

District Vision:

The Smyer Board of Trustees will adopt policies, provide fiscal responsibility and strive to make decisions that will benefit the students of the Smyer School and our community. Our school will be a place of exemplary learning with a positive and safe environment.

Innovation Plan

1. Uniform Start Date (TEC § 25.0811)

Currently, state law prohibits school districts from starting class before the fourth Monday in August, unless they are year-round districts.

Proposed Innovation

This innovation regarding the start date allows the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the need of the students, the school, and the community. In addition, this flexibility allows the district to better align its start date to accommodate the start date of colleges in which the district uses dual credit courses. Another benefit of exempting this restriction is it allows the school to look at starting classes as a short week which can ease the transition for students entering kindergarten, middle school, and high school. And further the ability to change the school start date can also help to better balance the number of days in each semester.

2. Length of School Day (TEC § 25.081)

State law currently requires that all school days must be 7 hours long each day in order to count for ADA calculations and funding purposes and to accumulate instructional minutes towards the 75,600 minutes required annually.

Proposed Innovation

The innovation of exempting Smyer ISD from the 7 hour/day requirement would allow our district the flexibility needed to alter the school day schedule on selected days whenever it was locally determined as necessary or beneficial to the district and its stakeholders. While there is a waiver process available to request exemption

from the requirement, the waiver is limited to a 6-day maximum number for the school year.

Exempting completely from the 7 hour/day requirement would give the district a significant amount of local control over scheduling (above and beyond the 6-day maximum as needed) without the fear of diminishing state funding or losing credit for instructional time that might cause the district to fall out of compliance with annual minute requirements. This would allow the district the flexibility to schedule non-instructional days into the schedule to allow for teachers to analyze student data and engage in targeted, relevant professional development.

Smyer ISD does not have any intentions to shorten the school day on a regular basis, or without a specific purpose.

3. Teacher Certification (TEC § 21.003, § 21.053 and § 21.057)

State law states that a person may not be employed as a teacher by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued by the appropriate state agency. In the event, a district cannot locate a certified teacher for a position or a teacher is teaching a subject outside of their certification, the district must request emergency certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or State Board of Educator Certification.

Proposed Innovation

The current certification requirement severely limits the district's options to hire professionals with work related experience or degrees to teach a variety of courses form CTE and STEM-related courses along with other required courses, such as fine arts, needed throughout the district. In order to maximize the opportunities for students to take such courses, the district will consider the qualifications necessary to create a local requirement for these courses instead of the requirements set forth in TEC §21.003(a). The exemption will allow the district to consider professionals, those with proven skills, and trade-related professional to teach courses on a full-time or even part-time basis.

The campus principal shall submit to the superintendent a request for local certification that will allow a certified or non-certified teacher to teach a subject(s) for which he/she is not certified. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credential the teacher possesses that would qualify this individual to teach the proposed subject. Background checks will be conducted

and fingerprints required. The superintendent will report this action to the Board of Trustees at the first board meeting following these assignments.

A teacher certification waiver, state permit applications, or other paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency.

4. Probationary Contracts (TEC § 21.102 (b) a

Currently, State law states that a probationary contract may not exceed one year for a person who has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment with the district.

Proposed Innovation

This period of time is not sufficient to evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom since teacher contract timelines demand that employment decisions must be made prior to the availability of end of year classroom and student data. For experienced teachers, counselors, librarians, or nurses new to Smyer ISD that have been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, the probationary period when becoming employed by Smyer ISD shall be for a period of two years with probationary contract issued for each of the two years.

5. Teacher Benefits and the length of a Teacher's Contract Days (TEC § 21.401)

Currently, state law requires a teacher to work a 187 day contract. Teachers will often work longer contracts depending on their assignment.

Proposed Innovation

Smyer ISD will reduce a teacher's contract days from 187 days, to 182 days for the same salary. Teachers who work longer contracts will have their contract time reduced by five (5) days accordingly. This reduction in contract days at the current salary schedule should make our district's salaries more competitive. Our district is a small, rural school district which is unable to match the teacher pay of some of the larger and more affluent school district in the area. By reducing the days of service to 182 days, without a reduction in pay, the district is able to increase the daily rate the district pays its teachers. This move should improve teacher morale. It should enhance teacher recruitment during the years of innovation. This action will not cost the school district any more funds than it currently pays its teachers.