

**MINUTES OF MEETING: LOCAL INNOVATION COMMITTEE  
EL PASO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT  
FEBRUARY 18, 2016  
11:30 A.M.**

**PRESENT:** Dr. Royce Avery, Area II Superintendent;  
Jaime Barcelau, Social Worker;  
Dr. Tamekia Brown, Executive Director, Academics;  
Ingrid Brown, Parent;  
Norma De La Rosa, Teacher and President, El Paso Teacher Association/TSTA/NEA;  
Dr. David DeMatthews, UTEP;  
Michael Devine, Retired Teacher;  
Ivonne Durant, Deputy Superintendent, Academics and School Leadership;  
Laila Ferris, Principal, Mesita E.S.;  
Lynn Gill, Principal, Andress H.S.;  
Nancy Hanson, Principal, Shuster E.S.;  
Dr. Elena Izquierdo, UTEP;  
Ross Moore, President, El Paso AFT;  
Melanie Mullings, Parent and member of DEIC;  
Debbie Trexler, Youth Education Support Services Director, Ft. Bliss Liaison, and member of DEIC; and  
Dr. Michael Warmack, Principal, Bowie H.S.

**ABSENT:** Karen Blaine, Executive Director Advanced Academics & Innovation;  
Scott Gray, Asst. Principal, Irvin H.S.;  
Dana Hamilton, Parent;  
Elizabeth O'Hara Williams, Diocese of El Paso; and  
Amy O'Rourke, Parent.

**1. Brief Overview of Prior Meeting and Distribute Minutes**

The meeting was called to order at 11:35 a.m. Ms. Sarmecanic welcomed the Committee members and distributed the draft minutes from the February 11, 2016 meeting. The members had no questions regarding the content of the minutes.

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

Ms. Sarmecanic provided a brief recap of the work and goal of the Committee, that being to draft the Local Innovation Plan, which must include a Comprehensive Educational Program for the district. Such Program may include: innovative curriculum, instructional methods, and provisions regarding community participation, campus governance, and parental involvement; modifications to school day or year; provisions regarding the District budget and sustainable program funding; accountability and assessment measures that exceed state and federal mandates; and any other innovations prescribed by the Board.

The Committee discussed that the items that are being considered for the District at this time are: modifications to the school day or year and items enumerated by the Board, to include the 90% attendance rule, dual language, student discipline and teacher appraisals.

A draft of the proposed survey was provided to the Committee in the agenda packet. Ms. Sarmecanic commented that in order to comply with the Board's desire to obtain stakeholder input through a survey, such survey will need to be prepared and disseminated very soon. It was discussed that responses should be requested from a broad range of stakeholders, to include teachers, parents and perhaps high school students. The goal of the survey is to both get a pulse on whether the current direction of the Committee is supported and to see if there are additional ideas for innovation. The Committee began open discussion regarding the draft survey questions, attached to the materials provided.

**a. Survey form discussion**

The Committee discussed that the survey should not be so lengthy that participation would decrease. Suggestions were made to have multiple choice, yes or no, or Likert/rating scale questions as opposed to qualitative or open-ended questions. Due to time constraints, it was suggested that a shorter survey with quicker measurable responses is desired.

**b. 90% Rule regarding attendance**

The Committee discussed multiple diverse changes that could be implemented if allowed a waiver of the 90% attendance rule for the District, which would provide educational advantages to students of the District. Allowing for blended learning, e.g., attendance remotely through online class work or alternative scheduling structures, would promote dropout recovery, increase the number of qualifying graduates, and allow prevention of funding loss. An example was provided detailing that many students have family in other parts of the country. As a result, they may need to miss school to participate in important family events out of state. Teachers should have the discretion to allow students to receive credit for successful completion of online course work or other forms of out-of-class content mastery even when students have not physically attended at least 90% of all classes.

Other items mentioned were "no bells," attendance taking to be required fewer times per day, and relief from core sequence.

The survey question language would mention that a waiver of this rule would provide for ways to remediate absenteeism/loss of credit for students and allow for blended learning. Blended learning would require professional development for the teachers.

**c. Uniform School Start Date**

The survey language should include explanation of the goal of balancing the semesters. The Committee discussed that a waiver from the requirement that the start date not be earlier than the fourth Monday of August may also provide an opportunity for students to access UTEP courses that start in early June. Another option would be to adjust the school calendar to provide more space/days off during the school year, while keeping the same end date.

**d. Teacher Certification for Dual Credit Instructors**

There was no additional discussion, and the committee supports a recommendation to seek an exemption to allow more innovation. A survey question should ask whether the responding parties support a waiver to allow instructors who meet criteria other than those with Texas teaching certification only.

**e. Student Discipline**

The goal is to shift from punitive forms of discipline to an emphasis on positive support in disciplinary actions. The Committee discussed whether flexibility in Education Code Chapter 37 is needed. It was stated that the District is already able to use Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (“PBIS”), however, the Local Innovation Plan can create a District wide shift to PBIS, and also provide for exemption from Ed. Code requirements that inhibit creativity flexibility. Such waiver would also provide exemption from requirements that are not able to be complied with, such as the requirement that every campus have a single designated campus behavior coordinator to handle all student disciplinary matters in accordance with Education Code Sec. 37.0012. A benefit of this shift is that it will promote student responsibility, better partnerships with the community, better resolutions as opposed to pure punishment, and reduce mandatory and discretionary removals. The survey question should be phrased in such a way that asks whether the responder supports positive support rather than punitive discipline.

**f. Teacher Appraisals**

The Committee desires to eliminate the connection between teacher appraisals and student assessment data, which is either 10% or 20%. However, the Committee supports having student performance tied to appraisals, maintaining accountability. The appraisals would include multiple observations, goal setting and tracking, and student growth rather than strictly data from standardized testing scores. The Committee discussed the difference between growth and achievement measured by standardized test scores. There is still support to use Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (“T-TESS”). The survey question would ask whether there is support to link teacher appraisals to student growth rather than “achievement” as shown by standardized test scores.

**g. Length of School Day**

The Committee desires to provide opportunities for teachers to receive professional development (“PD”) training during the school day/hours. The concerns are the requirement of 75,600 minutes of instruction per school year, V1 CTE funding (which is tied to Average Daily Attendance of 7 hours / day), 30/40 hours for dual credit and IB League. Principal Gill described a proposed plan to provide for such by having a 2 hour late start for students every Wednesday, and lengthening the instruction time by 15 minutes at the beginning and end of each day Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. This would allow for the full 75,600 minutes of instruction time. During the Wednesday morning late start, PD would be provided to the teachers under a District wide structure, providing guidance for the type of PD to be provided each week.

Because many students, specifically in elementary and middle school, would still need to be on campus during the late start, programming and planning would need to take place to provide Student Support Options. Suggestions were made to provide specified activities/special interest classes to 50% of the students in the first hour, and allow the other 50% to have supervised recess, participate in community service, work with

volunteers, etc. The students would switch for the second hour. Under this plan, for most campuses, 1/5 of the teachers would provide the special instruction each week rather than participate in the PD. The teachers would miss the PD once every five weeks. Reagan High School in Austin has a Student Support Options program that may be instructive.

There is not a specific waiver needed from the Education Code unless relief from the 75,600 minutes requirement is sought. More information needs to be obtained regarding how this plan would affect funding, dual credit and IB.

The survey question should ask whether there is support for a strategic method of providing professional development during the school day that would allow for an adjusted schedule.

### **3. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 1:45 p.m.