



Hamlin Collegiate Independent School District



Local Innovation Plan Renewed Spring 2021

Background

The 84th Texas Legislature passed House Bill 1842 which allows public school districts to declare exemptions from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code by becoming a designated District of Innovation. Hamlin Collegiate ISD became designated as a District of Innovation in March of 2017. On Monday March 15, 2021, a discussion was conducted to consider whether Hamlin Collegiate ISD should renew the plan for designation as a District of Innovation. The Board held a public meeting and adopted a resolution to move forward. The Local Innovation Committee reviewed and revised the Local Innovation Plan adding one exemption. The plan was posted online for public viewing and feedback on March 17, 2021 and remained online until April 15, 2021 when the Local Innovation Committee met to review the plan and community feedback. The final version of the plan was presented at a Public Hearing at 4:00 on April 19, 2021. The District Advisory Committee voted to approve the plan with a 11-0 vote. With a majority of committee members voting in the affirmative, the plan moved on for final vote of the Hamlin Collegiate ISD Board of Trustees. On April 19, 2021 the Board of Trustees reviewed and approved the plan with 7-0 vote.

Local Innovation Committee

Matt Pond, Dean of Secondary Education
Randy Burks, Superintendent
Katrina Bogle, Dean of College Readiness
Lauri Pond, Dean of Academics
Rosie Lucas, Secondary Teacher
Jori VanCleave, Secondary Teacher

Michelle Jones, Dean of Elementary Education
Kristi Byerly, Elementary Teacher
Tammy Clawson, Elementary Teacher
Katy Sepeda, Elementary Teacher
Shalaina Hall, Elementary Teacher
Ryne Lucas, SpEd Teacher

District Advisory Committee

Matt Pond, Dean of Secondary Education
Randy Burks, Superintendent
Katrina Bogle, Dean of College Readiness
Lauri Pond, Dean of Academics
Jason Botos, Secondary Teacher
Jamie Woods, Secondary Teacher
Cindy Hastings, Secondary Counselor
Jeremy West, Assoc Dean Secondary Education

Michelle Jones, Dean of Elementary Education
Paula Rodgers, Elementary Teacher
Katy Sepeda, Elementary Teacher
Russell Lucas, Athletic Director
Troy Harper, Business Member
Irma Castillo, HS Parent
Brittany Arce – ES Parent

Hamlin ISD Board of Trustees

Mason VanCleave, President
Dan Byerly, Vice-President
Norman Pond, Member
Jerry Woods, Member

Luke Shoemaker, Member
Jennifer Prater, Member
Kendon Gruben, Member

HCISD Mission Statement

The mission of Hamlin Collegiate ISD is to build a strong foundation that will motivate students to grow, learn and conquer the challenges they will face in tomorrow's world.

HCISD Vision

Hamlin Collegiate ISD will be a high-performing district of choice that connects students to a productive and rewarding future.

Hamlin Collegiate Independent School District Goals for Student Learning

To demonstrate that they are learning everything necessary to successfully assume the various roles of productive American adults:

Goal 1. Hamlin students will remain in school until graduation. (Attain an overall dropout rate of zero).

Goal 2. Hamlin students will attend school every day unless legitimately hindered.
(Maintain an ADA of 97%)

Goal 3. Hamlin students will exhibit exemplary academic performance in reading/ ELA, writing, mathematics, science and social studies. (90% or better)

Goal 4. Hamlin students will manifest respect and care for all others; will attend school in a safe, disciplined and drug-free environment that is conducive to learning; and be provided an educational setting which meets their social and emotional needs.

Goal 5. Hamlin students and staff will increase their knowledge and use of technology.

Goal 6. Parents of Hamlin students will be partners with the district in the education of their children.

Texas Education Code Exemptions

District staff in conjunction with the Local Innovation Committee reviewed the subchapters of the Texas Education Code to determine which permissible exemptions currently inhibit the district from maximizing the educational opportunities of the students who attend Hamlin Collegiate ISD.

