

# **ADOPTED DISTRICT OF INNOVATION PLAN**

## **For April 18, 2022- April 18, 2027**

### **I. Introduction**

House Bill 1842 passed during the 84th Legislative Summary, permits Texas public schools districts to become Districts of Innovation and to obtain exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. On February 13, 2017, Cedar Hill Independent School District's Board of Trustees passed a resolution to initiate the process of designation of a District of Innovation (DOI). The purpose of passing the Resolution was to increase local control over District operations and to support innovation and local initiatives to improve the educational outcomes for the benefit of students, staff, and the community.

### **II. Term**

The term of the Plan is for five years, beginning at the start of the 2022-2023 school year and concluding at the end of the 2026-2027 school year, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. The DEIC Committee will continually monitor the effectiveness of the Plan and recommend to the Board any suggested modifications to the Plan.

### **III. Comprehensive Educational Program**

The Plan's comprehensive educational program is guided by and aligned with the Board's Vision, Mission, and Goals for the District.

#### **a. Vision**

Unlocking every Longhorn's potential

#### **b. Mission**

To develop resilient scholars who excel academically and are empowered to serve

#### **c. Goals**

- Goal #1- Increase the percentage of scholars graduating College, Career & Military Ready
- Goal #2- Increase the percentage of 3rd grade (all students) scholars reading at or above grade level
- Goal #3- Increase the percentage of Algebra 1 scholars scoring Meets or Above
- Goal #4- Increase the percentage of scholars participating in extra-curricular or co-curricular activities

## **IV. Granted and Requested Amendments to Texas Education Code Currently Inhibiting District Goals and Priorities**

### **A. Instructional Calendar (TEC 25.0811)**

Texas Education Code Section 25.0811 inhibits the District's goals by prohibiting the District from beginning instruction before the fourth Monday in August. Flexibility to begin instruction earlier in the calendar year will enable the District to be more responsive to students by balancing the amount of instructional time in each semester, which will allow teachers to better pace and deliver instruction before and after the winter break. In addition, the flexibility to start and end the school year earlier enables students to enroll in college courses that begin in early June, thereby increasing college and career readiness.

### **B. Teacher Certification (TEC §21.003)**

Texas Education Code Sections 21.003, as well as 19 Texas Administrative Code Chapter 231, limits the ability to hire teachers in highly specialized or hard to fill areas. Through an exemption from existing teacher certification requirements for career/technical credit teachers, Cedar Hill ISD will be granted the flexibility to hire professionals in specialized trades and vocations to teach identified career and technical courses. This exemption permits these professionals to meet the Highly Qualified designation for the State and permits the District to obtain the same weighted funding as would be available should the professional hold a traditional teaching certification for the course.

Through additional exemption from existing teacher certification requirements for Languages Other than English (LOTE) courses as well as hard to fill, high demand dual credit courses, the District will have the flexibility to hire community college instructors, university professors, instructors with real world/native- expertise.

Cedar Hill ISD would like to add to the following additional language to this exemption in order to hire other qualified teacher applicants:

**For a teacher applicant who is in the process of obtaining certification, they may be hired in an at will capacity and paid at a salary commensurate with the teacher applicant's qualifications and experience before the effective date of the issuance of a valid certificate if the following apply:**

- 1. The individual is recommended for hire no more than 20 days before the first day of instruction or after the start of the instructional year; and**
- 2. The candidate will be issued a certificate by the deadline set annually by the Human Resources Department**

### **C. Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Final Grade (TEC §25.092)**

Texas Education Code Section 25.092, inhibits the District goals by not allowing the District to issue class credit or a final grade for a class if a student is not in attendance ninety percent of the time that a class is offered. In other words, the law currently requires the District to award class credit to students based on "seat time" rather than based on content mastery. This exemption 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 in traditional courses not impacted by this exemption would still be required to meet the current 90% attendance requirement.

