



HISD

District of Innovation Plan

2022-2027

I. Introduction

The District of Innovation (DOI) is a concept passed by the 84th Texas Legislature through House Bill (HB) 1842 that gives traditional independent school districts most of the flexibilities available to open enrollment charter schools, including exemptions from many requirements mandated in the Texas Education Code.

As a District of Innovation, Hudson ISD 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;
- power to innovate and think differently.

HB 1842 does not allow for exemptions from statutes including curriculum and graduation requirements or academic and financial accountability.

II. Our Process

On October 20, 2016, the Hudson Independent School District's Board of Trustees passed a resolution to initiate the process of designation as a District of Innovation. The board also appointed a District of Innovation Committee on October 20th with a charge to begin the process of drafting a Local Innovation Plan ("Plan"). The committee consisted of a majority (60%) of classroom teachers with the remaining members being campus and district administrators and directors. The committee began work on November 2, 2016 to draft a plan of innovation. The Local Innovation Plan was approved in February, 2017. The term of the Plan was for five years, beginning February 16, 2017 and ending February 17, 2022.

To begin the renewal process for the district's innovation plan, a new Committee was formed to review and study the Plan and any additional exemptions to consider.

Hudson ISD's District of Innovation Advisory Committee Members are as follows:

Committee Members

Name	HISD Role
Kalyn Franks	Teacher – Peavy Primary
Amanda Horan	Teacher – Peavy Primary
Amy Tyer	Teacher – Peavy Primary
Laura Mikeal	Principal – Peavy Primary
Kara Largent	Teacher – Bonner Elementary
Laura Mosley	Teacher – Bonner Elementary
Ashley Reneau	Teacher – Bonner Elementary
Kelley Phillips	Principal – Bonner Elementary
Lorilea Craft	Teacher – Middle School
Kim Ray	Teacher – Middle School

Terri Reed	Teacher – Middle School
Jonathan Davis	Principal – Middle School
Patrick Largent	Teacher – High School
Shanna Noel	Teacher – High School
Erin Weiblinger	Teacher – High School
Richard Crenshaw	Principal – High School
John Courtney	Assistant Superintendent
Lisa Cagle	Assistant Superintendent
Josh Smith	Technology Director
P.T. Walters	Career/Technology Director

The Committee met on the following dates: November 17, 2021 and December 9, 2021. The Committee approved the Plan on December 9, 2021. The proposed plan was posted to the district website for public comment on December 16, 2021 and remained posted well over the 30-day requirement. On January 10, 2022, the district notified the Commissioner of Education regarding the Board's intent to vote on the proposed plan. On February 17, 2022, the Hudson ISD Board of Trustees voted unanimously to approve the DOI plan as submitted.

III. Term

The term of the Plan is for five years, beginning February 17, 2022 and ending February 17, 2027, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board in accordance with the law. If, within the term of the Plan, other areas of operations are to be considered for flexibility as part of HB 1842, the Board will appoint a committee to consider and propose additional exemptions in the form of an amendment. Any amendment adopted by the Board will adhere to the same term as the original plan. The HISD may not implement two separate plans at any one time.

IV. Innovations

The District proposes flexibility and seeks an exemption in the following areas:

1. MAINTAIN REASONABLE CLASS SIZES IN GRADES K-4

(TEC 25.111) (TEC 25.112a-g) (TEC 25.113a-b) (BF LEGAL) (EEB LEGAL)

Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan:

The Texas Education Code requires districts to maintain 22 students or less in kindergarten through 4th grade classes. A school district must complete and file a waiver with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) for each class that exceeds this limit. These waivers are rarely rejected by TEA, making the process primarily for awareness purposes and to preserve a more personal instructional environment.

State law also requires districts to notify parents of waivers or exceptions to class size limits. Sometimes during the course of a school year, due to shifting enrollments, a class may return to a smaller student-to-teacher ratio before or after the waiver is formally granted, thus negating the notice or causing parents and staff unnecessary concern.

