

**MINUTES OF LOCAL INNOVATION COMMITTEE MEETING
EL PASO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
March 24, 2021
12:00 P.M.**

- PRESENT:** Cezy Collins, General Counsel
Dr. Tamekia Brown, Chief Academic Officer
Patricia Cortez, Superintendent of Human Resources
Nancy Tovar, Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Schools
Norma De La Rosa, President of El Paso Teachers Association
Ross Moore, President of El Paso American Federation of Teachers
Martha Aguirre, Executive Director of Budget & External Financial Management
Dr. Sarah Chavez-Gibson, Principal, Stanton Elementary School
Nancy Hanson, Principal, Logan Elementary School
Ray Adauto, El Paso Builders Association
Dow Farley, Retired Teacher
Jessica Silva, Librarian, El Paso High School
Richard Gutierrez, UTEP Professor
Jonathan Childress, Community Engagement Manager, Microsoft TechSpark Program
Dr. Deborah Fetzer, Youth Education Support Services Director, Fort Bliss Liaison
Dr. Elena Izquierdo, UTEP Professor
Gustavo Arriaga, Lead Program Manager, Southwest Region, Microsoft Philanthropies TEALS Program
Michael Martinez, City Manager, Sunland Park, NM
- ABSENT:** Laura Strelzin Bagley, Teacher, Franklin High School
Mari Vanpelt, Community Member
Mica Short, Vice President of Development, Paso Del Norte Community Foundation
- OTHER:** Gabriela Gomez, Executive Assistant General Counsel
Victoria Orozco, Director Strategy and Evaluation
Dr. Rosie Perez, Coordinator Legal Services and Office of Quality Management

A. Welcome

Ms. Cezy Collins, General Counsel, and Dr. Brown, Chief Academic Officer, welcomed the Committee Members to the fifth Committee meeting. Ms. Collins thanked the committee members for their time serving on the Committee and for their input with the survey regarding the District exemptions.

B. Brief Overview of Prior Meeting and Distribute Minutes

Ms. Collins provided a brief overview of the prior meeting (March 10, 2021). The meeting minutes for the prior meeting and the survey from five years ago was sent via email to the Committee for informational purposes.

C. Discuss Committee Survey Results

Ms. Orozco reviewed the Survey Results. The report was displayed for the Committee. There were 20 voting members. Only completed surveys were tabulated, thus there were 18 surveys used for compilation of the report. On the first question, 83.3% were in favor of the current 6 exemptions. Ms. Orozco then reviewed the exemptions for which three respondents were not in agreement. There was one "no" on the limited exemption from Texas Education Code Sections 21.003, 21.053, 21.044 that limit the District's ability to hire noncertified 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. There was one "no" on the exemption from Texas Education Code Section 37.0012 which requires one person at each campus to be designated to serve as the campus behavior coordinator. The last "no" was on the limited exemption from Texas Education Code Sections 21.351, 21.352, 21.354, 21.3541 that govern teacher and administrator appraisals to the extent these laws require that state standardized test scores be used as one of the evaluation measures for teachers and administrators.

Next, Ms. Orozco reviewed the survey results for possible exemptions discussed from other Districts. The participants voted 10 for and 8 against for exemption from Texas Education Code Section 25.087 (b-2) which permits a district (without losing funding) to excuse a student from attending school

for up to two days in both the student's junior and senior years to visit an accredited institution of higher education for the purpose of determining interest in attending the institution. The Committee members voted 3 for and 15 against for exemption from Texas Education Code Section 21.458 that requires teacher mentors have three or more years of experience in the field. The Committee members voted 2 for and 16 against exemption from Texas Education Code Section 28.023 which requires a school district to give a student in grade level six or above credit for a subject by examination if the student scores in the 80th percentile or above on the examination. The Committee members voted 7 for and 11 against exemption from Texas Education Code Section 29.151 that requires to be eligible for kindergarten and receive state funding, a child must be 5 years old by September 1st of the school year. The Committee members voted 2 for and 16 against exemption from Texas Education Code Sections 11.252 and 11.253 which require districts to follow prescribed procedures for district-level planning and decision-making and campus-level planning and decision-making. The Committee members voted 4 for and 14 against opting out of teacher certification requirements under Texas Education Code Section 21.003 for teachers of foreign language (other than English) classes. All Committee members responded "no" to the question regarding reviewing and discussing any other exemptions from other districts.

