



# District of Innovation Plan

Humble Independent School District  
Board of Trustees

September \_ 2021  
Proposed Amendment

## Introduction

HB 1842 was passed during the 84th Texas Legislative Session in Spring 2015 and provides Texas public school districts the opportunity to be designated as Districts of Innovation in order to access the flexibility available to open-enrollment charter schools. 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 in the best interests of students.

Districts are not exempt from all statutes, and certain legal requirements must remain in place including curriculum and graduation requirements, and academic and financial accountability.

## Our Process

On June 21, 2016, the Humble Independent School District's Board of Trustees passed a Resolution to Initiate the Process of Designation as a District of Innovation in order to support innovation and local initiatives to improve student learning. The Board appointed a District of Innovation Committee representing various stakeholders across the district, including teachers, parents, campus administration, and local business owners. The Committee met on June 30, 2016, to discuss and draft the district's first local District of Innovation Plan (the "Plan"). The Committee presented the proposed Plan to the District's Decision Making Team, a body composed of representatives from all stakeholder groups within the district's community. The Decision Making Team met on August 2, 2016, and approved the Plan by majority vote for submission to the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees considered the proposed Plan and voted to approve the Plan on August 9, 2016, and established Humble ISD as a District of Innovation.

The Plan has been amended several times since the plan's adoption to meet evolving District needs and was renewed for an additional five year term on January 12, 2021.

# The Plan

## 1. Teacher Certification for Career and Technical Education Instructors

Prior to 2013, students were expected to graduate under the “4x4” which required such courses as physics and Algebra II. With the adoption of House Bill 5 by the Texas Legislature in 2013, the state’s graduation requirements moved to a more personalized graduation plan that allowed students to earn endorsements in specific areas of study, including STEM, business and industry, public services, etc.

Many of the career pathways that fall under the endorsements, such as health services or engineering, require very specialized certification in that particular field. Texas Education Code specifically requires as follows: Section 21.003 (certification requirement); Section 21.044 (requirements to obtain a certificate); Section 21.053 (requiring the presentation of a certificate to be employed as a teacher); Section 21.055 (requirements for a CTE teacher permit). The Texas Education Code provisions are supplemented by state regulations in 19 Texas Administrative Code Chapter 231. Together, these statutes and regulations inhibit the development of post high school plans and improvement of workforce skills to the extent these laws limit the District’s ability to hire teachers to teach hard-to-fill, high-demand career and technical courses when quality certified teachers are not available.

In order to enable more students to obtain the educational benefit of career and technical course offerings, the District seeks to establish its own local qualification requirements for such courses in lieu of the requirements set forth in law while adhering to Texas Education Code sections 21.003, 21.044, 21.053, 21.055 and 19 Texas Administrative Code Chapter 231.

This exemption will afford the District the flexibility to hire professionals in certain trades and vocations to teach the crafts of those trades and vocations, such as welding, health sciences, architecture and construction, in career and technical courses.

## 2. Class Size and Notice of Class Size

Texas Education Code Section 25.112 addresses the number of students who may be in a single pre-kindergarten (pre-K), kindergarten, first, second, third, or fourth grade class and limits that number to 22. The intent of this statute was to ensure that classrooms maintained a small teacher/student ratio under the belief that smaller classes led to improved achievement for students who benefited from more individualized teacher attention. While the maximum number of students in Pre-K-4 classrooms may be addressed by a state waiver, said waivers must be applied for annually and must be applied by each district, each year. Texas Education Code Section 25.113 relates to annual notice of the waiver if approved by the state. By seeking an exception from sections 25.112 and 25.113, 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.

The district works to remain within the guidelines of the current Education Code. Should the classroom exceed the class size of 22, however, the District provides support to the classroom by adding an additional staff member to preserve an in-person 22:1 staff to student ratio for Pre-K-3 grade classrooms, and 24:1 for 4th grade. Factors such as time of year, relationships between peers and teachers, and the learning environment are considered in each situation. The goal is to personalize each circumstance with appropriate staffing support so that students' learning experiences remain at the highest quality and effectiveness. Class sizes are continuously monitored and reviewed by campus principals and appropriate district staff.

