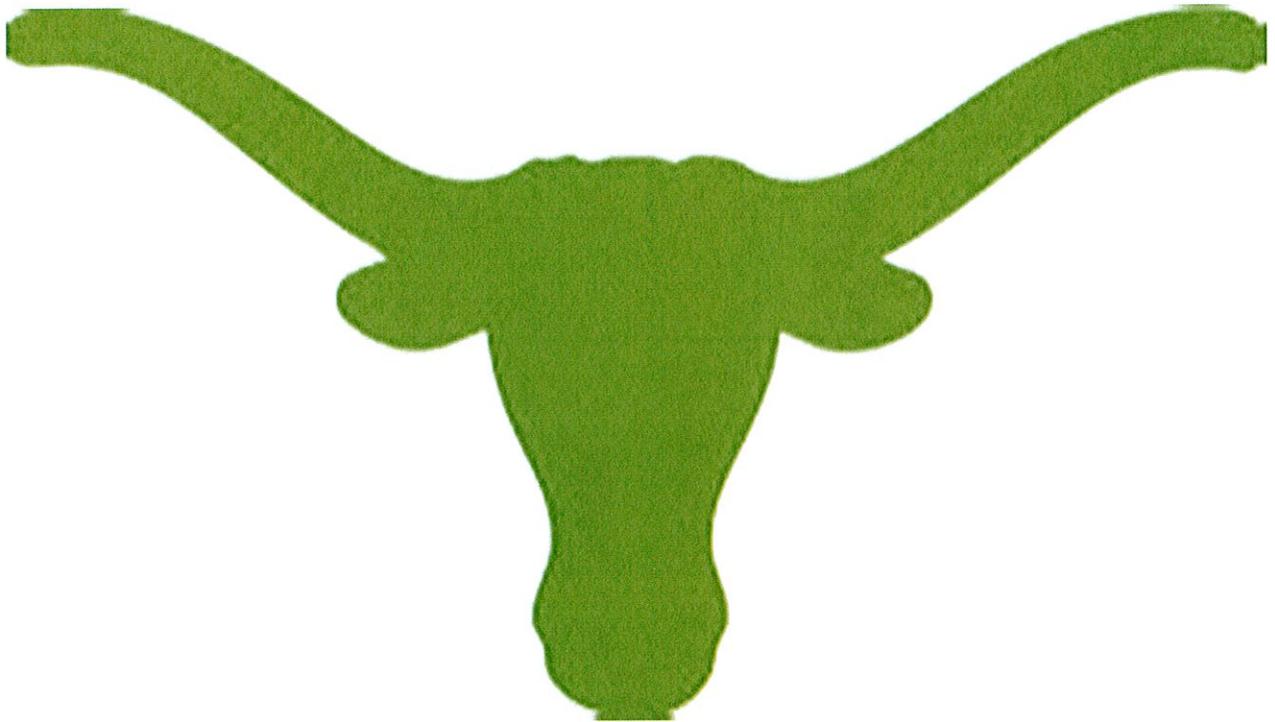


# Harper ISD



## District of Innovation Plan

## **Districts of Innovation Plan for Exemptions from Provisions of the Texas Education Code under House Bill 1842**

House Bill 1842, passed in the 84<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislative Session, provides Texas public school districts the opportunity to amend certain state requirements at the local level to better meet the needs of their unique student populations. Harper ISD (HISD) intends to follow the Texas Education Code (TEC) in all other areas. HISD's District of Innovation Plan is comprehensive and touches numerous areas in the TEC, and because HISD seeks to maximize local control of educational decisions for students, HISD seeks exemption from the permissible provisions of the TEC included and explained in the local Innovation Plan. HISD's District of Innovation Plan will begin with the 2018-2019 school year and conclude at the end of the 2022-2023 school year unless the plan is terminated or amended by the HISD Board of Trustees in accordance with HB 1842. Any future amendments will adhere to the same term of the original plan.

