set forth in law.

By obtaining exemption from existing teacher certification requirements for dual credit and career and technical/STEAM teachers, the District will have the flexibility to hire credentialed community college instructors or university

professors in specific content areas in order to afford more students the opportunity to take dual credit courses if certified teachers are not available to teach those courses. In addition, this exemption will afford the District the flexibility to hire professionals in certain trades and vocations to teach the crafts of those trades and vocations (such as welding, fine arts, etc.) in career and technical/STEAM courses if certified teachers are not available to teach those courses.

#### **D. Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator**

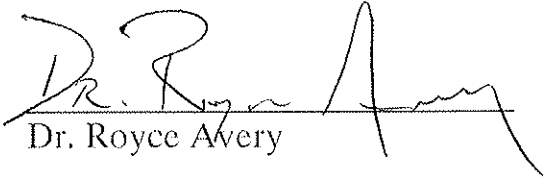
One of the Strategic Plan's student learning goals is to help students become socially and emotionally intelligent individuals. Social and emotional learning is inhibited by Texas Education Code Section 37.0012, which constrains campus governance by requiring one person at each campus to be designated to serve as the campus behavior coordinator. This requirement inhibits social and emotional learning because it restricts the District's ability to promote a more collaborative discipline program in which community schools provide social and emotional supports to students. By obtaining exemption from Section 37.0012, the District will be better able to focus on establishing classroom protocols and utilizing school culture to foster the development of individual responsibility, positive behavioral interventions and supports while encouraging the social and emotional development of each student and his or her responsibility toward the community.

#### **E. Teacher and Administrator Appraisals**

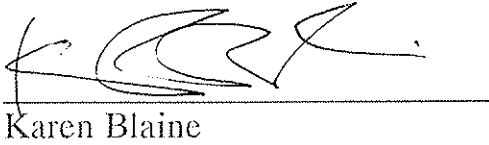
Finally, the Strategic Plan's initiative of active, project-based and blended learning includes the goals of developing a teacher support model, a new principal's academy, an administrator's institute, and a comprehensive District staff development plan that focuses on individual growth. These goals are impeded by the laws governing educator appraisals set forth in Texas Education Code Sections 21.351, 21.352, 21.354, 21.3541 and 19 Texas Administrative Code Chapter 150 to the extent these laws require that state standardized test scores be used as one of the evaluation measures for teachers and administrators. In order to promote professional development that focuses on individual growth, the District needs to maintain local flexibility to continue its current practice of using various measures, including multiple observations, goal setting and tracking, and student growth progress toward

learning objectives, as evaluation measures on teacher and administrator appraisals.

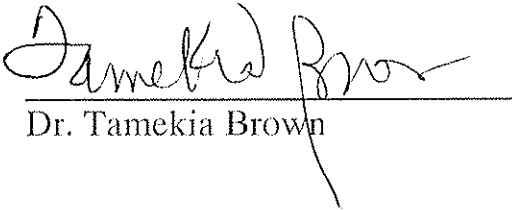
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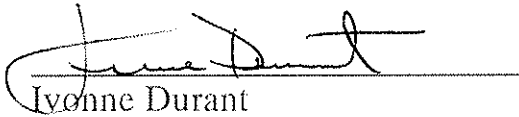
  
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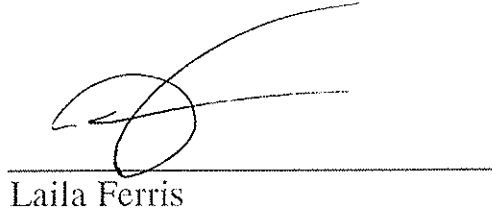
  
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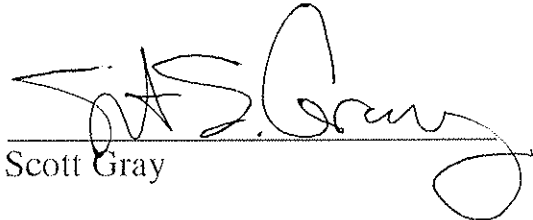
  
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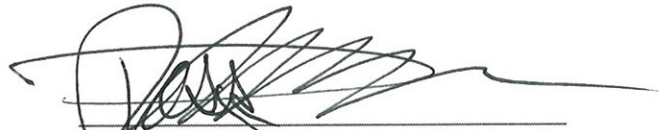
  
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Dana Hamilton

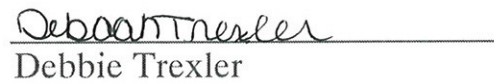
  
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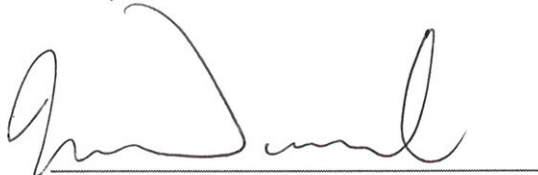
  
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