

# *District of Innovation Plan*

*April 2022 – April 2027*



# INTRODUCTION

HB 1842 was passed during the 84<sup>th</sup> 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

The plan was posted on the District website for 30 days before being presented to the DQIC on December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Hooks 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 February 28, 2022.

On February 28, 2022 the DQIC held a public hearing for public discussion on the renewal of the District as a District of Innovation where the plan was approved by the majority of the members. This committee represents various stakeholders across the district, including teachers, parents, campus administration, district administration and local business owners. The committee met initially on December 14, 2021 to discuss and review the plan renewal.

The board of adopted the proposed plan by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the members on March 28, 2022. The district then notified the commissioner of approval of the plan on March 29, 2022.

# TERM

The District of Innovation Plan will become effective in April 2022 and will remain in effect for five years, through April 2027, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. The DQIC will monitor the effectiveness of the Plan and recommend to the Board of Trustees any suggested modifications to the Plan.

## TIMELINE

| Timeline                         | Activity/Task  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| November 18 <sup>th</sup> , 2021 | Administration Meeting to discuss renewal                                      |
| December 14 <sup>th</sup> , 2021 | Initial meeting of DQIC to review the District of Innovation Plan              |
| January 21, 2022                 | Post District of Innovation Plan on HISD website                               |
| January 21, 2022                 | Notification to the Commissioner of Education of the board's intention to vote |
| February 28, 2022                | DQIC vote on District of Innovation Plan at a Public Meeting                   |
| March 28, 2022                   | Board of Trustees vote on District of Innovation Plan                          |
| March 29, 2022                   | Approved District of Innovation Plan submitted to Commissioner of Education    |
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|                                  |  |

## PLANNING COMMITTEE

| First Name | Last Name | Member Category                          |
|------------|-----------|--|
| Myra       | Jenkins   | Business Member                          |
| Patti      | Whitehead | Business Member                          |
| Janet      | Stoker    | Business Member                          |
| Juan       | Romero    | Community Member                         |
| Bill       | Clements  | Community Member                         |
| Mike       | Smith     | Community Member                         |
| Tracy      | Cook      | Assistant Superintendent                 |
| Keith      | Minter    | Superintendent                           |
| Taylor     | Clements  | Federal and Special Programs Coordinator |
| Kim        | Ford      | Elementary Teacher                       |
| Helenna    | Sipes     | Elementary Non-Teacher                   |
| Shannon    | Diamond   | Non-Teacher/Counselor                    |
| Crystal    | Roach     | Non-Teacher/Counselor                    |
| Teresa     | Kuhn      | High School Teacher                      |
| Belyn      | Graves    | Junior High Teacher                      |
| Cathy      | McBroom   | Junior High Teacher                      |
| Debbie     | Ritchie   | Non-Teacher/Counselor                    |
| Beverly    | Shannon   | Non-Teacher /Secondary Administrator     |
| Jennifer   | DeAnda    | Non-Teacher/Elementary Administrator     |
| Kelly      | Odom      | Non-Teacher /Secondary Administrator     |
| Danny      | Garrett   | District Administrator                   |
| Shelly     | Hackett   | Parent 1                                 |
| Kristen    | Holiday   | Parent 2                                 |
| Kelly      | Wasson    | Parent 3                                 |
| Kim        | Baggett   | Parent 4                                 |
| George     | Tullis    | Parent 5                                 |

# EXEMPTIONS

## **§25.0811 Uniform School Start Date**

*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.*

### **Proposed**

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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Creates Flexibility for District to pursue other calendar options for identified populations.

### **Local Guidelines**

The district will determine, on an annual basis, when each school year will begin.

## **§25.112 Class Size and Notice of Class Size**

*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 ration, and inform them the waiver has been submitted.*

### **Proposed**

By seeking an exemption 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 appropriate district and campus administration. The Board of Trustees will be informed of K- 4 classes that exceed 22:1. TEA waivers for class sizes exceeding 22 will not be required. An exemption from TEC 25.113 is also requested.

## **§21.002 Teacher Employment Contracts**

*Currently states a school district shall employ each classroom teacher, principal, librarian, nurse, or school counselor under: (1) a probationary contract, as provided by Subchapter C. TEC 21.102. Probationary Contract (B) states a probationary contract may not be for a term exceeding one school year. The probationary contract may be renewed for two additional, one year periods, for a maximum permissible probationary contract period of three school years, except that the probationary period 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 by the district.*

### **Proposed**

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. Exemption from current guidelines 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 Hooks ISD.

### **Local Guidelines**

At the time of contract recommendation consideration, newly hired teachers and counselors with the district, who have been employed in public education for at least five of the eight previous years and have completed their first probationary year with the district, may receive a probationary contract for the second year in order to continue to evaluate the staff member's effectiveness.

## **§21.003 Certification Required**

*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.*

### **Proposed**

In order to best serve Hooks 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.
- b) An individual with experience in a Career and Technology field may be eligible to teach a vocational skill or course. An individual may hold a teaching certification in another state for Core areas or Career and Technology. An individual may have background, experience, skills or work related/ industry experience to work full time or part time in a designated area. 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.
- c) The superintendent will approve or deny requests for local certification.

### **§25.036 Inter-district Transfers**

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

### **Proposed**

Hooks 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 25.36 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. In these rare cases, Hooks ISD seeks exemption from the one-year transfer commitment.

### **Local Guidelines**

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.

### **§21.203, 21.352 Teacher Evaluations**

*The State of Texas issued a new teacher appraisal system in 2016-2017, the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (TTESS). Under T-TTESS, all teachers on a teacher contract and paid on the teacher pay scale are currently evaluated every year utilizing TTESS unless they are exempted under criteria in DNA (Local).*

### **Proposed**

Hooks ISD will continue to utilize TTESS to evaluate identified teachers in the classroom setting. Teachers that are in varied positions not providing whole group instruction but more individualized and varied instruction as well as

other duties, need a more defined appraisal tool relevant to their position. Teachers with specialized positions will be exempted from TTESS and a local specialized alternative appraisal tool will be developed to better align with their duties and position. This exemption will allow local flexibility to evaluate performance measures for the particular job duties and expectations.

### **Local Guidelines**

The specialized positions could be exempt with superintendent approval and will utilize the local alternative appraisal tool.

### **§28.004 Local School Health Advisory Council and Health Education Instruction**

*The local school health advisory council shall meet at least four times each year. The board shall appoint at least five members to the SHAC. A majority of members must be person who are parents of students enrolled in the district and who are not employed by the district. One of those members shall serve as chair or co-chair of the SHAC, in addition to its other duties, the SHAC shall submit to the board, at least annually, a written report.*

### **Proposed**

An exemption from TEC 28.004 would reduce the amount of time spent on compliance fulfillment tasks, freeing up valuable time and resources. The district's size ensures that stakeholders and committee members will be knowledgeable and aware of the needs of the district's students. Many of the same staff members serve on multiple committees. This will ensure the effective and efficient use of people's time while continuing to meet the needs of our community.

### **Local Guidelines**

Hooks ISD will determine the number of SHAC meetings held each year as well as the make-up of the committee. SHAC will continue to assist the district in ensuring that local community values are reflected in the district's health education instruction and provide reports and make recommendations to the board as needed.

## **COMMENTS**

If you have any comments or concerns regarding the Hooks District of Innovation Plan, we want to hear from you. Please email us your thoughts to: [cookt@hooksisd.net](mailto:cookt@hooksisd.net)

Thank you.