Ms. Orozco reviewed the last two survey question which asked about the Committee's opinion regarding the importance of surveying the school community and how valued Committee members felt serving on the Local Innovation Committee. Nine Committee members felt it was very important to survey the school community regarding the exemptions being sought. Eight Committee members felt it was important to survey the school community regarding the exemptions being sought. Only one Committee member felt it was slightly important to survey the school community. On the final question, "as a valued member of our Local Innovation Committee, do you believe your input is heard?" there were 13 Committee members who answered yes, 4 Committee members who answered sometimes, and 1 who answered they wanted the option to comment.

Ms. Collins asked to return to the slide regarding District level planning as per Ms. De La Rosa's request. Question 12 was displayed just for informational purpose.

Ms. Collins reviewed the possible exemption regarding Texas Education Code Section 25.087 (b-2) which permits a district (without losing funding) to excuse a student from attending school for up to two days in both the student's junior and senior years to visit an accredited institution of higher education for the purpose of determining interest in attending the institution. The Committee members voted 11 for and 7 against opting out of the Section to allow for increased excused days even if state funding would not be available. She asked for Committee member input due to the close count in votes. Dr. Brown stated that the community would most likely support the increased time to visit and explore post high school options. Ms. De La Rosa asked if there was a limitation to distance or schools to visit. Dr. Brown stated that the time is the student's and they can utilize it to visit locations of their choice. She further stated that Ms. Felder stated that the district has a process in place that families can take advantage of, which allows students to visit colleges more days than are allocated. Mr. Aduato stated he was appreciative of the fact that the District is supportive of students being able to take time for visits. Ms. Hanson asked how involved students are with the program Upward Bound. She stated she traveled in the past as a volunteer with students years back. Students in the Upward Bound program were taken to visit colleges because they were the first to attend college in their families and benefited from the program. Dr. Brown said she could find information regarding Upward Bound. Mr. Childress stated that looking at this exemption shows the community that the District cares that its students attend college or visit military facilities. Mr. Martinez shared that his children are in elementary school and he is involved as a Watch Dog. He stated he feels that he doesn't know about the process or program of allowing students to take time to visit campuses. His family is setting up visits on weekends. He stated that they have taken three trips on weekends so that his family member does not accrue absences. Mr. Farley stated he was for the exemption because he understood there was a process in place for absences to colleges and he was not wanting the District to lose funding due to absences. Mr. Farley stated the District should be proactive and innovative. Families need to be made aware of the ability of students to go to college and military visits. Ms. Collins stated that the Committee could offer to the Board of Trustees their opinion. Ms. Collins mentioned that once we have an exemption in place, it does not mean it will be utilized. The Committee could ask District to find innovative ways to support more than two days of absence. Ms. Collins said she would follow up with TEA and TASB on this particular exemption and report back.

Ms. Hanson discussed computer languages and stated students could acquire certifications. She stated the District is missing out on the opportunity to provide students with programs to support them in learning coding. Mr. Arriaga stated he works with District high school teachers to acquire knowledge on how to teach Computer Science. They receive technical backing by software engineers. Math and Science teachers are supported by professional software engineers. He stated this is why the exemption is important. Texas education code does recognize technology courses as a foreign language.

Mr. Martinez was asking clarification question on funding. He asked if the District is penalized for the absences. Ms. Collins stated funding is impacted. Ms. Collins said she will research and report back to the Committee.

