



HENDERSON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

DISTRICT OF INNOVATION PLAN

*HB 1842, of the 84th Legislative Session,
allows Texas districts to qualify as a District of Innovation.
Districts of Innovation are able to gain local control of certain operations
that are currently under the control of the Texas Education Agency.*

INTRODUCTION

The 84th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2015, passed HB 1842, allowing eligible Texas school districts to be designated Districts of Innovation. In accordance with 19 TAC §102.1303, Henderson ISD is eligible to be designated a District of Innovation as the District's most recent performance rating under TEC §39.054 is "Met Standard" therefore representing acceptable performance.

Districts of Innovation are able to gain local control and obtain exemption from certain operations of the Texas Education Code (TEC). Henderson ISD believes that this Comprehensive Local Innovation Plan will allow our local Board of Trustees and district staff to make decisions based on the unique needs of our students and community.

DISTRICT OF INNOVATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Central Office

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Campus Teachers

Lisa Lybrand – HHS
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Brooke Kinsman – HMS
Kaysie Sabella – NS
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Melissa Jones – WPS

Campus Administration

Terry Everitt – HHS
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Michelle Walker – WES
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Parents and Community Members

Casi Dickerson
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UNIFORM SCHOOL START DATE

(TEC 25.0811a)

Currently

TEC 25.0811a requires that a school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August.

Problems

1. Henderson ISD teachers and administrators prefer to end the semester before the winter break. Doing so causes the first semester of the school year to have fewer days than the second semester.
2. The state required uniform school start date pushes the end of the school year into June.
3. Under the 2016-2017 school calendars, the majority of professional development is held in August. Henderson ISD teachers and administrators would prefer it throughout the year.
4. There is a need to maximize instructional time before administering state assessments.
5. The current school calendar does not align with Dual-Credit College Courses.

Proposed

Henderson ISD will begin classes no earlier than August 1st in order to balance semesters and allow for meaningful staff development throughout the school year. This flexibility will provide more instructional days before scheduled state assessments, more closely align with the Fall, Spring, and Summer semesters of local colleges and universities, and will better meet the needs of our local community.

KINDERGARTEN – GRADE 4 CLASS SIZE RATIO

(TEC 25.112; TEC 25.113)

Currently

TEC 25.112 requires districts to maintain a class size of 22 students or less for Kindergarten – Fourth Grade classes.

TEC 25.113 requires district to notify parents of waivers or exceptions to class size limits.

Kindergarten – Fourth Grade classes are to be kept at a 22 student to 1 teacher ratio according to state law. When a class exceeds this limit, the district must complete a waiver with the Texas Education Agency. These waivers are never rejected by TEA.

Problems

1. Applying for a waiver that is never rejected is a bureaucratic process.
2. Along with the waiver, it is required that a letter is sent home to each parent in the class that exceeds the 22:1 ratio, informing parents the waiver has been submitted. Many times soon after the waiver is submitted, students move out of the district and Henderson ISD again meets the 22:1 ratio.

Proposed

1. Hiring decisions will be based on projected 22:1 ratios.
2. Henderson ISD will, to the extent possible, begin each school year with enough teachers to establish a homeroom student to teacher ratio of 22:1 per Kindergarten- Grade 4 homeroom class.
3. In the event a single grade level in grade Kindergarten –Grade 4 increases its overall enrollment by a total of ten students (number of sections x 22 students + 10), the District will begin actively seeking an additional teacher in order to maintain a 22:1 ratio in all classrooms.
4. A teacher may be hired at any time during the school year if the Superintendent determines it to be in the best interest of the students to do so.
5. A TEA waiver requests and related notifications shall not be necessary when a Kindergarten-4th classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio.

PROBATIONARY CONTRACTS

(TEC 21.102b)

Currently

TEC §21.102b states that a probationary contract 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 with the district.

Problems

This period of time is not sufficient to evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom since teacher contract timelines demand that employment decisions must be made prior to the availability of end of year classroom and student data.

Proposed

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 from the last date of district employment.

TEACHER CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

(TEC 21.003a; TEC 21.053; TEC 21.057)

Currently

TEC 21.003(a) states that a person may not be employed as a teacher by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued by the appropriate state agency. In the event a district cannot locate a certified teacher for a position or a teacher is teaching subject outside of their certification, the district must request emergency certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or State Board of Educator Certification. This system is burdensome and does not take into account the unique financial and/or instructional needs of the district.

TEC 21.053 requires a teacher to present his or her certificate to the District before their employment contract will be binding, and prohibits the District from paying an educator for teacher if the educator does not hold a valid certificate at the time.

TEC 21.057 requires that the District provide written notice to parents if an inappropriately or uncertified teacher is assigned to a classroom for more than 30 consecutive instructional days.

Problems

Rural, high poverty districts have difficulty filling positions with quality instructors, especially in subjects where state-wide shortages exist. 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 request emergency/local certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or State Board of Educator Certification. TEA then approves or denies this request. This system is burdensome and does not take into account the unique financial and/or instructional needs of the district. Furthermore, there have been instances when persons meeting the criteria outlined in TEC 21.057 have been denied local certification because they were actively, yet unnecessarily, pursuing an alternative certification. Additionally, highly qualified standards/notifications have been removed from federal requirements under repeal of the NCLB Act.