### 3. First Day of Instruction

Texas Education Code Section §25.0811 prohibits the District from beginning instruction before the fourth Monday in August. The District has historically ended classes for the first semester before the Winter Break according to stakeholder input, to better align with college and university schedules in the area and to accommodate high school students taking dual credit courses. Late August start dates result in unbalanced semesters and are particularly challenging for students and teachers in single semester classes during the fall semester. Exempting TEC §25.0811 has allowed the District to develop more calendar options and increased local control and flexibility over the Humble ISD school year. All school calendars must be submitted to the Board of Trustees for final review and approval.

Allowing more flexibility in the school start date has provided the following benefits:

1. More balanced fall and spring semesters would be possible.
2. Single semester classes during the fall semester which more closely mirror the single semester class during the spring semester in instructional time.
3. Ending the fall semester in December and the spring semester in early June to support college and career readiness efforts by aligning with local college calendars.
4. Allowing more time earlier in the school year to provide students additional instructional days prior to standardized assessments such as STAAR, SAT, ACT, AP and IB exams.
5. More calendar options developed for review by stakeholders

### 4. Expanded Insurance Options for Employees

**NOTE: SB 1444 impacts existing laws included here. Humble ISD's current insurance offerings, DOI plan and exemption remain in full force and effect under the new law at this time.**

Texas Education Code Section 22.004(i) prohibits public school districts like Humble ISD that participate in the state's uniform group coverage program under Chapter 1579 of the Texas Insurance Code from making other group health coverage options available to employees. This statutory provision dictates that TRS-ActiveCare is the sole group insurance option that Humble ISD is permitted to offer to its employees, and prohibits the District from procuring other group health insurance packages on the open-market.

TRS-ActiveCare cannot tailor coverage and pricing to the Humble ISD community because the system must serve school districts across Texas, from major metroplexes to small rural communities.

Exemption from Section 22.004(i), and its implementing rules and regulations, is permitted pursuant to the District of Innovation procedures detailed in Texas Education Code Section 12A.004 and 19 Texas Administrative Code Section 102.1309 (both listing mandatory provisions that cannot be exempted through District of Innovation without including any mention of Section 22.004(i)). Exempting from Section 22.004(i), and its implementing rules and regulations, prioritizes local control and employee choice over a state-wide approach. Employees will be given the option of continuing with TRS-ActiveCare or enrolling in an alternate group health insurance program offered by Humble ISD. By allowing Humble ISD to procure additional health insurance options, companies must compete for the District's business and tailor coverage to the needs of Humble ISD's specific community. The goal is to provide better coverage choices at a lower cost so that employees may choose what is best for themselves and their families. Additional choice further allows the District to attract prospective employees by offering health insurance options not otherwise available under the state-wide plan.

## **5. 90% Attendance Rule**

Texas Education Code 25.092 requires students in Kindergarten through 12th grade to maintain at least 90% attendance of the days the class is offered in order to obtain credit or a final grade for a particular class. Humble ISD seeks to exempt from this provision in order for the District to implement a locally-developed attendance plan for students that further personalizes learning to their individual needs. For example, students enrolled in virtual learning may be counted "present" for purposes of attendance, earning class credit, and calculation of the average daily attendance outside of the traditional classroom environment and the required daily attendance time. Exempting from the 90% attendance rule more accurately reflects the flexible and personalized learning environment.

## **6. Designation Limit for Local Eligibility Criteria for At-Risk Students**

Texas Education Code 29.081 allows the Board of Trustees to adopt local eligibility criteria for students to be considered at risk of dropping out of school; however, Section 29.081(g) limits the number of students who may be designated as at risk to no more than 10% of the number of students defined under the same at-risk category in the proceeding school year. On August 10, 2021, the Humble ISD Board of Trustees revised Board Policy EHBC (Local) to include students struggling academically or emotionally, students struggling with health and safety concerns, and students who will not participate in in-person instruction. Humble ISD seeks an exception from the 10% limitation on designation of students under the District's local eligibility criteria in Section 29.081(g) so that the District can serve these students in the virtual learning model.