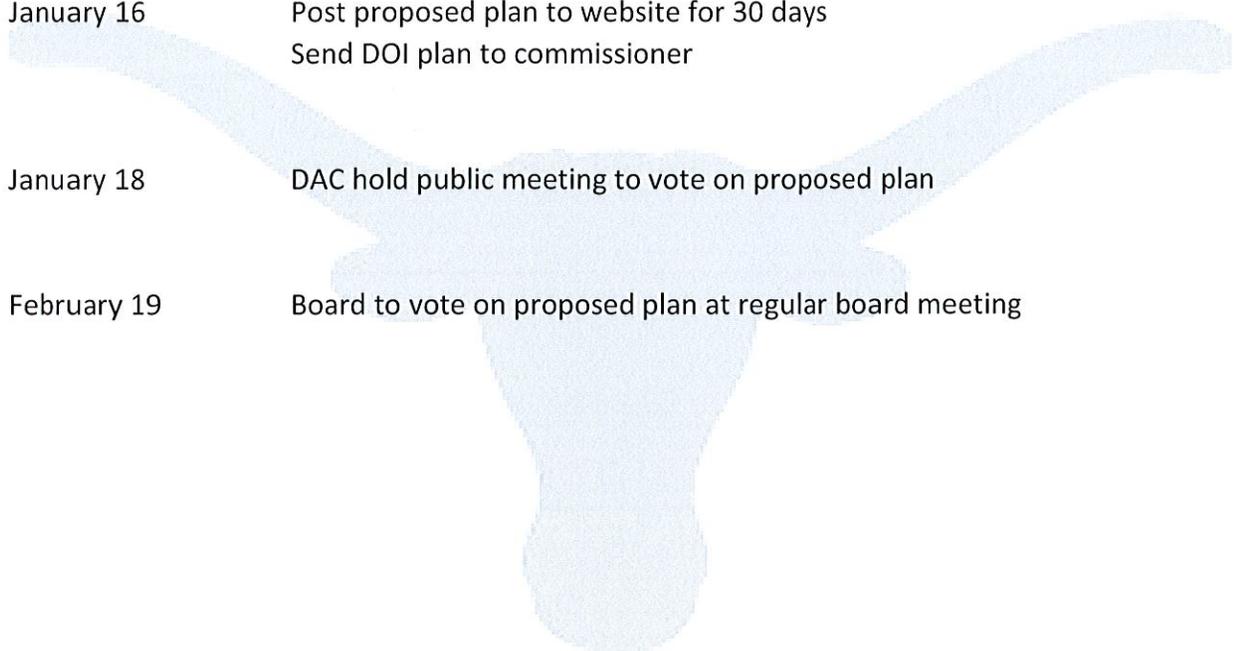
HB 1842 permits Texas public school districts to become Districts of Innovation and to obtain exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code.

Potential benefits of becoming a District of Innovation include:

- **Flexibility:** Districts will have the flexibility to implement practices similar to charter schools, including exemptions from certain mandates including the uniform school start date and required minutes of instruction.
- **Local Control:** Districts decide which flexibilities best suit their local needs.
- **Autonomy:** Districts must submit a district of innovation plan to the commissioner of education, but approval is not required.

On December 18, 2017, the Harper ISD Board of Trustees (Board) passed a Resolution to explore the development of a District of Innovation Plan to increase local control over District operations and to support innovation and local initiatives. The adoption of the plan seeks to increase the District's flexibility in order to improve educational outcomes for the benefit of students and the community.

