

# CHESTER

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT



## Local Innovation Plan 2017-2021

HB 1842, of the 84<sup>th</sup> 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.

RESOLUTION

RESOLUTION TO INITIATE THE PROCESS OF EXPLORING THE OPTION OF  
DESIGNATING CHESTER INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT AS A  
DISTRICT OF INNOVATION

**Whereas**, the 84th Legislature passed House Bill 1842 which provides Texas public school districts the opportunity to be designated as Districts of Innovation; and

**Whereas**, Texas school districts designated as a District of Innovation may be exempted from a number of state requirements which affords traditional public schools with many of the same freedoms that apply to open-enrollment charter schools; and

**Whereas**, the vision of Chester Independent School District is to produce students who are progressive, independent, collaborative, open, determined, and well-rounded; and this legislation empowers local communities to be creative and innovative, while also providing greater local control in the decision-making process; and

**Whereas**, the Board of Trustees believes that decisions affecting the students of Chester Independent School District are best made at the local level by those who know our students, district, and community; and

**Whereas**, the Chester Independent School District Board of Trustees has adopted a strategic plan that supports customization and innovation; and

**Whereas**, HB 1842 requires districts seeking to be designated as a District of Innovation to develop a local innovation plan that allows for increased freedom from certain state mandates; and

**Whereas**, the Chester Independent School District Board of Trustees will hold a public hearing and receive feedback from stakeholders to consider the development of a local innovation plan; following the public hearing, the Board of Trustees may decline to pursue the designation or may appoint a committee to develop a plan in accordance with chapter 12A of the Texas Education Code; now therefore, be it

**Resolved**, that the Chester Independent School District Board of Trustees initiates the process of exploring and considering the option of designating HJISD as a District of Innovation under HB 1842.

**Witness** these signatures on the 27th day of March, 2017.



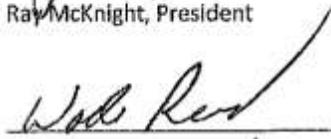
Ray McKnight, President



Steve Havis, Vice-President



Sheryl Barnes, Secretary



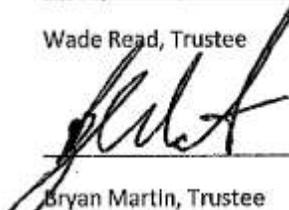
Wade Read, Trustee



Dr. Jake David, Trustee



Josh Clarke, Trustee



Bryan Martin, Trustee



Cory Hines, Superintendent

# TIMELINE OF EVENTS

## **Monday, March 13, 2017 – Chester High School**

*Meeting with administrative staff to discuss benefits of becoming a District of Innovation.*

## **Monday, March 27, 2017 – Chester High School**

*Board of Trustees approval of a resolution to hold a public hearing to discuss the possibility of using HB 1842 to be designated a District of Innovation {TEC 12A.001 (c)(1)}*

## **Monday, May 15, 2017 – Chester ISD Board Room**

*Public hearing to explain the process of becoming a District of Innovation and the hear from the community. {TEC 12A.002 (b)(2), 12A.003}*

*Board of Trustees approval to pursue the designation of District of Innovation, and the appointment of a committee to develop a plan. {TEC 12A.002(b)(2), 12A.003}*

## **Thursday, May 18, 2017 – Chester ISD Board Room**

*Initial meeting of the District of Innovation Committee*

## **Thursday, May 25, 2017 – Chester ISD Board Room**

*Second meeting of the District of Innovation Committee*

## **Friday, May 26, 2017 – Chester ISD Board Room**

*Draft District of Innovation Plan posted to the CISD website for 30 days {TEC 12A.005 (a)(1)}*

## **Tuesday, May 30, 2017 – 8:00 am**

*Commissioner notified of Board's intent to vote on the District of Innovation Plan*

## **Thursday, June 8, 2017 – Chester ISD Board Room**

*District Leadership Team Public Meeting {TEC 12A.005(a)(3)}*

*Approval of Final Plan by District Leadership Team*

## **Friday, June 9, 2017 – 10:00am**

*Finalized District of Innovation Plan posted to the CISD website for 30 days {TEC 12A005(a)(1)}*

## **Monday, July 17, 2017 – Chester ISD Board Room**

*Board Approval of the District of Innovation Plan by at least a 2/3 majority {TEC 12A.005(a)(1)}*

*District of Innovation Plan sent to Commissioner {TEC 12A.005 (a)(2)}*

# DISTRICT OF INNOVATION COMMITTEE

NAME	COMMITTEE POSITION
SHERYL BARNES	BOARD OF TRUSTEES REPRESENTATIVE
CORY HINES	SUPERINTENDENT
BRANDI HAVARD	CHESTER ISD PRINCIPAL
DEWAYNE ARMSTRONG	CHESTER HIGH SCHOOL
BECKY BYRD	HEALTH/SHAC REPRESENTATIVE
SUSAN GRIMES	CHESTER ELEMENTARY
STACEY READ	PARENT/COMMUNITY MEMBER
KRISTY MARTIN	PARENT/COMMUNITY MEMBER

# CISD INNOVATION PLAN

## INTRODUCTION

House Bill (HB) 1842, passed during the 84th Legislative Session, 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.