Hudson ISD certainly recognizes reasonable class size plays a positive role in the classroom and acknowledges the intent of the state requirements. However, class size must be balanced with the logistics and timing of adding staff, available campus resources or space, and the optimal teacher-to-student ratio given the total number, age and needs of students. Often, it is not the number of the students but the makeup and chemistry of the classroom which create a more personal instructional environment. Most importantly, research shows the teacher in the classroom has the greatest impact on student learning, not absolute class size. This exemption does not disregard the intent of class size ratio requirements, but rather, allows Hudson ISD the local control to determine class size.

Local Innovation Strategies:

- A. In accordance with TEC §25.112, Hudson ISD will make every effort to begin each school year with enough teachers to establish a student-to-teacher ratio of 22:1 per K-4 homeroom class. Also consistent with TEC §25.113, if, after consideration of the factors outlined below, any class size exceeds this ratio during the school year, the superintendent will inform and obtain consent from the Board of Trustees and will notify parents of affected students.
- B. If, during the school year, a K-4 homeroom exceeds 22:1, the administration will have 30 school days to consider:
 - 1. The subject/age to be taught, the teaching methodology to be used and any need for individual instruction in the class;
 - 2. Available space and resources;
 - 3. Whether another teacher should be hired (thus creating a new classroom);
 - 4. Whether a teaching assistant could be added to the homeroom class; or
 - 5. Whether keeping the class intact is more advantageous than separating students, in which case the class size may slightly exceed 22:1.
- C. Consistent with TEC §25.112, TEC §25.114 and TEA guidance, the 22:1 ratio does not apply to physical education or fine arts classes. In such subjects, Hudson ISD will consider student/teacher ratios appropriate to implement the curriculum and ensure student and staff safety.
- D. Additionally, consistent with TEC §25.112, Hudson ISD will not be required to seek consent from the Board of Trustees for a homeroom classroom that may exceed 22:1 during the last 12 weeks of the school year.
- E. A TEA waiver will no longer be filed when a K-4 classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio, although the Hudson ISD Board of Trustees must still consent and parents must still be notified.

The district will not allow the average class size per grade level (K-4) to exceed 23:1.

2. DETERMINE A FLEXIBLE SCHOOL START DATE

(TEC §25.0811a) (EB LEGAL and LOCAL)

Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan:

The Texas Education Code states a school district may not begin student instruction before the fourth Monday of August. For many years this was the rule; however, districts had the option of applying for a waiver to begin earlier, even as early as the second Monday in August.

The start-date waiver was eventually removed when the legislature determined school districts should begin the first semester no earlier than the fourth Monday of August, with no exceptions. The current process allows no flexibility in the design and balancing of instructional semesters to meet the needs of students or the wishes of the local board of trustees, who represent community interests in this matter.

Local Innovation Strategies:

- A. Hudson ISD will determine on an annual basis the local starting date of the first semester, not to precede the second Monday in August of any given year.
- B. The annual calendar will be submitted by the District Calendar Committee and approved by the Board of Trustees.

3. ALLOW ALTERNATIVES TO EDUCATOR CERTIFICATION FOR DISTINCTIVE SUBJECTS

(TEC §21.003a) (TEC §21.057a-e) (DK LEGAL)

Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan:

Texas Education Codes state a person may not be employed as an educator by a school district unless the individual holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued by the appropriate state agency. In the event a school district cannot locate a certified teacher for a position, or a teacher is teaching a subject outside her or his certification, the district must request emergency certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or the State Board of Educator Certification. This system is burdensome and does not consider the unique financial and/or instructional needs of the district, especially for innovative classes where certification may not exist or educators with those credentials may not be readily available. Special Education and Bilingual/ESL teachers must continue to be SBEC certified.

Local Innovation Strategies:

- A. In exceptional circumstances, when a certified educator is not found for a course, the campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request for local certification that will allow a non-certified yet highly qualified professional to teach OR a certified educator to teach a subject in a related field for which she or he is not credentialed by the state.
- B. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what qualifications the individual possesses to teach the proposed subject. Emergency or financial situations creating the need for this assignment should also be noted.
- C. Whenever possible, lesson plans or curriculum guides to support the uncertified yet highly qualified educator will be developed or provided in partnership with certified teachers in the same field.