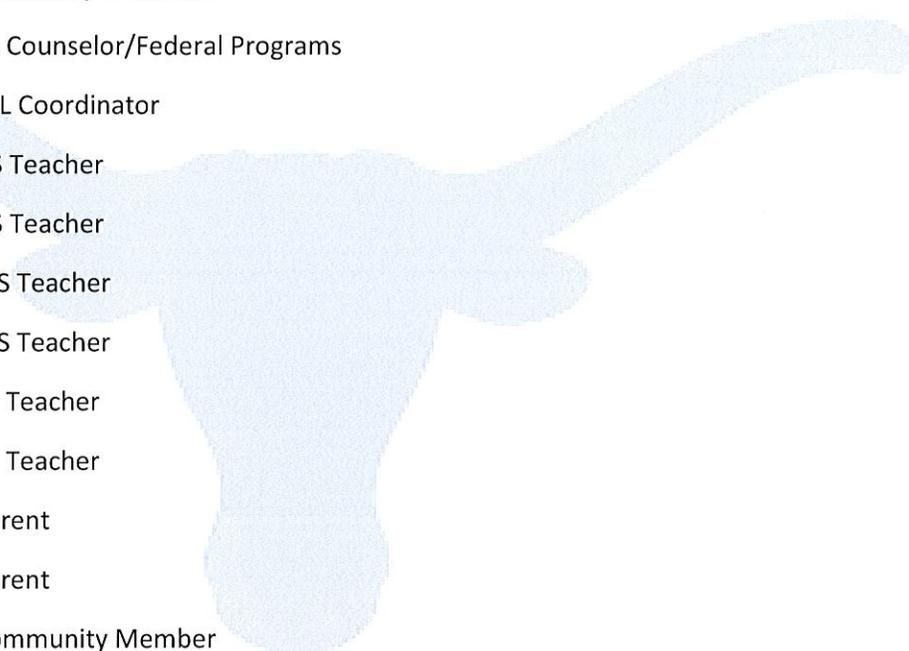
## District of Innovation (DOI) Timeline



December 18	Board Resolution for DOI
January 11	Public Hearing and appointment of District Advisory Committee (DAC)
January 15	DAC develops DOI Plan
January 16	Post proposed plan to website for 30 days Send DOI plan to commissioner
January 18	DAC hold public meeting to vote on proposed plan
February 19	Board to vote on proposed plan at regular board meeting

District of Innovation (DOI) Planning Committee

Chris Stevenson	Superintendent
Bonnie Stewart	HS Principal
Julie Fiedler	MS Principal
Jay Harper	ES Principal
Dean Eckert	Facility Manager
Loretta Eckert	Business Manager
Leigh Anne Lake	Secondary Counselor
Aaron Brooks	ES Counselor/Federal Programs
Nancy Cantwell	ESL Coordinator
Pat Buch	HS Teacher
Wendi Reid	HS Teacher
Kayla Burns	MS Teacher
Lisa Reid	MS Teacher
Lisa Sanders	ES Teacher
Jennifer Moody	ES Teacher
Diane Earhart	Parent
Lisa Koenig	Parent
Nicole Baumann	Community Member



RESOLUTION TO CONSIDER DESIGNATION AS DISTRICT OF INNOVATION

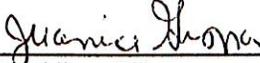
WHEREAS Education Code 12A.001 provides that a district is eligible for designation as a district of innovation if the district's most recent performance rating under Section 39.054 reflects at least acceptable performance, and that consideration of designation as a district of innovation may be initiated by a resolution adopted by the board of trustees of the district; and

WHEREAS the Harper Independent School District's most recent performance rating under Education Code 39.054 reflects at least acceptable performance.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees of Harper Independent School District by adoption of this resolution initiates the process under Education Code Chapter 12A to become a District of Innovation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that after this resolution is signed by the Board, a public hearing shall be held within 30 days to consider whether the District should develop a local innovation plan for the designation of the District as a district of innovation and that within 30 days of the public hearing the Board of Trustees of Harper Independent School District shall appoint an innovation plan committee to develop a local innovation plan or decline to pursue designation as a district of innovation.