#### **D. Kindergarten Start Age (TEC §29.151)**

Texas Education Code Section 29.151 prohibits a student from entering kindergarten who is not 5 years old by September 1 of the current school year. Children mature and demonstrate readiness for school at varying rates, and their social/emotional development can be affected by a wide range of factors. The September 1<sup>st</sup> deadline for entering public kindergarten does not provide the flexibility needed for the district to serve students who are ready for school slightly earlier than the established date. Parents of students who are ready for kindergarten curriculum and learning environments are enrolling their children in private kindergarten, and then requesting to skip ahead to first grade once they enter public schools the following year, thus they have not participated in any district kindergarten program.

#### **E. Probationary Contracts (TEC §21.102)**

Under current statute, probationary contracts for newly hired teachers who have been in public education for at least five of the previous eight years cannot exceed one year. This limited period is insufficient in some cases to fully determine the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. Exemption from Texas Education Code Section 21.102 will permit the Cedar Hill ISD the option to issue a probationary contract for a period of up to two years for experienced teachers, counselors, or nurses. This will better allow the District to evaluate their effectiveness.

#### **F. Filing of Teacher Certification (TEC 21.053)**

Texas Education Code section 21.053 requires that an individual's teaching certificate must be filed with the hiring district before the individual's contract is binding and prohibits a district from paying a non-certified individual for teaching or work done prior to the effective date of the issuance of a valid certificate. An exemption from this provision provides: flexibility to hire expert educators regardless of teaching certificate. • flexibility in hiring "hard to fill" positions • flexibility to hire those with industry expertise.

#### **G. DAEP Requirement of Certified Teachers (TEC 37.008)**

TEC 37.008 requires students who are placed in a Disciplinary Alternative Educational Program (DAEP) to be separate from their regular instructional setting under the supervision of a certified teacher, and not be allowed to be with other students who are not in the program. This exemption would allow CHISD extra flexibility in administration of discipline to students and staffing for DAEP.

#### **H. Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator (TEC Code §37.0012)**

A person at each campus must be designated to serve as the campus behavior coordinator. The person designated may be the principal of the campus or any other administrator selected by the principal. Exemption from this requirement will provide campuses the opportunity to allow campus administrators to fully understand and get to know the students in their caseload rather than sourcing all discipline matters to one employee designated as a campus behavior coordinator.

#### **D. Student/Teacher Ratios (TEC 25.111)**

TEC requires that each district maintain an average ratio of not less than one teacher for each 20 students in average daily attendance. Fluctuations in enrollment can make it difficult to maintain this ratio. Non-compliance due to fluctuations may last for only a few days.

Exemptions from this provision will maximize flexibility with class size and give local control to the district to determine the timing of adding staff while considering what is in the best interest of students and staff.

#### **E. Class Size (TEC 25.112 & 25.113)**

State law limits the number of students that can be enrolled in a K-4th grade class to no more than 22 students.

In order to address concerns that this ratio can cause an exemption with a local cap of 24 or 25 can be supported by this exemption.

### **V. Local Innovation Plan Summary**

In summary this plan reflects the following:

- A modified calendar addressing the local need of balanced instructional time and additional enrichment and intervention opportunities for students.
- An exemption from specified rules regarding teacher certification in order to increase flexibility when hiring in specialized areas.
- An exemption from the specified attendance requirements over location, method, and times of instruction in order to award course or grade credit.
- An innovative instructional method to expand curriculum offerings to students who demonstrate readiness for school earlier than current statute allows.
- An exemption from specified rules regarding probationary contracts for newly hired teachers, counselors, or nurses who have been in public education for at least five of the previous eight years.
- An exemption from being required to have a teacher certificate on file prior to hire allowing flexibility in hiring hard to fill positions and individuals with industry expertise.
- An exemption in allowing extra flexibility in administration of discipline to students and assignment of staff in DAEP.
- An exemption allowing the district to suspend contract workers in limited areas with procedural safeguards without pay
- An exemption allowing a campus to have more than one designated behavior coordinator to handle student discipline.

- An exemption allowing the District to hire teacher candidates who are in the process of obtaining certification on an at-will basis.
- An exemption allowing the district to maximize flexibility with class size and gives local control to the district to determine the timing of adding staff.
- An exemption to the 22:1 ratio allowing the district to set local caps and determine the timing when adding staff.