Uniform Start Date (TEC §25.0811)

State law currently prohibits school districts from starting class before the fourth Monday in August, unless they are year-round districts.

Rationale for Exemption

The flexibility of the start date allows the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of the students, the school, and the community. In addition, this flexibility allows the district to better align its starting date to accommodate the start date of colleges that the district uses for dual credit courses. Additionally, the ability to change the school start date can also help to better balance the amount of days in each semester, and this would ensure more instructional days prior to end of the year testing.

Length of School Day (TEC §25.081)

State law currently requires that all school days must be 420 minutes long each day in order to count for ADA calculations and funding purposes, and to accumulate instructional minutes towards the 75,600 minutes required annually.

Rationale for Exemption

An exemption from the 420-minute day requirement would allow Hamlin Collegiate ISD the flexibility needed to alter the school day schedule on selected days whenever it was locally determined as necessary or beneficial to the district and its stakeholders. While there is a waiver process available to request exemption from this requirement, the waiver is limited to a 6-day maximum number for the school year.

Exempting completely from the 420-minute requirement would give the district a significant amount of local control over scheduling (above and beyond the 6-day maximum as needed) without the fear of diminishing state funding or losing credit for instructional time that might cause the district to fall out of compliance with annual minute requirements. This would allow the district the flexibility to schedule non-instructional time into the schedule to allow for teachers to analyze student data and engage in targeted, relevant professional development.

Hamlin Collegiate ISD does not have any intentions to shorten the school day on a regular basis, or without specific purpose. To the greatest extent possible, “early release” days would be planned ahead of time and noted in the district calendar, which is approved by the Board of Trustees and published and distributed to stakeholders in advance of the school year and continuously published using school media. Hamlin Collegiate ISD will ensure that the district reaches or exceeds the overall requirement of 75,600 minutes for funding purposes each year.

Teacher Certification (TEC §21.003, §21.053 and §21.057)

State law 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 a subject outside of their certification, the district must request emergency certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or State Board of Educator Certification.

Rationale for Exemption

The current state teacher certification requirements inhibit the District's ability to hire teachers to teach hard-to-fill, high demand, dual credit, as well as career and technical courses. Hamlin Collegiate ISD is located in a rural area which limits course offerings and utilization of creative instructional methods district wide. Allowing the local district control will better enable students to obtain the educational benefits of varied course offering; therefore, the District seeks to establish its own local qualification requirements and its own requirements for training professionals and experts to teach such courses in lieu of the requirements set forth in law, when deemed necessary. The district notes that all core area teachers, special education and bilingual teachers must be fully certified in their area.

Class Sizes and Student-Teacher Ratios (TEC §25.112)

State law requires that in Kindergarten through fourth grade the class student-teacher ratio must not exceed 22 to 1.

Rationale for Exemption

While small class size plays a positive role in the classroom, it must be balanced with the logistics and timing of adding staff and the best teacher to student ratio that can be achieved given the total number of students. While it is often cited that smaller class sizes improve academic performance, the decision for what size is the appropriate size should be a local decision. Many times it is not the number of the students but the makeup and chemistry of the classroom which influence the learning environment. Most importantly, research clearly shows that the teacher in the classroom has the greatest impact on student learning, not absolute class size. HCISD will strive to maintain the 22 to 1 ration; however, if it is deemed appropriate to exceed the limit, that decision will be made by the administration and approved by the Board of Trustees. Parents would be notified if the exemption was utilized and a class size exceeded the 22 to 1 ratio.

90 Percent Attendance Rule (TEC §25.092)

State law mandates a student may not be given credit or a final grade for a class unless the student is in attendance for at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered. In addition, if a student is in attendance greater than 75 percent and less than 90 percent, they may be given credit or a final grade for the class if the student completes a plan approved by the campus administrator and meets the instructional requirements for the class.

Rationale for Exemption

The 90 percent rule is an arbitrary percentage. Districts should have the option to set their own requirement. Local districts need the flexibility to set attendance requirements which reflect their specific situations and expectations.