Mr. Moore stated he is in favor of the exemption due to the travel time needed to get from El Paso to the east coast, for example.

D. Discuss Other Ideas for Innovation

There were no other areas that the Committee wanted to explore or discuss.

E. Discuss Potential Survey

Ms. Collins reviewed the results from the survey that the Committee members completed regarding surveying stakeholders. Dr. Brown's stated that the survey could result in misunderstandings by the community. She stated it was best to communicate that the exemptions are being reviewed by the Local Innovation Committee and inform the community what the Committee has already vetted.

Ms. Orozco stated that the Committee has had discussion and knowledge regarding the exemptions and it is necessary that the respondents review information in order to respond to the survey. The questions may be too lengthy and the respondents may not respond completely. Question development would be crucial because it can become overwhelming for the respondents. Ms. Collins stated the Committee has been working several weeks and the survey was created specifically for the Committee.

The Committee discussed a prior agenda item at this point in the meeting. Dr. Fetzer asked if discussion was concluded for the areas voted "no". She wanted to re-visit the exemption regarding Campus Behavior Coordinators. She stated the initial intent was to exempt the District from having the Campus Behavior Coordinator not solely because it was an unfunded position but because it inhibited the District from implementing other social and emotional behavior interventions. She stated she wanted to revisit section 37.0012 that addresses the responsibilities of the behavior intervention coordinator and the section below it (37.0013) that addresses the social and emotional programs that are required to be implemented into the District. She stated role of the Campus Behavior Coordinator was to facilitate the communication between the campus and the parent in the event of a disciplinary action with the student. It provides a timeline for when that communication needs to occur. She stated the code also allows for a principal or counselor to assume that responsibility. Dr. Fetzer then asked who is charged with setting up the communication. Ms. Hanson stated that an Assistant Principal at each campus is delegated as the point of contact for discipline issues. Ms. Collins asked if any other Committee member who voted for the exemption wanted to comment. Ms. Tovar asked if there was a change the Committee needed to review. Ms. Collins stated that it was enacted in 2015-2016 school year and there no amendments after that. However, section 37.0013 became effective the 2017-2018 school year. Dr. Fetzer asked if it she be re-voted on. Dr. Brown asked for the Zoom reactions to be used. Ms. Tovar requested more information before making a decision. Dr. Brown stated we are going to revisit the Upward Bound program and College visits. Dr. Brown will continue the conversation thru email due to the timeline. Ms. Collins stated there are two Committee meetings left to draft the plan to present to the Board of Trustees at the May 18 meeting. The plan needs to be posted by April 16 on the District website.

The Committee returned to the topic of surveying the community. Mr. Moore stated that the timeline doesn't lend itself to a survey as it would need to be stated in terms all community members can understand. He stated community meetings would be beneficial. Dr. Brown stated we could hold a public meeting that would allow District leaders time to clarify.

Ms. Collins stated there will be a public meeting of the DEIC and notice must be given to the commissioner. Mr. Moore stated to hold meetings at different sites district wide for the community. Ms. Collins asked if we hold the meetings in lieu of the survey. Mr. Childress stated he thinks the community should have a voice. He further stated it is important to explain the exemptions. Mr. Martinez stated he holds meetings via Zoom and that he would be willing to participate. Mr. Moore and Ms. De la Rosa also volunteered to assist. Ms. Collins thanked them for their support.

Ms. Collins stated there would be Zoom community meetings in the evening to request community input as opposed to a survey. She asked the Committee members if the survey results should be used to draft a plan. Committee members agreed. Ms. Collins stated she would begin to draft the plan for the Committee to review.

F. Discuss Drafting of the Proposed Plan

Ms. Collins stated she will utilize the Committee responses to the survey to create a draft of the plan.

G. Next Meeting on Wednesday, March 31, 2021, 12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.

H. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 1:12 p.m.

DRAFT