## TERM

The term of the Plan is for five years, beginning August 1, 2017 and ending July 31, 2021, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. If, within the term of this Plan, other areas of operations are to be considered for flexibility as part of HB 1842, the Board will appoint a new committee to consider and propose additional exemptions in the form of an amendment to the Plan. Any amendment adopted by the Board will not extend the term of this Plan. The District may not implement two separate plans at any one time.

## 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 any state agency or entity, including but not limited to the Commissioner of Education, Texas Education Agency, State Board for Educator Certification, and State Board of Education.

### **1. School Start and End Date**

*Exemption from: TEC §25.0811; TEC §25.0812*

*Related Board Policies: EB LEGAL*

#### ***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 4th Monday of August. TEC 25.0812 states that a school district may not schedule the last day of school before May 15. 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 community interests in this matter.*

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

### **Innovation Strategies**

- a. Relief from the statute will allow CISD to develop a calendar that addresses student instruction and focused professional development in conjunction with the new instructional minutes requirement, rather than days.
- b. Alignment of the district calendar with local universities, advanced placement exams, and STAAR timelines.
- c. Provide for increased local control of the instructional calendar in order to be responsive to community needs.

## **2. Instructional Minutes / Length of Instructional Day / Early Release Days**

*Exemption from: TEC 25.081*

*Relevant Board Policies: EB LEGAL*

### ***Manner in 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 natural disaster or 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**

- a. CISD seeks relief from this statute in order to build staff development that more align with the needs of our students and staff. Professional days will be inserted based on anticipated data received from local assessments and also at the end of grading periods to appropriately plan for upcoming lessons.
- b. The district seeks additional flexibility to schedule early release days in the calendar in order to provide for student and district needs.

## **3. Kindergarten – Grade 4 Class Size Reporting Requirement**

*Exemption from: TEC 25.112; TEC 25.113*

*Related Board Policies: EEB LEGAL/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 for Kindergarten – 4th Grade classes. When any class exceeds this limit, the district must complete and file a waiver with the Texas Education Agency. 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:***

- a. CISD believes in a low student to teacher ratio in all of its classrooms. The District has a goal of 18:1 in K-4 and 22:1 in 5-12. CISD will 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 school 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 individual teachers and student groups, and the availability of additional instructional staff members.
  
- b. A TEA waiver request will not be filed when a K-4 classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio.
  
- c. Parents of students in K-4 classrooms that exceed a ratio of 22:1 will continued to be notified as per TEC 25.113.

**4. Teacher Certification**

*Exemption from: TEC §21.003; TEC §21.053; TEC §21.055; TEC §21.057*

*Relevant Board Policies: DBA LEGAL/LOCAL; DK LEGAL/LOCAL*

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

*TEC 21.003 states that a person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern or trainee, librarian, educational aide, administrator, educational diagnostician, or school counselor 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 a subject outside of their certification, the district must request emergency certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or State Board for 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 teaching if the educator does not hold a valid certificate at the time.*

*TEC 21.055 states that if a teacher is not certified, the District may issue a teaching permit to employ the individual. This process requires notice to the Commissioner and its usefulness is extremely limited. Additionally, the language of this section could be construed to prohibit the issuance of a local teaching certificate.*

*TEC 21.057 requires that the District provide written notice to parents if an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher is assigned to a classroom for more than 20 consecutive instructional days.*

### **Innovation Strategies**

a. The District will maintain its current expectations for employee certification. The District will make every attempt to hire individuals with 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 equipped to effectively perform the duties of the position in question.

b. For grades 5-12, the campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request for 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 what credentials or life experience the teacher possesses that would qualify this individual to teach the proposed subject.

c. 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. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials or life experience the teacher possesses that would qualify this individual to teach the proposed subject.

d. Whenever possible, instructional planning for the uncertified teacher's 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.

e. The superintendent will report this action to the Board of Trustees at the first board meeting following the assignment.

f. Teacher certification 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.