Abstaining from the requirement means that the district will not have to penalize students who miss class due to extra/co-curricular activities, academic activities, or other extenuating circumstances. With online and other flexible courses, the attendance requirements should be broadened to awarding credit based on

course completion rather than daily attendance when the situation warrants. The flexibility can allow the local board to set higher expectations for attendance while promoting student engagement, social and emotional development, and by encouraging more students to participate in extracurricular activities. The proposal would allow counselors and administrators to refocus efforts on students who are truly at risk, while simultaneously providing rigor and relevance in the curriculum. Exemption from this requirement will provide educational advantages to students of the District by promoting learning through innovation in the methods, locations, and times instruction may be delivered to students, thereby accommodating students with legitimate scheduling conflicts, reducing dropouts, and increasing the number of qualifying graduates.

It must be noted, Relief from Section §25.092 does not in any way impact or alter existing compulsory attendance requirements or University Interscholastic League ("UIL") rules. Opting out of Section §25.092 in no way limits or modifies a teacher's right to determine the finality of a grade in accordance with Texas Education Code Section §28.0214, nor does it restrict or alter a teacher's right to assign grades in accordance with Texas Education Code Section §28.0216.

Contract Service Days (TEC §21.401)

State law currently requires educators employed on a 10-month contract to provide a minimum of 187 days of service.

Rationale for Exemption

With the passage of §25.081 which changed the required days of instruction to minutes, the law did not address contract days for 10-month contract employees. The determination of how many days are required to fulfill an employee's contract should be a local decision. This proposal reduces teacher contract days with no effect on teacher salaries. This is an attempt to more align the teacher days to the 75,600 minutes required of students. This proposal will increase the daily rate the district pays teachers which should aid in teacher recruitment and increase teacher morale. Adequate time for teacher and classroom preparation and staff development will be included in each yearly calendar as approved.

Teacher Employment Contracts (TEC §21.102)

Law states that a probationary contract may not be for a term exceeding one school year. The probationary contract may be renewed for two additional one-year periods, for a maximum permissible probationary contract period of three school years, except that the probationary period 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 by the district.

Rationale for Exemption

This time period is not sufficient to evaluate a teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. For experienced teachers and counselors new to HCISD that have been employed 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. This will allow the district more time to evaluate a staff member's effectiveness.

Preclusion from providing Alternative Uniform Group Coverage Program (TEC §22.004 (New in 2021))

Law states that a school district may not make group health coverage available to its employees pursuant to TEC §22.004(b) after the date a District Implements the program of coverages provided under Chapter 1579 of the Texas Insurance Code. The current process allows no flexibility in the design of group health insurance benefits to fit the needs of all Hamlin Collegiate ISD employees. This provision also prohibits the District from procuring group health insurance benefits that may provide better coverages for its employees and at a lower cost.

Rationale for Exemption

Hamlin Collegiate ISD values our staff and the quality of the total employment package we can offer. One major benefit of any potential employment opportunity is quality medical insurance at the best possible cost. This exemption allows HCISD the opportunity to sample the market for group medical insurance and creates the possibility for flexibility in plan design and focus. The availability of an alternative to the current TRS options will also create a database of medical claims information from our own district employees that can be utilized to drive a targeted wellness program and increase the overall health of our employees and community.

Hamlin Collegiate ISD will sample the market for group medical insurance plans through an official procurement process, evaluate components of those plans, and then present to our employees an additional group medical insurance option (or options) alongside the TRS offerings during open enrollment. Employees would then have an additional choice in the options for group medical insurance, along with the associated benefits which come in a competitive insurance marketplace.

Term and Implementation

The term for this plan is for five years, (school years 2021-22 through 2025-2026) unless terminated or amended by the Board of Trustees in accordance with Texas law. In the event Hamlin Collegiate ISD feels other exemptions would benefit the district, the Board of Trustees will nominate a new committee and follow all procedures for amending this plan.

This innovation plan and specific implementation of the plan will be developed by the appropriate campuses and principals. Adjustments to Hamlin Collegiate ISD Board Policy and other district policies will be researched, reviewed, and adopted by the Board of Trustees.