Adopted this 18th day of December, 2017, by the Board of Trustees.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Presiding Officer

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary

## Areas of Innovation

With regard to each area of innovation, the District declares exemption from the listed statutory provisions, as well as any implementing rules or regulations promulgated pursuant to those statutory provisions by state agency or entity, including but not limited to the Commissioner of Education, Texas Education Agency, State Board for Educator Certification, and the State Board of Education.

### I. School Start and End Date

*Exemption from: TEC 25.0811; TEC 25.0812*

*Related Board Policies: EB Local*

#### ***Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan***

*TEC 25.0811 states that a school district may not begin student instruction before the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of August. TEC 25.0812 states that a school district may not schedule the last day of school before May 15<sup>th</sup>. The current process allows no flexibility in the design of annual calendars to fit the needs of the community or the wishes of the local Board of Trustees who represent the community interests in this matter.*

*Previously, districts had the options of applying to TEA for a waiver to start earlier, even as early as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday in August. The Texas tourism groups lobbied to have this stopped because they believed it was hurting the tourism business. Therefore, several years ago the legislature took away all waivers and dictated that districts may not begin until the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of August, with no exceptions.*

#### **Innovation Strategies**

- Relief from the statute will allow HISD to develop a calendar that best meets the needs of the students and local community and addresses student instruction and focused professional development in conjunction with the new instructional minutes requirement, rather than days.
- Empowers HISD to personalize learning, increase college and career readiness, and balance the amount of instructional time per semester.
- Provide increased local control of the instructional calendar in order to be responsive to the community needs which allows HISD the flexibility to set a school start date prior to the fourth Monday of August as is determined by local stakeholders.

### II. Instructional Minutes/Length of Instructional Day/ Early Release Days

*Exemption from: TEC 25.081*

*Relevant Board Policies: EB Local, EC Local*

#### ***Manner of which statute inhibits the goals of the plan***

*TEC 25.081 requires that a school district provide at least 75,600 minutes of instruction each school year, including intermission and recess. School districts must seek a waiver of this requirement from TEA in order to provide fewer than the required number of instructional minutes in the case of a natural disaster, flood, extreme weather conditions or other calamity. This requirement restricts the District in the development of the academic calendar, including the scheduling of early release days and staff development days.*

*TEC 25.081(e) references a day of instruction as 420 minutes.*

#### **Innovation Strategies**

This exemption will provide Harper ISD with the flexibility to adjust the minutes of instruction. It also has the added benefit of allowing the possibility of an altered length of school day, which may include, for example, a later start/early release time to accommodate professional development/collaboration opportunities for professional and support staff within HISD.

- HISD seeks relief from the section in order to provide staff development before the start of instruction, as well as additional days throughout the school year. These non-instructional days have been purposely placed throughout the calendar to allow teachers to plan instruction based on student instructional data in addition to engaging in relevant, targeted professional development.
- The district seeks additional flexibility to schedule early release days in the calendar in order to provide for student and district needs.

### III. Probationary Contracts

*Exemption from: TEC 21.102(b)*

*Relevant Board Policies: DCA Local*

#### ***Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan***

*For experienced teachers new to the district, the probationary period may not exceed one year if the person has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the previous eight years. A one year probationary contract is not sufficient to evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom since teacher contract renewal timelines demand that employment decisions be made prior to District receipt of state assessment results.*

#### **Innovation Strategies**

For experienced teachers, counselors, or nurses new to the district that have been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, a probationary contract may be issued for up to two years. All other teachers hired in the District may remain on probationary status for three years, and may be issued a fourth year of probation.

### IV. Teacher Certification

*Exemption from: TEC 21.003; TEC 21.053; TEC 21.057*

*Relevant Board Policies: DBA Local; DK Local*

This exemption from the state teacher certification requirements that inhibit the HISD's ability to hire teachers for hard-to-fill teaching positions will allow the district to establish local qualification and training requirements. This exemption directly supports the move from "highly qualified" requirements in the Every Student Succeeds ACT (ESSA).