- D. In the event an uncertified yet highly qualified educator or professional is assigned to a course, the superintendent will inform the board of trustees and will notify parents of students who benefit from this decision.
- E. A teacher certification waiver, state permit applications or other paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency.

4. ADJUSTMENT OF TEACHER CONTRACT DAYS (*for emergency purposes only*)

(TEC §21.401) (DC LEGAL)

Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan:

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. If a district anticipates providing less than 180 days of instruction for students during a school year, as indicated by the district's academic calendar, the district may reduce the number of days of service proportionately. A reduction by the district does not reduce an educator's salary. The commissioner of education may reduce the number of days of service if disaster, flood, extreme weather conditions, fuel curtailment, or another calamity causes the closing of schools. A reduction by the commissioner does not reduce an educator's salary.

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.

Local Innovation Strategies:

- A. Hudson 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.
- B. 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.

The adjustment of teacher contract days is ONLY for emergencies/special circumstances that would allow the local school board to approve, as opposed to approval by the Texas Commissioner of Education.

Example: If school were to close for an extended period of time (but within the 75,600 minute instructional requirement), the board would have authority to reduce teacher contract days. This effort would be to minimize the need to 'find work or training' just to fulfill the days required for teacher contract days. This will only be used for very special and rare circumstances.

5. STUDENT ATTENDANCE AND COURSE CREDIT

(TEC 25.092) (FEC LEGAL and LOCAL)

Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan:

Texas Education Code restricts a student from receiving credit or a final grade in a course of study in which the student was not in attendance for at least 90% of the days the course was offered. If the student attends the course at least 75% of the time, the student may be awarded credit if he/she successfully completes a plan of action determined by the principal. An established attendance committee must hear petitions for credit from students that failed to meet the plan of action. The committee may approve the award of credit based on extenuating circumstances.

Hudson ISD does have rigorous course options with high expectations. Students are highly encouraged to stretch their academic capability by taking advanced level courses. If a student attempts to take a course, but it is later determined that a different course of study is most appropriate, we feel the principal should be allowed to approve a schedule change without regard to developing an individual plan of action. The student will be required to meet the instructional requirements of the new course in order to obtain an expected level of mastery of the curriculum. Additionally, this would apply for a student that transfers to the district during the school year with a course of study that may not be offered at the campus.

Local Innovation Strategy:

- A. Regardless of the percentage of days a student is in attendance, the principal may approve a schedule change and award course credit if it is determined that the student sufficiently meets the instructional requirements of the course of study.
- B. If the principal does not award course credit for a student due to poor attendance (less than 90%), the student may petition for a review and decision by the Attendance Committee. If the committee denies the credit or final grade, then the student may appeal the decision to the Board of Trustees. The decision of the Board is final.

6. PROBATIONARY CONTRACTS FOR EXPERIENCED TEACHERS

TEC §21.102(b) (DCA LEGAL)

Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan:

Texas Education Code states that 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.

State law currently requires the probationary period for newly hired teachers who have been in public education for at least five of the previous eight years to be limited to a maximum of one year. Given that personnel decisions are typically made as early as the end of January, this is insufficient time to evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom.

Local Innovation Strategy:

Exemption from this statute will better permit administrators the time necessary to evaluate a teacher's performance and provide opportunities for additional improvement and growth. The probationary contract term will be two years for a person who has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment with HISD.

7. CAMPUS BEHAVIOR COORDINATOR

TEC §37.0012 (FO LEGAL and LOCAL)

Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan:

Texas Education Code states a person at each campus must be designated to serve as the campus behavior coordinator. The person designated may be the principal of the campus or any other campus administrator selected by the principal.

State law requires a single person to be designated as the campus behavior coordinator. This requirement is currently being met in HISD by the principal of each campus. However, this designation fails to effectively align with practices on the HISD campuses where discipline is typically assigned to more than one assistant principal who collaborates with a variety of students and parents daily.

Local Innovation Strategy:

While the principal will continue to be apprised of disciplinary matters occurring on campus, relief from this statute would permit the principal to designate multiple campus behavior coordinators. This approach to discipline will allow for continued collaboration to support students and handle disciplinary matters.