



Hitchcock ISD

District of Innovation Plan

Introduction

House Bill 1842, created and passed during the 84th Texas Legislative Session in Spring 2015, provides a unique opportunity for Texas public school districts to exempt themselves from some parts of the Texas Education Code. In order to do this, a public school district must adopt an innovation plan, as set forth in Texas Education Code Chapter 12 A.

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

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

District of Innovation Committee Members

Kellie Edmundson, Crosby Middle School

Patrick Faour, Assessment and Accountability

Ethel Gaines, Kids First Head Start

Laurie Gilcrease, Hitchcock High School

Evangelina Guerra, Curriculum and Instruction

Sharanda Harrison, Human Resources

LaDonna Landry, Hitchcock High School

Donette Line, Stewart Elementary School

Angela Mancini, Hitchcock Primary School

Adrianna Ricard, Hitchcock Primary School

Sara Roach, Special Programs

Shannon Robertson, Stewart Elementary School

Ericka Ross, Crosby Middle School

Carla Vickroy, Superintendent

Nancy Wolffard, Kids First Head Start

District of Innovation Process and Timeline

December 2017	Regular Board meeting overview presented; Board Resolution; Superintendent delegated to appoint committee
January 2018	Members of Planning Committee named
January 24, 2018	First committee meeting to educate the committee about the benefits and responsibilities of a District of Innovation
February 27, 2018	Second committee meeting to discuss the needs of Hitchcock ISD and begin formation of the Hitchcock ISD District of Innovation Plan
March/April 2018	Plan posted for review on district website for 30 days; Notify TEA of Intent to Vote – Board of Trustees will notify the Commissioner of Education intention to vote on the proposed plan; DAC committee will hold a public meeting to consider the final plan and will approve by majority vote.
May 2018	Board of Trustees votes on the Plan; upon approval of the Plan, Hitchcock ISD will be designated as a District of Innovation and will begin operation in accordance with the Plan; Texas Education Agency Commissioner will be notified; form will be completed and submitted

Term

Hitchcock ISD will be recognized as a District of Innovation for a term of five years, renewable within six months of the plan's expiration date of May 2023. If, within the term of the plan, other areas of operations are to be considered for flexibility as part of HB 1842, the Superintendent will appoint a committee to consider and propose additional exemptions in the form of an amendment. Hitchcock ISD will not implement two separate plans at any one time.

Innovation Plan

Hitchcock ISD proposes flexibility and seeks an exemption in the following areas:

Flexible Calendar/Start Date	
Texas Education Code §25.0811	EB(LLEGAL)
Rationale: Texas Education Code states that a school district may not begin student instruction before the 4 th Monday in August. This forces the district into a calendar that has minimal opportunity for teacher professional development, causes shortened grading periods when the first semester ends in December, and provides negligible times for summer school before state mandated assessment re-takes in the summer.	
Proposed Innovation: To best serve the students in Hitchcock ISD, we will move the school start date for students to no earlier than the second week in August. Starting earlier will allow for creative scheduling that allows for more intentional teacher professional development throughout the school year and also allows students to have a schedule that is more conducive to their learning.	

Minimum Teacher Service Required	
Texas Education Code §21.401	DC(LLEGAL)
Rationale: Currently, districts are required to provide teachers with contracts that are a minimum of 10 months and 187 days. This law inhibits the District's ability to manipulate teacher contract days to accommodate a flexible school calendar. Under the current law, teachers would be required to attend professional development days after the last day of instruction in order to meet the 187 requirement. The district feels that professional development at the end of a school year is not likely to be productive.	
Proposed Innovation: The district would like to have the flexibility to adjust the number of teacher contract days to accommodate the calendar set by the DEIC and school board each year. With the change in the law from required number of instructional days to required number of minutes, and by exempting laws regarding school start and end dates, the required minutes of instruction can be achieved in less than the normal 180 (or 177 with PD waiver) school days, requiring students to attend less actual days. Subsequently, with less days of instruction, teachers could get more PD days and still not have a need to work a total of 187 days. Since we plan to increase the number of minutes of instruction per day, teachers will have a longer work day. The district would like the ability to modify the number of teacher contract days in the future to compensate for teachers working more time each day.	