#### ***Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan***

*In the event a district cannot locate a certified teacher for a position or a teacher is teaching a subject outside of their certification, the district must submit an emergency certification request to the Texas Education Agency and/or State Board for Educator Certification. TEA then approves or denies this request. There is a lot of bureaucracy and unnecessary paperwork involved in the process and does not take into account the unique financial and/or instructional needs of the district.*

#### **Innovation Strategies**

## Harper ISD District of Innovation Plan

- HISD will have the flexibility to hire external or internal applicants that do not have the traditional state certifications. The District will make every attempt to hire individuals with the appropriate certification for the position in question; however, where that is not reasonably possible, the District will have the flexibility to hire individuals who are knowledgeable in the area and are equipped to effectively perform the duties of the position in question. This will enrich applicant pools in specific content areas if certified teachers are not available to teach those courses.
- For grades 5-12, the campus principal may submit a request to the superintendent for a local certification that will allow an already certified teacher to teach a course or grade level for which he/she is not certified. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document the credentials or life experience the teacher possesses that would qualify this individual to teach the proposed subject.
- An individual with experience in the content of an elective course could be eligible to teach a vocational skill or elective course through a local teaching certificate. This exemption will afford the District the flexibility to hire a professional in certain trades or vocations to teach the crafts of those trades or vocations (such as welding, fine arts, health services, law, etc.) if certified teachers are not available to teach those courses. The principal must specify in writing the reason for this request and document what credentials or life experience the teacher possesses that would qualify this individual to teach the proposed subject.
- Whenever possible, instructional planning for the uncertified teachers course will be created in partnership with certified teachers in the same field. Uncertified teachers will be provided teacher mentoring, increased observations and feedback, professional development or instructional resources, or other supports.

Teacher certifications waiver requests, state permit applications, or other paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency. The District will ensure that all individuals assigned to teach have the knowledge and resources necessary to be successful.

### V. Class Size Ratio

*Exemption from: TEC 25.112; TEC 25.113*

*Related Board Policies: EEB Local*

#### ***Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan***

*TEC 25.112 requires districts to maintain a class size of 22 students or less per teacher for Kindergarten-4<sup>th</sup> Grade classes. When any class exceeds this limit, the district must complete and file a waiver with TEA. While these waivers are never rejected by TEA, this is a bureaucratic step that serves no purpose.*

*TEC 25.113 requires school districts to notify parents of waivers or exceptions to class size limits. In many cases, the class has returned to a smaller student to teacher ratio before the waiver is even approved, negating the need for this notice.*

#### **Innovation Strategies**

- Harper ISD believes in a low student to teacher ratio in all of its classrooms. Small class sizes enable effective teachers to provide more individualized attention to each student.
- HISD will attempt to begin each school year with enough teachers to establish a student to teacher ratio of at least 22:1 or less in each K-4 homeroom class. In the event that any class size

exceeds this ratio during the year, the superintendent will report this information to the Board of Trustees.

- Decisions regarding appropriate student to teacher ratios will be made at the local level, taking into consideration the age and grade level of the students, the subject matter of the class, the needs of the individual teachers and student groups, and the availability of additional instructional staff members.
- A TEA waiver request will not be filed when a K-4 classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio.

## **VI. INTER-DISTRICT TRANSFERS**

*Exemption from: TEC 25.036*

*Related Board Policies: FDA Local*

### ***Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan***

*A district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district, but TEC 25.036 has been interpreted to require a transfer to be for a period of one school year.*

### **Innovation Strategies**

- Harper ISD maintains a transfer policy for K-12 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, grades, standardized tests, 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. In these rare cases, Harper ISD seeks exemption from the one-year transfer commitment.
- Nonresident students who have been accepted as inter-district transfer students 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.
- When a K-4 class reaches an 18:1 ratio, the district may determine if an out-of-district transfer student will be accepted.