

***** PENDING BOARD APPROVAL *****

Hughes Springs ISD

District of Innovation Plan



April 11, 2017 – April 10, 2022

INTRODUCTION

HB 1842 was passed during the 84th Texas legislative Session in Spring 2015, and provides Texas public school districts the opportunity to be designated as a District of Innovation. To access these flexibilities, a school district must adopt an innovation plan, as set forth in Texas Education Code Chapter 12A.

Districts of Innovation may be exempted from a number of state statutes and will have:

- Greater local control as the decision makers over the educational and instructional model for students;
- Increased freedom and flexibility, with accountability, relative to state mandates that govern educational programming; and
- Empowerment to innovate and think differently.

Districts are not exempt from statutes including curriculum and graduation requirements and academic and financial accountability.

PROCESS

On January 9, 2017, the Hughes Springs Independent School District's Board of Trustees initiated the process by passing a Resolution to Adopt a District of Innovation in order to support innovation and local initiatives to improve student learning.

On January 23, 2017, the Hughes Springs ISD Board of Trustees held a public hearing for public discussion on whether the District should develop a local innovation plan for the designation of the District as a District of Innovation. With there being no objection from the hearing, the Board of Trustees appointed the District Site Based Committee to discuss and draft this Local Innovation Plan. This committee represents various stakeholders across the district, including teachers, parents, campus administration, district administration and local business owners. The committee met initially on February 6, 2017, to discuss and develop the plan. A follow up meeting to finalize the plan was held on February 20, 2017.

The plan was posted on the District website for 30 days before being presented to the District Site Based Committee on March 28, 2017. Hughes Springs ISD notified the Texas Commissioner of Education of the District's final District of Innovation Plan and the plan will be submitted to the Board of Trustees for final approval on April 10, 2017.

The District's Educational Philosophy (Board Policy AE-Local) guides the District of Innovation Plan:

Vision Statement

Our students respect themselves and others. They have very strong academic, social, and emotional skills allowing them to be happy and responsible citizens. These skills enable them to be productive and make a positive contribution to the District.

Our students succeed because we care. We are a family where every person is important. Through open and honest communication, we unify the campus, classroom, and community to support students in their pursuit of success.

As positive role models, we support learning through total participation in all areas of education. Our example leads to the success and achievement of this community.

Mission Statement

The mission of the District is to prepare our children to live and work in the changing future. All students need to master the know-ledge, skills, and competencies necessary to interact productively and successfully in a democratic society.

Inherent in this purpose is the belief that all students need to develop essential academic skills and acquire a knowledge base on which to build life-long learning. All students can learn if provided an environment of high expectations for academic achievement. Educating our children to be productive in a changing future necessitates an excellent education system.

Goals

The goals of the District are to provide:

- 1. A stable and secure environment.
- 2. Recognition of every student’s accomplishments.
- 3. Appropriate instructional time.
- 4. Curriculum that meets the needs of all students.
- 5. Increased commitment to education.

TERM

The District of Innovation Plan will become effective on April 11, 2017 and will remain in effect for five years, through April 10, 2022 unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. The district site based committee will monitor the effectiveness of the Plan and adjustments will be made in the best interests of student and staff, if necessary, at any time during the term of this plan in accordance with the law.

TIMELINE

Timeline	Activity/Task
January 9, 2017	Board of Trustees passed Resolution to initiate District of Innovation Plan
January 23, 2017	Board of Trustees held public hearing and appointed committee to draft Plan
February 6, 2017	Initial meeting of Committee to discuss District of Innovation Plan
February 20, 2017	Meeting to finalize District of Innovation Plan
February 22, 2017	Post District of Innovation Plan on HSISD website
March 28, 2017	Committee vote on District of Innovation Plan
March 30, 2017	District of Innovation Plan submitted to the Commissioner of Education
April 10, 2017	Board of Trustees vote on District of Innovation Plan

