

**MINUTES OF LOCAL INNOVATION COMMITTEE MEETING
EL PASO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
FEBRUARY 17, 2021
12:00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Cezy Collins, General Counsel
Dr. Tamekia Brown, Chief Academic Officer
Patricia Cortez, Assistant 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
Laura Strelzin Bagley, Teacher, Franklin High School
Martha Aguirre, Executive Director of Budget & External Financial Management
Michael Martinez, City Manager, Sunland Park, NM
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
Mari Vanpelt, Community Member
Jonathan Childress, Community Engagement Manager, Microsoft TechSpark Program
Mica Short, Vice President of Development, Paso Del Norte Community Foundation
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

A. Welcome

Ms. Cezy Collins, General Counsel, and Dr. Brown, Chief Academic Officer, welcomed the Committee Members to the second Committee meeting. Ms. Collins explained the exercise that the group would conduct to learn about the District of Innovation process by reviewing other district's plans. She explained that the committee would be divided into 5 groups and each group would be assigned 5 district plans to review. She showed the committee on the internet where to find the district of innovation plans for their assigned districts. They will be reviewing the exemptions each district had, the rationale for the exemption, and to discuss the exemptions, the pros and cons of the exemption, and if the exemption might work for EPISD. Each group will then report back to committee on the exemptions.

B. Brief Overview of Prior Meeting and Distribute Minutes

Ms. Collins provided a brief overview of the prior meeting, including a discussion of the District's current exemptions from the Texas Education Code under the District's current Innovation Plan and Amendment thereto. Ms. Collins reminded the Committee of the Board's Resolution in which they expressed their desire that the District not be exempt from any existing laws related to teacher contracts or benefits, except to the extent of that the Texas Education Code allows the District to have a dual system of insurance. The districts chosen were based on relative size in comparison to EPISD and A rated districts. The Committee may want to review additional plans later.

C. Break-Out Groups to Review and Discuss Ideas for Innovation

The Committee broke into five break-out groups. Group one: Patricia Cortez, Richard Gutierrez, Mari Vanpelt, and Nancy Hanson; Group Two: Michael Martinez, Nancy Tovar, Gustavo Arriaga, and Dr. Elena Izquierdo; Group Three: Dr. Tamekia Brown, Dow Farley, JJ Childress, and Deborah Fetzer; Group Four: Mica Short, Laura Strelzin Bagley, Jessica Silva and Norma De La Rosa; and Group Five: Dr. Sarah Chavez-Gibson, Ross Moore, Martha Aguirre, and Ray Adauto.

The break-out groups reviewed the following school districts: Group One: Katy ISD, Mansfield ISD, Childress ISD, Lewisville ISD, Humble ISD; Group Two: Frisco ISD, Eanes ISD, Dripping Springs ISD, Pasadena ISD, Clear Creek ISD; Group Three: Plano ISD, Carroll ISD, Highland Park ISD, Klein ISD, Killeen ISD; Group Four: Brownsville ISD, Alamo Heights ISD, Grandview ISD, Garland ISD, Alief ISD; Group Five: United ISD, Northwest ISD, Fort Bend ISD, Arlington ISD, and San Antonio ISD.

After the groups reviewed the plans, they reported back to the committee with their group's findings. Break-out groups were given approximately thirty minutes to complete the exercise.

D. Reconvene Entire Committee to Review and Discuss Ideas for Innovation

Each break-out group reported their findings and discussed the variances in exemptions as compared to the District's plan.

Group Five reported that the plans that they reviewed had the same exemptions as EPISD, although there were two other exemptions of minimum minutes of instruction and relief from term of depository contracts. In addition, was class size that Mr. Moore reported was used against that district by charter schools. Ms. Aguirre indicated another exemption found was the mentor teacher exception which was for a rapid growth district that was not applicable to EPISD and probationary contracts that is not on the table for EPISD according to the Board Resolution.

Group Four reported that the majority of the districts reviewed had the flexibility of the start date to align of semesters. Garland had the flexibility of the start date and the exemption from the T-Tess for administrators and teachers. Alamo Heights opted out completely from appraisals for teachers only. Almost all waived the Campus Behavior Coordinators as well as the certification about probationary teachers. Alief opted out of class size, minimum attendance, early release, minimum minutes of instruction, certification for dual credit, planning and prep time flexibility, and staff development flexibility based on campus needs.

Group Three reported a lot of similarities such as start date, certification for CTE and dual credit instructors, and appraisals at the local level. Most interesting to this group was credit by examination by prior instruction at Highland Park. When the state lowered the pass rate to 80% Highland park asked for exemption so they could require 90% again. Klein had an exemption to the kindergarten start age (September 5). Killeen had an exemption related to college/military visits to allow for three days instead of two.

Group Two reported a lot of overlap with EPISD. Class size ratios stood out but those appeared to be related to districts of higher or faster growth. They also noted they would keep to those ratios unless absolutely necessary and with board approval. Minimum attendance. Clear Creek opted out of District level planning and decision making in order to replace the prescriptive requirements by the state to replace it with the strategic planning process which is more specialized to the district. Frisco added limitations on students being suspended in grades 3 or below. Instead, they wanted to give campuses more options to deal with behavior issues for student below grade 3. They also had a suggestion on the drafting of the new EPISD plan in a more rule focused format versus a narrative format.

Group One noticed a common theme in all plans such as certification for career tech and STEAM, one district added an exemption for teachers of classes other than English. Other common themes were the start date and the Campus Behavior Coordinators. One district had an exemption to school counselors versus social workers. Ms. Hanson mentioned EPISD visited this in the past. Exemption from minutes of instruction was also a theme. She also commented the narrative form of our plan was to address how to provide education in ways that charter schools do, such as dual language and pre-k. Humble renewed their plan and included the self-funded plan insurance plan as an option to TRS ActiveCare.

E. Discuss Survey(s) to Obtain Stakeholder Input on Ideas for Innovation

Time expired before this item was discussed. Ms. Collins asked the group if they thought a survey would be appropriate and what questions would they ask. It will be brought back at another meeting.

F. Next Meeting on Wednesday, February 24, 2021, 12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.

G. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 1:29 p.m.