District of Innovation Plan

Huntsville Independent School District

Introduction

The 84th Legislative Session passed House Bill 1842, allowing Texas public school districts to become Districts of Innovation and thus permitting exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. In an effort to promote systematic improvement and allow for more local control, Huntsville ISD elected to become a District of Innovation. The current five year plan expires at the end of the 2025-2026 school year.

A district of innovation plan may be renewed if the action is approved by a majority vote of the District Advisory Council and a two-thirds majority vote of the board of trustees. The term of the designation as a district of innovation may not exceed 5 years.

District of Innovation Renewal Timeline

March/April/May/ June 2025	District level personnel will review and update the current District of Innovation plan.
June 2025	The Huntsville ISD District of Innovation plan will be posted on the district website for 30 days. A public meeting will be held prior to the District Advisory Council (DAC) meeting to review the plan. The DAC must pass the District of Innovation renewal plan by a majority vote.
December 2025	The Huntsville ISD Board of Trustees must approve the District of Innovation plan by a ⅔ majority vote.

District Advisory Council

Name:	Role:
Marcus D. Forney	Council Chairman
Glen Andrus	Business Representative
Michelle Black	Classroom Teacher
Wendi Britt	Paraprofessional
Richard Burns	Classroom Teacher
Julie Cooper	Parent
Christie Coy	Non-classroom Professional
Shiloh Crocker	Parent
Andy Graves	Business Representative
Christine Hill	Paraprofessional
Ashlyn Hooks	Parent
Gequetta Horton	Paraprofessional
Brittany Johnson	Paraprofessional
Naomi Krawzik	Parent
Micah Lehmkuhl	Parent
Corona Major	Paraprofessional
Jessica McDonald	Classroom Teacher
Thad Mitchell	District Level (Voting Member)
Deborah Rasberry	Classroom Teacher
Teresa Ruiz	Classroom Teacher
Cassie Scott	Classroom Teacher
Rebecca Sievert	Classroom Teacher
Tori Skinner	Classroom Teacher
Michelle Spencer	Community Representative

Carolyn Stivender	Non-classroom Professional
Danielle Tuttle	Classroom Teacher
Norma Vazquez	Community Representative
Myla Weber	Non-classroom Professional
Nicolaus Zeisig	Non-classroom Professional

Term

The term of the District of Innovation Plan, as outlined by the Texas Education Agency, is five years; therefore, the plan shall commence with the 2026-2027 academic year and conclude at the end of the 2030-2031 school year, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law.

Innovations

To meet district needs and address Board Goals, flexibility is required to exert local control, at both the District and campus levels to create the following benefits:

1. An academic calendar to address the needs of students (TEC §25.0811)
    - Allow students to enroll in college courses that start in early June.
    - Allow for flexible start and end dates.
    - Allow for more instructional time.

2. An innovative practice for addressing teacher certification so as to enhance any area of the curriculum (TEC §21.003)
    - Hire credentialed community college instructors/professors to teach dual credit courses which will allow more dual credit courses.
    - Hire professionals in certain trade and vocational areas to teach CTE courses (such as health science, HVAC, etc.) and expand our current CTE offerings.

House Bill 5 has added significant support for the need to expand college and career opportunities for students. However, this call for increased opportunities does not adequately accommodate the special challenges faced by school districts as they seek to find individuals with the education or work-related experience needed to adequately educate students in specialized areas of instruction.

Districts must often compete with industries that pay substantially more than education. In addition, industry professionals interested in education often face increased costs from participation in alternative certification programs. The individual qualifications would include demonstrated subject matter expertise, such as:

- Professional work experience.
- Formal training and education.
- Relevant industry license, certification, or registration.
- Any combination of work experience, training and education or industry credential related to the subject matter he or she will be teaching.

At the present time, Huntsville ISD would focus on academic and non-academic CTE courses.For example, a practitioner with expertise such as computer science coding may be able to provide relevant coursework on a part-time basis. A bachelor's degree would not be a requirement for CTE courses. Additionally, an elementary certified literacy specialist may be able to serve in a secondary school with struggling and non-readers.

In order to provide greater flexibility in staffing and ensure that students have access to high-quality instruction, the district seeks exemption from Texas Education Code §21.003, which requires educators to hold appropriate certification for the subject or grade level they are assigned to teach. By obtaining this exemption, the district may locally approve the assignment of uncertified teachers to teach non-foundational subjects (electives) when determined to be in the best interest of students. All such decisions will be made by campus administration in consultation with the superintendent and based on qualifications, professional experience, and instructional needs. This flexibility will help address staffing shortages, expand course offerings, and provide students with access to diverse perspectives and real-world knowledge.

