

Harts Bluff ISD  
District of Innovation Plan

House Bill 1842, passed during the 84th Legislative Session, provides opportunities for Texas public school districts to pursue the designation of District of Innovation. The designation allows local school districts to obtain exemptions for certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. This allows district more flexibility and local control for innovative programs.

**Term:**

The District of Innovation Plan will be for a term of up to five years beginning July 2020 and will remain in effect through June 2025, unless amended, rescinded, or renewed by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. The Plan will be reviewed annually as part of the comprehensive needs assessment.

**Time Line:**

April 14, 2020	Committee met to discuss amendments and renewal of plan.
April 16, 2020	Board held a public hearing and appointed a District of Innovation committee to draft the amended and renewed plan.
May 21, 2020	Public Hearing and Discussion regarding draft plan.
May 22, 2020	Plan posted on the District Web Page for 30 days and commissioner notified of intent.
June 25, 2020	Public Hearing and Board votes to approve plan.
July 1, 2020	Send letter to the commissioner.

**Committee:**

Baker, Kelly	Finnigan, Joyce
Brannon, Roger	Haney, Nettie
Cameron, Kristy	Martin, Shana
Cheek, Sivi	Munoz, Tiffany
Cook, Leslie	Parker, Penney
Craver, Craig	Pena, Angelica
Currey, Laura	Rose, Tracie
Dickerson, Carole	Stovall, Jennie
Dyer, Courtney	Walker, Kelly

## **Teacher Employment Contracts**

TEC §21.102 (b)

DCA LEGAL

### Previous

TEC §21.101 DEFINITION. In this subchapter, "teacher" means a principal, supervisor, classroom teacher, school counselor, or other full-time professional employee who is required to hold a certificate issued under Subchapter B or a nurse.

TEC §21.102 (b) states that an experienced teacher new to the district may not have a probationary contract to exceed one year if the teacher has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment by the district.

Experienced teachers new to Harts Bluff ISD may need more than one year to learn the Harts Bluff Engage Learning Model. A one-year probationary period may not provide the teacher or the administrator sufficient time to evaluate the teacher's capacity or ability to adopt the Harts Bluff ISD requirements.

### Approved

Harts Bluff ISD will have the flexibility to issue a probationary contract for up to two years for experienced teachers, counselors, or nurses new to Harts Bluff ISD that have been employed for at least five out of the eight previous years. This would allow the district the opportunity to evaluate the employee for a period of up to two years.

## **School Start and End Date**

TEC §25.0811 TEC §25.0812  
EB LEGAL EB LOCAL BF LEGAL

### Previous

TEC §25.0811 states that a school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August.

TEC §25.0812 states that a school district may not schedule the last day of school for students for a school year before May 15.

The required start and end dates do not take into consideration local district, student, and community needs.

### Approved

Harts Bluff ISD would like to determine the first and last day of school for our district. This flexibility would allow the district to determine, on a yearly basis, the dates that meet the needs of the district, student, and community.

The first day of school for students would be no earlier than the first week of August. The last day of school would be based on the required number of minutes or days of instruction for students. It would also allow for changes to the state testing calendar.

The exemptions would allow for greater flexibility in the district calendar, allow opportunities for more staff development, and help balance the number of instructional days for the fall and spring semesters. Another anticipated outcome would be improved student and teacher attendance rates.

## **Teacher Contract Days**

TEC §21.401

DC Legal DEA Local

### Previous

TEC §21.401 states that a contract between a school district and an educator must be a minimum of 10 months' service and at least 187 days.

TEC §25.081 changed the required days of instruction for students from 180 days to 75,600 minutes. The code did not address 10 month employee contract days.

Harts Bluff ISD will determine the number of days teachers work based on the needs of the students which is determined by the annual district needs assessment.

### Approved

Harts Bluff ISD would like to have the flexibility to determine the number of days teachers work at the local level. The number of days would be based on the student calendar. Teachers would work no less than 180 days under this plan.

The plan will have no effect on a teacher's salary. It would increase teacher's daily rate of pay.

## Teacher Certification

TEC §21.003  
DK LEGAL

TEC §21.003 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.

### Previous

In the event the district is unable to hire a certified teacher for a position or a teacher is teaching a subject outside of their certification, the district must submit a request to the Texas Education Agency. TEA then either approves or denies the request.

### Approved

Harts Bluff ISD will have the authority to issue an annual local Innovative Teaching Permit. The permit would be valid from the date of issue until the last day of July of the issued school year.

### **Areas the district will consider for Innovative Teaching Permits**

#### **Outside Area of Certification**

A certified teacher may be eligible to teach subjects outside their certification area or grade level. Criteria to be considered would include: college coursework, personal experience, certifications from other states, and any other related information.

#### **Career and Technology and Extra-Curricular**

An individual with experience in Career and Technology may be eligible to teach a vocational skill or course. Criteria to be considered would include: hold a teaching certificate in another state for Career & Technology, background experience, skills, or work-related/industrial experience or other qualifications as needed.

#### **Core Subjects**

An individual with experience, skills, or work-related industry experience that holds at least a bachelor's degree may be eligible for an Innovative Teaching Permit to teach core academic classes.

### **Process-Innovative Teaching Permit**

For each of the above circumstances the principal must specify the reason for the request and document the credentials the applicant possesses qualifying them for the position. The principal will then present the information to the superintendent who will make the decision for the Innovative Teaching Permits based on the information provided.

The superintendent will report Innovative Teaching Permit actions to the Board of Trustees at the first board meeting following the assignment. Innovative Teaching Permits are issued for one school year only. The certification may be renewed annually. The Permit granted will expire on July 1.

Teacher certification waivers, state permit applications, or other paperwork will not be submitted to the TEA.

## **Transfer Students**

TEC §25.036

FDA Local

Texas Education Code states that a district may choose to accept, as transfer, 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.

### Previous

Harts Bluff has a local transfer policy FDA (LOCAL) requiring non-resident students wishing to transfer to file a transfer application each school year. In approving transfer requests, the superintendent or designee considers available space and instructional staff. Also considered is the student's disciplinary history and attendance records.

### Approved

The district is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one year commitment in acceptance of transfer applications for the following reasons:

- Student behavior warrants suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion.
- Student attendance falls below the TEA truancy standard.
- Student must attend required interventions (if needed) to retain approved transfer status.

## **Insurance**

TEC 22.004 (i)

Insurance Code Sec. 1579.001/1579.051

CR Legal, CRD Legal, CRD Local

TEC §22.004 (i) states that a school district may not make group health coverage available to its employees pursuant to TEC 22.004(b) after the date a District implements the program of coverages provided under Chapter 1579 of the Texas Insurance Code. This process allows no flexibility in the design of group health insurance benefits to fit the needs of all district employees. This provision also prohibits the District from procuring group health insurance benefits that may provide better coverages for its employees and at a lower cost.

Texas Insurance Code 1579.051 states that the Teacher Retirement System of Texas, as trustee, shall implement and administer the uniform group coverage program.

### Current

Harts Bluff offers insurance to its employees under a policy of group health, accident, accidental death and dismemberment, disability income replacement and hospital, surgical, and/or medical expense insurance through the Teacher Retirement System of Texas (TRS) Acti-Care system.

### Approved

Increase local control of the group health benefits plan to allow the District to be responsive to employee and community needs by providing access to an alternative Uniform Group Coverage Program.