PLANNING COMMITTEE

Cody McCain – Parent

Sherry Brabham – Parent

Caroline Everett – Community Representative

Kirk Bradley – Business Representative

Jennifer Kennington – Business Representative

Theresa Jennings – Curriculum Director

Maudie Peters – School Nurse

Derick Sibley – Business Manager

Randy Stuard – Jr. High Principal

Stephen Barnes – Assistant Principal

Rachel Ashlock – Elementary Teacher

Brandi Pittman – School Nurse

Leanne Ale-Ebrahim – Elementary Teacher

Deidra Moore – Elementary Teacher

Michele Nelson – Jr. High Teacher

Melinda Bidy – Jr. High Teacher

Judy Walker – Jr. High Teacher

Sandra Willis – High School Teacher

Katie Denevan – High School Teacher

Regena Calcote – High School Teacher

Clay Holliday - Student

Lakesia Bolden – Parent

Dan McGuire – Community Representative

Jesse Campbell – Community Representative

Julie Page – Business Representative

Sarah Dildine – Superintendent

Ken Miller – Elementary Counselor

Jana Scharnberg – High School Counselor

Scott Hanes – Elementary Principal

Brian Nation – High School Principal

Brenda Fincher – Assistant Principal

Diane Jackson – Paraprofessional

Katie Brown – Elementary Teacher

Jennifer Pearson – Elementary Teacher

Kim Stovall – Jr. High Social Worker

Daisy Black – Paraprofessional

Tammy Caver – Jr. High Teacher

Wendy Pilgrim – High School Teacher

Annette Burson – Paraprofessional

Holly Neill – High School Teacher

Chandler Priddy – Student

PROPOSED EXEMPTIONS

Uniform School Start Date (TEC 25.0811)

*A district may not begin instruction for students for a school year **before the fourth Monday in August** unless the district operates a year-round system. A district may not receive a waiver for this requirement.*

This flexibility of start date allows the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of the students and local community. It also offers the below opportunities:

- An improved balanced instructional calendar because currently we have 75 days in the fall and 94 days in the spring for the 2016-17 school year. With the option starting school earlier, 5 days earlier for 2016-2017 school year, our instructional calendar would be 80 days in the fall and 89 days in the spring.
- Allows HSISD to continue to offer staff development days at the end of each 6 weeks.
- Students participating in Dual Enrollment opportunities will work with balanced semesters, which align with our local colleges.
- An early start date permits students an additional week of instruction prior to state assessments.
- An early start date will enable HSISD to end the school year before college summer sessions begin. Therefore, students will be afforded opportunities to enroll in summer college sessions with finalized official transcripts and staff will be able to attend summer school classes as well if they so desired.

Local Guidelines

The district site based committee will determine, on an annual basis, when each school year should begin, subject to the Board's adoption of the official calendar.

Inter-District Transfers (TEC 25.036)

Under Texas Education Code 25.036, a district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district; however, a transfer is interpreted to be for a period of one school year.

Hughes Springs ISD maintains a transfer policy under FDA (Local) requiring nonresident students wishing to transfer to file a transfer application each school year. In approving transfer requests, the availability of space and instructional staff, availability of programs and services, the student's disciplinary history records, work habits, and attendance records are also evaluated. Transfer students are expected to follow the attendance requirements, rules and regulations of the District. TEC 25.036 has been interpreted to establish the acceptance of a transfer as a one-year commitment by the District. The District is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one year commitment in accepting transfer applicants. On rare occasions, student behavior warrants suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion. In addition, student attendance may fall below the TEA truancy standard.

Local Guidelines

In these rare cases, Hughes Springs ISD seeks exemption from the one-year transfer commitment.

Nonresident students who have been accepted as inter-district transfer may have such transfer status revoked by the Superintendent at any time during the year if the student is assigned discipline consequences of suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion. In addition, students not meeting the State's 90% attendance standard may also be subject to immediate revocation of the transfer status.

Employment Contracts (TEC 21.102(b))

Currently, experienced teachers new to the district have a probationary period that may not exceed one year if the person has been employed as a teacher in Texas public education for at least five of the previous eight years.

Under current guidelines, probationary periods for newly hired teachers and counselors who have been in public education for at least five of the previous eight years cannot exceed one year. This limited time period is insufficient in some cases to fully determine the staff member's effectiveness.

Local Guidelines

Hughes Springs ISD wants to ensure we employ high quality teachers for our students; therefore, relief from Texas Education Code 21.102(b) is requested. This will permit the district the option to issue a probationary contract for a period of up to two years for experienced teachers and counselors newly hired in Hughes Springs ISD.

This provision would only effect experienced teachers who are on probationary contracts as of **the plan effective date** and those hired **after the plan effective date**. It does not affect any current HSISD employees (as of 4/10/2017).

