

Harleton ISD District of Innovation Plan

**To Be Considered for Adoption
by the
Harleton ISD Board of Trustees**



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Shane Wright, Junior High Principal
Traci Jones, Elementary Principal
Kim Clynch, Librarian
Adam Chandler, High School Assistant Principal
Melinda Ready, Elementary Assistant Principal
Patricia Newman, Gifted/Talented Professional
Melissa Fitts, Special Education Professional
Alisa Pilkington, Teacher
Pam Wright, Teacher
Sonya Smith, Teacher
Jana Minor, Teacher
Brian Coulter, Teacher
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District of Innovation

The 84th Legislative Session in House Bill 1842 allows school districts greater local control and flexibility regarding certain state-level regulations in an effort to utilize the designation to better serve students.

The proposed plan, once adopted, will remain in effect for five years (2019-2023). The plan may be amended at any time by the District of Innovation Committee with the approval of the school board.

STATUTES UNDER CONSIDERATION AT THIS TIME INCLUDE:

1. Uniform School Start Date (Texas Education Code §25.0811)

Current Statute: Students may not begin school before the 4th Monday of August. In the past, districts could apply for a waiver to start the school calendar earlier to meet the needs of the local community. This waiver opportunity was met with resistance from the Texas tourism groups who lobbied to have the practice ended, because they believed it was detrimental to the Texas tourism business. Therefore, several years ago the legislature took away all waivers and dictated that districts may not begin until the 4th Monday, with no exceptions.

Innovation Plan: The 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. Flexibility to start earlier in August would help our district plan for balanced instructional time in the semesters that would support semester course curriculum.

2. Probationary Contracts (Texas Education Code §21.102)

Current Statute: Probationary periods for newly hired teachers who have been in public education for at least five years of the previous eight years cannot exceed one year. This limited period is insufficient in some cases to fully determine the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. Under this circumstance, the district must either give the teacher a term contract or terminate their contract after their first year in the district.

Innovation Plan: Relief from Texas Education Code §21.102 will permit the district the option to issue a probationary contract for a period of up to two years for experienced teachers, librarians, counselors or nurses newly hired to Harleton ISD, in order to allow a better evaluation of effectiveness.

3. Transfer Students (Texas Education Code §25.036)

Current Statute: Under Texas Education Code, 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 year.

Innovation Plan: Harleton ISD maintains a transfer policy requiring nonresident students wishing to transfer to file a transfer application yearly. In approving transfer requests, the availability of space and staff, availability of programs and services, the student's grades, disciplinary history records, and attendance records are evaluated. Transfer students are expected to follow the attendance requirements and the 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. Harleton ISD is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one year commitment in accepting transfers. Occasionally, a student's behavior warrants suspension (in or out of school), placement in an alternative program, or expulsion. In addition, student attendance may fall below the TEA truancy standard. In these cases, Harleton ISD is seeking exemption from the one year transfer commitment.

4. Teacher Contract Days for Emergency Purposes (Texas Education Code §21.401)

Current Statute: Texas Education Code states that a contract between the district and an educator must be for a minimum of ten months of service. An educator employed under a ten-month contract must provide a minimum of 187 days of service. The Commissioner may reduce the number of days of service, but such a reduction does not reduce an educator's salary and benefits. District calendars are designed to maintain the minimum total of 75,600 minutes of instruction per year. However, due to individual campus schedules, excess minutes of instruction may be "banked" and used as required make-up time in the event of bad weather or emergencies requiring the closing of a campus or district. Although this flexibility has been allowed for required student attendance, there was no flexibility that impacted teacher contract days. Districts should have the option to reduce the number of contract days for educators when bad weather or emergencies arise.

Innovation Plan: Harleton ISD will continue its very conservative practice regarding the implementation of bad weather/emergency closures. In the event that inclement weather or emergencies arise requiring the closure of a campus or entire district, the Board of Trustees shall have the option to reduce the number of contract days by an amount less than or equal to the number of attendance days adjusted for student instruction. If the Board of Trustees makes any change to reduce the number of contracted days, such a reduction may not reduce an educator's salary and benefits.

5. Required Professional Development (Texas Education Code §21.451)

Current Statute: Texas Education Code state a)The staff development provided by a school district to an educator other than a principal must be: (1) conducted in accordance with standards developed by the district; and (2) designed to improve education in the district. Harleton ISD faculty are well trained to identify social indicators such as sexual harassment, bullying, and suicide. In addition, the faculty/staff clearly understand the requirements of FERPA. Mandating these trainings in these areas annually only serves to add redundancy to back to school work that can be better utilized in preparing for the students to return.

Innovation Plan: The district will set up and maintain a database for all employees. Employees will participate in formal training every three years in the following areas as mandated by law:

1. Sexual harassment
2. Bullying prevention for teachers, administrators, and staff
3. Child abuse, sexual abuse, and other maltreatment of children
4. FERPA (student privacy)
5. Suicide prevention
6. Anaphylaxis and Auto-Injectors
7. Blood Borne Pathogens
8. Diabetes Overview
9. Illegal Steroid Use
10. Concussions – except for teachers, administrators and staff who are required to have annual training per UIL rules)

All teachers, faculty, and staff new to the district will complete the compliance training during the first year of employment in the district. District and campus administrators may assign compliance training to an employee or group of employees as needed during the three year cycle.