

**MINUTES OF LOCAL INNOVATION COMMITTEE MEETING
EL PASO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
March 31, 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
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
Jessica Silva, Librarian, El Paso High School
Richard Gutierrez, UTEP Professor
Mari Vanpelt, Community Member
Laura Strelzin Bagley, Teacher, Franklin High School
Dr. Elena Izquierdo, UTEP Professor
Mica Short, Vice President of Development, Paso Del Norte Community Foundation

ABSENT: Michael Martinez, City Manager, Sunland Park, NM
Dow Farley, Retired Teacher
Dr. Deborah Fetzer, Youth Education Support Services Director, Fort Bliss Liaison
Jonathan Childress, Community Engagement Manager, Microsoft TechSpark Program
Gustavo Arriaga, Lead Program Manager, Southwest Region, Microsoft Philanthropies TEALS Program

OTHER: Gabriela Gomez, Executive Assistant General Counsel
Cheryll Felder, Executive Director Student & Parent Services
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 sixth Committee meeting. Ms. Collins thanked the Committee members for their time.

B. Recap of Prior Meeting and Distribution of Minutes

Ms. Collins provided a brief overview of the prior meeting (March 24, 2021). The meeting minutes for the prior meeting and the draft of the updated Local Innovation Plan was sent via email to the Committee.

C. Draft, Review and Revise Local Innovation Plan

Prior to discussing the proposed draft Plan, Ms. Collins and Dr. Brown provided the Committee information requested from the last meeting related to the proposed exemptions. She began by discussing the information regarding the exemption to Texas Education Code Section 25.087 (b-2), which provides that a district may excuse a student from attending school to visit an institution of higher education accredited by a generally recognized accrediting organization during the student's junior and senior years of high school for the purpose of determining the student's interest in attending the institution of higher education. The draft of the Plan proposes that students be allowed up to 3 days to visit institutions of higher learning. Ms. Collins shared the District data regarding absences due to college visits. In 2019, there were 324 absences due to college visits. In 2020, there were 212 absences due to college visits. Coronado High School reported 148 absences related to college visits in 2019 and 90 absences in 2020 related to college visits. Franklin High School reported 48 absences due to college visits in 2019 and 27 absences due to college visits in 2020. Ms. Felder stated that the campus has a form that the students/parents fill out when they are going to be absent for college visits. The absences in excess of two are excused but not funded. Ms. Collins stated that student absences are counted for funding purposes, the 90% rule, which we have opted out of, and for truancy. Excused absences for college visits do not count towards truancy nor do they count against the student to be exempted from taking a final exam under EIA (Local).

The Committee was interested in the exemption to Texas Education Code Section 25.087 (b-2) during the Committee meeting discussions leading to the drafting of the plan, so it is included in the draft Plan.

Ms. Collins discussed the fourth exemption regarding the designation of a Campus Behavior Coordinator. She stated that Ms. Felder, Executive Director Student & Parent Services, stated the exemption from Texas Education Code Section 37.0012 that requires one person at each campus to be designated to serve as the campus behavior coordinator is still necessary. She stated it is impossible to have one person responsible at the high school level in charge of all of those duties. So, the exemption is still needed. Ms. Collins stated the Committee could further discuss the exemption when the Plan was discussed later in the meeting. She referenced the discussion during the previous meeting when Dr. Fetzer was hesitant regarding the exemption in relation to the changes with Positive Behavioral Interventions. She stated she crafted the rationale language to capture the reason for the need for the exemption.

Dr. Brown shared the data regarding Upward Bound. She stated there are 90 EPISD students currently participating. Lucero Macias is the point of contact at UTEP. She works directly with the campuses. Dr. Brown shared the number of participants along with their home campuses. The data is as follows:

- 11 participants from Andres High
- 13 participants from Austin High
- 5 participants from Bowie High
- 4 participants from Burges High
- 11 participants from Chapin High
- 2 participants from Coronado High
- 11 participants from El Paso
- 2 participants from Franklin High
- 5 participants from Irvin High
- 9 participants from Jefferson High
- 9 participants from Silva Magnet
- 8 participants from Trans Mountain Early College

Ms. Felder joined the meeting and stated the information regarding college visits and the amount of days students can be absent can be added to the student handbook.

Discussion of the draft of the Local Innovation Plan began. The Plan was shared for all to refer to on the screen. Ms. Collins reviewed how the Committee appointments were delegated to the Interim Superintendent by the Board of Trustees. The names of the members were reported at the January 2021 Board Meeting. Ms. Collins asked that members verify their information displayed and ensure it is correct. She explained that the Committee has 20 members due to an appointee dropping out and the alternate for that position dropping out as well. Next, Ms. Collins reviewed the dates the Committee met to review the Plan along with exemptions other districts of the same size and with A and B ratings filed.