All candidates would be carefully considered to ensure the individual has sufficient education and expertise to provide instruction necessary to meet the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for the course(s) to be taught.

Before issuing a school district teaching permit (SDTP) to an individual, the district would ensure that the individual completed the criminal background check in compliance with the State Board of Education (SBEC) rules. This would require the superintendent to certify to the board of trustees that the individual has undergone a criminal history background check and is capable of proper classroom management. In addition, the individual would be required to obtain a set number of hours in classroom management training. Any school district permit would only be valid in the Huntsville Independent School District.

To be eligible for an SDTP to teach in a core academic course assignment, an individual must have a bachelor's degree and demonstrate subject matter expertise.

Due to federal and state requirements districts cannot issue teaching permits under the DOI plan for the following areas:

1. **Bilingual Education**: Teachers in bilingual education programs must hold appropriate state certification to ensure effective instruction for students learning in two languages.

2. **English as a Second Language (ESL)**: ESL teachers are required to be certified to provide specialized instruction to students whose primary language is not English.

3. **Special Education**: Special education teachers must possess the necessary certification to address the diverse needs of students with disabilities. Dyslexia teachers are included in this certification category.

4. **Prekindergarten**: Teachers in prekindergarten programs are required to have specific certification to ensure quality early childhood education.

Teachers must adhere to the same professional standards, ethics, and requirements as all certified teachers, including 30 clock hours per year of continuing education.

CORE teachers permitted under the DOI provision will receive a certification plan to pursue appropriate credentials. The plan includes all teachers to obtain certification by the end of the 2026-2027 school year. This will give them a year to obtain their intern certificate and another year to obtain their standard certificate. The district applied for the Delay of Teacher Certification Requirements and the Board of Trustees approved the plan at the February 19, 2026 Board meeting.. The approved plan allows core teachers who are working on certification an extension until August 2029. These teachers are not eligible for Critical Needs stipends in SBEC areas where they lack certification.

Innovation : PROBATIONARY CONTRACTS	
Current State Requirement	-A person who is employed as a teacher by a school district for the first time, or who has not been employed by the district for two consecutive school years subsequent to August 28, 1967, shall be employed under a probationary contract. -All teachers that have been teaching in public education at least five of the last eight years prior to being employed by the district must be offered a term contract following one year on a probationary contract. *-Note: A "teacher" means a principal, supervisor, classroom teacher, school counselor or other full- time professional employee who is required to hold a certificate issued under TEC§21. Subchapter B.*
Texas Education Code:	**§21.102**
Challenge(s)	Current requirements do not always allow for sufficient time to effectively evaluate the full range of skills and abilities of a teacher. Teachers may be limited in the time provided for them to demonstrate improvement in their teaching and instructional delivery.
District Recommendation	Provide all new teachers, in good standing, with a second year of probationary status (probationary contract) to allow enough time to effectively evaluate the full range of their skills and abilities.

Removal of Unwanted Visitors Without a Warning (TEC 37.105)

Texas Education Code §37.105 governs the removal of disruptive individuals from school campuses and events. In 2017, the Texas Legislature revised the law to clarify the process for ejecting unruly guests, including parents and community members (excluding students). According to the law, an individual must first receive a warning before being removed, and they must be informed of their right to appeal the decision.

However, Huntsville ISD grants designated staff (campus and district administrators) the authority to remove parents or visitors from district property or school events without prior warning or written notice if their behavior is deemed inappropriate.

Grievance procedures to promote the efficient and timely resolution of concerns (TEC 26A.001(a)-(c), (e); TEC 26A.002; TEC 26A.003; TEC 26.011)

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The District seeks to resolve issues equitably, timely and at the lowest level possible.
TEC 26A.001(a)-(c), (e), 26A.002, and 26A.003 requires the District to adopt a grievance policy. This policy, among other things, significantly extends the timelines currently provided for under the district grievance policies.
The District believes its current grievance policies are effective and achieve the goals of resolving complaints.
The District will not adopt a new policy contemplated under TEC 26A but will continue to process complaints pursuant to its currently adopted grievance policies.

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Rationale for DOI Plan Addendum – Grievance Policy

Senate Bill 12, enacted during the 89th Texas Legislative Session and effective September 1, 2025, established TEC Chapter 26A, which changed the required timelines for school district grievance procedures. These changes significantly extended the timelines previously established in Huntsville ISD's grievance policy.

HISD is proposing this addendum to reinstate the district's previous grievance policy and timelines through its District of Innovation Plan. The intent is to provide a more timely and responsive process for addressing concerns, promote timely resolution, and better meet the needs of our parents, patrons, and staff while maintaining a fair and consistent grievance process.