Class Size & Notice of Class Size (TEC 25.112 & 25.113)

Texas Education Code 25.112 limits the number of students in grades Kindergarten through 4th grade to 22. While the maximum number of students in K-4 classrooms may be addressed by a state waiver, the waivers must be applied for annually. Texas Education Code 25.113 requires districts to notify each parent in the class section that exceeds the 22:1 ratio, and inform them the waiver has been submitted.

- TEC 25.112: A school district may not enroll more than 22 students in a kindergarten, first, second, third, or fourth grade class.
- TEC 25.113: A campus or district that is granted an exception under TEC 25.112(d) shall provide written notification of the exception to the parent of each student affected by the exception.

By seeking an exception from TEC 25.112, the District would have flexibility for all campuses and classrooms for the duration of the District of Innovation Designation and would not be required to seek waivers annually. While the District intends to remain within the guidelines of the current education code as much as possible, the District seeks flexibility to provide the best learning environment for our K-4 students, including more flexibility when teaching, creative ways of delivering instruction, and ability to manage increases in class sizes. Research shows it is the teacher in the classroom that has the greatest impact on student learning and not the absolute class size. Small class sizes may have a positive effect in the classroom, but must also be balanced with the timing of adding staff, the qualifications of staff available, the makeup and chemistry of the classroom and other classroom influences.

Local Guidelines

In the event a classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio in grades K – 4, the class sizes will be reviewed by the appropriate team of professionals. The team of professionals will consist of classroom teachers, campus administrators and district administrators. The team will take into consideration the time of school year the class size limit is exceeded, the availability of new qualified staff, the makeup of the classroom and any other information they deem relevant. The team will make a determination of the best course of action and notify the superintendent. The team will also develop a plan of action to provide additional supports for the classroom teacher whose class size exceeds the ratio.

The superintendent will notify the Board of any K-4 classes that exceeds the 22:1 ratio and the course of action to be taken. TEA waivers for classrooms exceeding 22:1 will not be required. The district also requests exemption from TEC 25.113. This gives the District flexibility without having the bureaucracy of waivers within the Texas Education Agency.

Certification (TEC 21.003a)

TEC 21.003(a) states a person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern or teacher trainee, librarian, educational aide, administrator, educational diagnostician, or school counselor by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued as provided by Subchapter B. TEC21.057 requires districts to provide written notice to parents when an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher is assigned to the same classroom for more than 30 consecutive instructional days during the same school year

In order to best serve Hughes Springs ISD students, decisions on certification will be handled locally. With the current teacher shortage, this exemption from teacher certification requirements will enable greater flexibility in staffing and will enrich applicant pools in specific areas of need. The district's exemption from TEC 21.003 would allow the district to consider part time professionals to teach courses, allow industry expert professionals to transition to the teaching profession in Career and Technology and also assist in staffing high need STEM and dual credit course offerings. Out of state certified teachers could be considered for positions upon a local review of experience, education and credentials. Often there are experienced certified teachers in our district that could teach a course outside of their certification area due to their education, background and/or experience. Local decisions outside of state certification requirements would allow innovation and flexibility in scheduling to meet student needs.

Local Guidelines

a) The campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach a subject and/or grade level out of their field. The principal must specify the reason for the request and document what credentials the certified teacher possesses qualifying this individual to teach the subject. Emergency and financial situations creating the need for such an assignment should also be noted in the request.

b) An individual with experience in a Career and Technology field may be eligible to teach a vocational skill or course. An individual may have background, experience; skills or work related/industry experience to work full time or part time in a designated area or an individual may hold a teaching certification in another state for Core areas or Career and Technology.

The principal will submit a request to the superintendent for local certification. The principal must specify the reason for the request and document what credentials the individual possesses qualifying this individual to teach the subject. Emergency and financial situations creating the need for such an assignment should also be noted in the request.

c) Individuals hired under the local certification guideline will be employed on an at will basis if they do not possess a Texas teacher certification.

d) An employee working under a local certification will adhere to the same professional standards, ethics and requirements of all certified teachers.

e) An employee working under a local certification will be appraised under the same teacher appraisal system as required of all certified teachers.

f) An employee working under a local certification will be compensated based on experience and qualifications as determined by the superintendent and Board

g) The superintendent will make the final determination on all local certifications and keep the board informed of all local certification decisions at the first board meeting following the assignment.

The district will continue to seek certified and qualified candidates to fill any and all positions. The district will provide high quality professional development for non-certified teachers to ensure student's needs are being met.