The Local Innovation Plan would be go into effect for 5 years according to law beginning the 2021-2022 school year. TEA has minimal authority to revoke the plan and that is based on a District losing its required rating.

Ms. Collins discussed the comprehensive educational program section and stated that Dr. Brown reviewed the Strategic Plan at the first meeting. Ms. Collins stated the Board will review an updated Strategic Plan in the future. There are four Board seats up for election in May. So, there might be a new Board and they may want to work on the Strategic Plan. In addition, the District currently has an Interim Superintendent which is why the Plan is based on the current Strategic Plan. The Local Innovation Plan will go to DEIC for voting on its approval by majority vote and the Board of Trustees will vote on its approval in May.

Ms. Collins reviewed the exemptions with the committee and asked if there were any changes to the rationale. No one had objections to the exemption from Texas Education Code Section 25.092 "Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Final Grade" which currently requires students to attend class 90% of the time a class is offered in order to earn credit or a final grade, placing value on "seat time" rather than content mastery.

Next she reviewed the exemption from Texas Education Code Section 25.0811 that prohibits the District from beginning instruction before the fourth Monday in August. She stated the rationale remained the same as the original Plan. The Committee had no objection.

The third exemption from Texas Education Code Sections 21.003, 21.053, 21.044 that limits 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 was reviewed. Ms. Collins stated the wording remained the same as the previous plan. The Committee had no objection.

The fourth exemption from Texas Education Code Section 37.0012 that requires one person at each campus to be designated to serve as the campus behavior coordinator was discussed. Ms. Collins stated the rationale discussed at the beginning of the meeting. Ms. Collins asked if anyone had anything to add and no one did.

The fifth exemption from Texas Education Code Sections 21.351, 21.352, 21.354, 21.3541 that govern teacher and administrator appraisals require that state standardized test scores be used as one of the evaluation measures for teachers and administrators was discussed. Ms. Collins stated the rationale was the same as before. The Committee had no objections nor further discussion.

The sixth exemption from Texas Education Code Section 22.004 (i) that prohibits a school district from making alternative group health coverage available to its employees after the date a district enters the TRS ActiveCare Plan was reviewed. The rationale remained the same for this exemption. The Committee had no objection.

Ms. Collins stated that the last exemption was from Texas Education Code Section 25.087 (b-2) that provides that a district may excuse a student from attending school to visit an institution of higher education accredited by a generally recognized accrediting organization during the student's junior and senior years of high school for the purpose of determining the student's interest in attending the institution of higher education, provided that the district may not excuse for this purpose more than two days during the student's junior year and two days during the student's senior year. The Committee agreed that 3 days were better and agreed to this include exemption in the Plan.

Mr. Aduato thanked Ms. Collins and asked the majority of the group agreed with the Plan. Ms. Collins stated she would reach out the absent Committee members.

Mr. Aduato made the motion to accept the Plan as drafted and presented. Mr. Moore seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

D. Discussion of Community Meetings Regarding Local Innovation Plan

Dr. Brown stated that there were going to be multiple meetings but due to the testing taking place only one meeting would be held. Ms. Collins and Dr. Brown will provide the rationale to the community. Dr. Izquierdo, Mr. Moore Ms. De La Rosa, and Mr. Martinez will be assisting at the meeting. Dr. Izquierdo asked about the logistics. Ms. Collins stated there will be a translator and meeting will be simultaneously translated for community. PTAs and Principals will support the passing of the information to the community. Notice of the meeting will be given on the District website and Community Engagement will send out posts on social media platforms. Mr. Moore stated one hour isn't enough time and that testing is not a reason to have the community meeting because testing is over 1 to 2 in the afternoon. Ms. Collins preferred the meeting take place before the committee's last meeting. One more day to advertise the meeting was agreed by the Committee. Dr. Izquierdo asked that the Plan be shared on the website in English and Spanish for parents. Jessica Silva shared that Social Media could be used to share the meeting information.

Ultimately, the Committee, decided that the Community meeting will be April 7th via Zoom. The final Innovation Committee meeting will be on April 8th.

E. Discussion of Presentation of Local Innovation Plan to Board of Trustees

Ms. Collins stated the Board is meeting on April 20th. The Board will not vote on the Plan until May 11, 2021. Committee members will need to be present for the April and May Board meetings. Mr. Moore recommended that Committee members present the plan to the Board of Trustees. Volunteers will be selected during the next meeting on April 8 to assist in the presentation of the Local Innovation Plan.

F. Next Meeting on Thursday, April 8, 2021, 12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.

G. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:54 p.m.

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