Proposed

The district will maintain its current expectations for employee certification and will make every attempt to hire individuals with appropriate certifications for the position in question. However, when that is not reasonably possible, the district will have the flexibility to hire individuals who are knowledgeable in the area and equipped to effectively perform the duties of the position in question. Henderson ISD would like the ability to issue District Teaching Permits (local certification) in areas of high demand to better meet the educational needs of our students.

1. In order to best serve Henderson ISD students, all decisions on teacher certification and assignments will be handled locally.
2. The campus principal may submit to the Superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach one subject in a related field for which he/she is not certified.
 - a. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials the certified teacher possesses that would qualify this individual to teach the subject/field of study.
 - b. Emergency or financial situations creating the need for this assignment should also be noted.

3. Henderson ISD will allow District Teaching Permits (local certification) based on skills and experiences outside the traditional teacher certification pathway.
 - a. An individual with certain qualifications who is not certified as a teacher can be eligible to teach in hard to fill positions including, but not limited to, TEA approved shortage areas such as special education, mathematics, science, Languages Other than English (LOTE), Career & Technical Education (CTE), etc.
 - b. A person seeking District Teaching Permit (local certification) should have the abilities and related knowledge/experience to fulfil the requirements of the position.
 - c. The principal may submit to the superintendent and/or the superintendent's designee, a request for District Teaching Permit (local certification) outlining all the individual's credentials/qualifications.
 - d. Qualifications that may be considered include but are not limited to:
 - i. Professional work experience;
 - ii. Formal training and education;
 - iii. Active professional relevant industry certification or registration;
 - iv. Combination of work experience, training, and education; and/or
 - v. Demonstration of successful experience working with students.
 - e. The superintendent or his/her designee will then approve the request if they believe the individual possesses the knowledge, skills and experience required of the position and feel the individual could be an asset to students.
 - f. An employee working under a District Teaching Permit (local certification) will not receive a contract but will work on an at-will basis and have a separate pay scale from state certified teachers. The separate pay scale for those teaching under a District Teaching Permit (local certification) will not exceed the Henderson ISD teacher salary schedule.
 - g. Determinations shall be made on a case-by-case basis.
4. A teacher certification waiver, state permit applications, notifications, or other paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency or other district stakeholders.
5. An employee working under a District Teaching Permit (local certification) will adhere to the same professional standards, ethics, and requirements of all certified teachers.
6. An employee working under a District Teaching Permit (local certification) will be appraised under the same teacher appraisal system as required of all certified teachers.
7. Henderson ISD will notify parents if a teacher working under a District Teaching Permit (local certification) is employed for their child's class.

EXPELLING STUDENTS FROM DAEP

(TEC 37.007c; TEC 37.010b)

Currently

State law requires that a student placed in a DAEP who engages in documented serious misbehavior while on the DAEP campus despite documented behavioral interventions may be removed from class and expelled. "Serious misbehavior" includes:

1. Deliberate violent behavior that poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others;
2. Extortion, meaning the gaining of money or other property by force or threat;
3. Conduct that constitutes coercion, as defined by Penal Code 1.07; or
4. Conduct that constitutes the offense of:
 - a. Public lewdness under Penal Code 21.07;
 - b. Indecent exposure under Penal Code 21.08;
 - c. Criminal mischief under Penal Code 28.03;
 - d. Personal hazing under Penal Code 37.152; or
 - e. Harassment, under Penal Code 42.07(a)(1), of a student or district employee.

If the student is expelled, the board or its designee refers the student to the authorized officer of the juvenile court for appropriate proceedings under Family Code Title 3 (Juvenile Justice Code).

Problems

The Texas Education Code makes no allowance for students whose persistent misbehavior disrupts instruction and is detrimental to the educational environment to be expelled.

Proposed

1. A student placed in a District Alternative Educational Program (DAEP) who engages in documented serious misbehavior (as defined above) while on the DAEP campus, despite documented behavioral interventions, may be removed from class and expelled.
2. A student placed in a DAEP who engages in documented persistent misbehavior while on the DAEP campus, despite documented behavioral interventions, may be removed from class and expelled.

CAMPUS BEHAVIOR COORDINATOR

(TEC 37.0012)

Currently

TEC 37.0012 requires that a person be designated to serve as the campus behavior coordinator (CBC) who is primarily responsible for maintaining student discipline and implementation of Chapter 37 and allows duties imposed on a campus principal or other campus administrator to be performed by the campus behavior coordinator.

Problems

1. This requirement inhibits social and emotional learning because it restricts the District's ability to promote a more collaborative discipline program that provides social and emotional supports to students.
2. It takes the control of the discipline plan out of the principal's control and does not take into consideration situations where discipline is handled by multiple assistant principals.

Proposed

The proposal is for the District to abstain from the state requirement that each school have a designated campus behavior coordinator in order for the district to promote the social and emotional learning of its students and foster the connection between actions and consequences. This will allow for more collaborative behavior management programs that have the support and buy-in of the students and local community.

STUDENT TRANSFERS

(TEC 25.036)

Currently

Under TEC 25.036 a transfer is interpreted to be for a period of one school year.

Henderson ISD maintains a transfer policy 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, and attendance records are also evaluated. Transfer students are expected to follow the attendance requirements, rules and regulations of the District.

Problems

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. Because of these situations, Henderson ISD seeks exemption from the one year transfer commitment.

Proposed

The District is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one year commitment in accepting transfer applicants.

1. Nonresident students who have been accepted as inter-district transfer 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.
2. In addition, students not meeting the required 90 percent attendance standard may also be subject to immediate revocation of the transfer status.