Highly Qualified Teachers	
Texas Education Code §21.003, §21.053, §21.057(A-E)	DBA(LLEGAL), DBA(LOCAL), DK(LLEGAL), DK(LOCAL), DK(EXHIBIT)
<p>Rationale:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the event a certified teacher cannot be hired for a position or a teacher is assigned to a subject outside his/her certification, the district must submit an emergency certification/exception/waiver to TEA. • Many of the career pathways set forth by HB 5 require very specialized certification. The current laws limit the District’s ability to hire teachers for hard-to-fill, high demand career and technical courses when quality certified teachers are not available. • Proposed TAC Rule (§231.611) states that individuals assigned to deliver content instruction in a special education setting must be certified in special education and the specific content area being taught. The proposed rule change compounds the current critical staffing shortage area of special education teachers. 	
<p>Proposed Innovation:</p> <p>Hitchcock ISD Human Resources Department will submit a written request for approval to fill a teaching position to the Superintendent or designee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. For a certified teacher to teach a subject area out of his/her certified field 2. For a degreed, non-certified professional with career/industry experience to teach a CTE subject within his/her area of expertise 3. For a certified special education teacher to address the special education needs of students while receiving support from teachers with appropriate content knowledge <p>The written request will outline the reason for the request and it will document the credentials the recommended teacher possesses which qualify him/her to teach the subject. In addition, the written request must be submitted to the Superintendent or designee for approval prior to recommending to the Board of Trustees.</p> <p>Exemption from the Texas Education Codes would enrich the applicant pools for Career Technical Education content areas and Special Education positions. Our secondary students will obtain the educational benefits of CTE course offerings because of the District’s flexibility to hire skilled professionals in certain trades and vocations; and our special needs population will continue to benefit from qualified special education teachers.</p>	

Professional Development	
Texas Education Code §21.451, §21.458	DMA(LEGAL) and DEAA(LEGAL)
<p>Rationale: Currently, the district is required to implement state-mandated professional development that may not be beneficial to our staff needs. The state currently sets eligibility requirements for teacher mentors and mentees. This provision states that the district may only assign a mentor to a teacher with less than two years of teaching experience, even though a teacher at any level of experience may benefit from a mentor-mentee relationship.</p>	
<p>Proposed Innovation: With Hitchcock ISD's student population, educators must be well equipped to meet the diverse learning needs of each student. The District seeks to exercise local discretion in both providing professional development to teachers and in assigning teachers to serve as mentors based on a variety of factors, including experience, knowledge, and areas of instruction targeted for improvement for innovation.</p>	

T-TESS	
Texas Education Code §21.352	DNA(LEGAL), DNA(LOCAL)
<p>Rationale: The commissioner shall adopt a recommended appraisal process and criteria on which to appraise the performance of teachers. The criteria must be based on observable, job-related behavior that includes the performance of teachers' students.</p>	
<p>Proposed Innovation: Hitchcock ISD District and Campus Improvement Committees would like the flexibility to adopt and support a locally-developed teacher appraisal system that can be used in place of T-TESS. The newly developed instrument will not include a student growth measure, nor will it require annual on-line certification for appraisers.</p>	

Class Size	
Texas Education Code §25.112, §25.113	EEB(LEGAL)
<p>Rationale: A 22 to 1 student/teacher ratio is required by State law for Kindergarten to 4th grade classes. When a class exceeds this limit, the district must complete and file a waiver with the Texas Education Agency, and the district must notify parents of waivers to class size limits.</p>	
<p>Proposed Innovation: Hitchcock ISD is in a state of growth and in recent years a class size waiver to TEA has been required. Based on our observations, we believe it is not the number of students but the relationship of the teacher to students and make-up of the classroom which most directly influence the learning environment. Hitchcock ISD will continuously monitor enrollment at the elementary campuses. When each teacher in a grade level has 25 students, an additional teacher will be added. A TEA waiver will not be submitted, however, the Superintendent will report enrollment to the Board of Trustees. Additionally, parents will be informed of all efforts relative to class size.</p>	

Minimum Seat Time	
Texas Education Code §25.092	FEC(LEGAL) and FEC(LOCAL)
<p>Rationale: The law currently requires the District to award credit by “seat time” instead of by mastery. Exemption from this requirement will provide educational advantages to students by promoting engaged learning through innovative methods, locations, and times for instruction, thereby accommodating students with legitimate scheduling conflicts, reducing dropouts, and increasing the number of qualifying graduates. Students taking traditional courses not impacted by this exemption would still be required to meet the 90% (or higher as set by the District) attendance requirement as it currently exists.</p>	
<p>Proposed Innovation: Counselors, administrators, and teachers will continue to work with parents and students to assure that students are attending school and adhering to Compulsory Attendance requirements. The District of Innovation Committee believes that students should be awarded credit when mastery of content has been achieved. There are extenuating circumstances when students need to miss school but are keeping up with work. There are also at-risk students who miss for a variety of reasons. Being required to make up hours via seat time with no direct instruction is counterproductive with limited educational benefit. The District would like to work with these students in innovative ways so that learning and mastery is connected to real world application. An attendance committee would still convene on an individual basis to determine an appropriate response for each student. Flexibility in this area does not alter a teacher’s right to assign a student’s final grade or exempt a student from any UIL rules.</p>	

School Day Interruptions	
Texas Education Code §25.083	EC(LEGAL)
<p>Rationale: The current law prohibits the District from removing a student from class for remedial tutoring or test preparation.</p>	
<p>Proposed Innovation: With the amount of emphasis placed on state testing, and the struggle to help students earn required credits, and prepare them for state assessments, the District would greatly benefit from the exemption of this rule. Hitchcock ISD seeks exemption from the provision requiring no more than 10 percent of the school day for tutorials allowing campuses to make scheduling decisions that best meet the needs of our students. Decisions on how to spend each day should be the sole purview of the campus/district—not the state. There are times, for example, when more than 10% of a child’s day should be spent in tutoring. Each campus will greatly benefit from the ability to schedule students in coursework and intervention as deemed necessary by the campus staff.</p>	

Designation of Campus Behavioral Support Personnel	
Texas Education Code §37.0012	FO(LLEGAL)
<p>Rationale: Senate Bill 107 requires the designation of a Campus Behavior Coordinator on each campus. This person is responsible for maintaining student discipline and the implementation of Chapter 37, Subchapter A.</p>	
<p>Proposed Innovation: Hitchcock ISD believes in a collaborative approach to discipline, with multiple people providing emotional social support to students, rather than just one person. All campus principals and assistant principals handle student discipline. Each campus administrator will serve as a Campus Behavior Coordinator in regard to student discipline, as outlined in the Hitchcock ISD Student Code of Conduct.</p>	

DEIC/CIIC Parameters	
Texas Education Code §11.251, §11.252 and §11.253	BQ(LLEGAL), BQA(LLEGAL), BQA(LOCAL), BQB(LLEGAL) and BQB(LOCAL)
<p>Rationale: Hitchcock ISD has a strong history of involving teachers, administrators, parents, community members and students in the decision making process. We are committed to maintaining that same level of engagement with our stakeholders. It is our intent to align our District Improvement Plan to the vision, mission, beliefs and goals that these same stakeholders have developed and embraced as the key drivers for our district planning and decision-making structure.</p>	
<p>Proposed Innovation: Hitchcock ISD proposes to return Site Based Decision Making back to the local district by allowing the local district to determine the makeup of the committee and which decisions will be referred to the committee, except those prescribed by law.</p>	