

Harmony ISD
District of Innovation Plan (HB 1842)
2017-2018

Harmony ISD District of Innovation Plan (HB 1842) 2017-2018 Harmony ISD is utilizing HB 1842, of the 84th Legislative Session, in order to have more local control in certain areas. HB 1842 allows a traditional public school to have some of the same local flexibility that public charter schools have always been allowed. We feel this is a great opportunity for our local district to tailor plans based on the needs of our students and community.

This plan will be in effect for the 2017-2018 school year through the 2022-2023 school year. This plan may be amended at any time by the committee with approval of the Board of Trustees.

District Innovation Team

Dennis Glenn, Superintendent
Cara Rendon, Elementary Principal
Ginger Cargal, Intermediate Principal
Pam Beall, Jr. High Principal
Michael Alphin, HS Principal
Lynn Elms, High School Academic Advisor
Jennifer Keller, Elementary Teacher
Trena Tillery, Elementary Teacher
Michelle Hector, Intermediate Teacher
Jennifer Jones, Intermediate Teacher
Wendy Miller, Junior High Teacher
Danielle Barr, Junior High Teacher
Kristie Bergamini, High School Teacher
Laura Bowin, High School Teacher

1. School start date

(EB LEGAL) (Ed. Code 25.0811)

Currently

Students may not begin school before the 4th Monday of August. For many years this was the rule, however, districts had the option of applying for a waiver to start earlier. The vast majority of districts applied for the waiver and would begin the 3rd Monday, some even going as early as the 2nd Monday.

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.

Proposed

To allow for a calendar that fits the local needs of our community, we would like to consider moving the mandatory start date back one week which would better benefit our students.

- a. Students will begin no earlier than the 3rd Monday of August.
- b. Teachers will begin no earlier than the 2nd Monday of August
- c. This will allow the first and second semesters to be closer in the number of days of instruction.
- d. The goal is to improve the district attendance rate and student success through the flexibility in the calendar.

2. Submitting waivers for Kindergarten – Grade 4 class size

(EEB LEGAL) (Ed. Code 25.111) (Ed. Code 25.112) (Ed. Code 25.113)

Currently

Kindergarten – 4th 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. This is a bureaucratic step that serves no purpose. Along with the waiver, it is required that a letter is sent home to each parent in the section that exceeds the 22:1 ratio, informing them the waiver has been submitted. Many times soon after the waiver is submitted, students move out of the district and we are below the 22:1 ratio.

Proposed

While we certainly believe that small class size plays a positive role in the classroom, we do not believe it has a negative effect when you only add one or two more students. Many times it is not the number of the students but the makeup and chemistry of the classroom which influence the learning environment.

- a. HISD will attempt to keep all K-4th core classrooms to a 22:1 ratio. However, in the event the class size exceeds this ratio, the superintendent will report to the Board of Trustees.
- b. In the event a K-4th core classroom reaches 25:1, the campus will notify the parents of the students in the classroom and inform them of the situation.
- c. A TEA waiver will not be necessary when a K-4th classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio.
- d. This gives HISD the flexibility without having the bureaucracy of waivers within the Texas Education Agency.

3. Teacher certification

(DK LEGAL, DK LOCAL, DK EXHIBIT)

Currently

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 submit a request to the Texas Education Agency. TEA then approves or denies this request. There is a lot of bureaucracy and unnecessary paperwork involved in the process.

Proposed

In order to best serve HISD students, decisions on certification will be handled locally.

a. The campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach one subject out of their certified field. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials the certified teacher possesses which qualify this individual to teach this subject.

b. An individual with experience in a CTE field could be eligible to teach a vocational skill or course through a local teaching certificate. The principal will submit the request to the superintendent with all the individual's credentials. The superintendent will then approve the request if they feel the individual could be an asset to students. The superintendent will then report this action to the Board of Trustees prior to the individual beginning any employment. Local teaching certificates will be for one year. The employee will be at-will.

c. This will allow more flexibility in our scheduling and more options for our students in class offerings.

4. Transfer Students

Exemption from: TEC 25.001; TEC 25.036
FDA (LOCAL)

Currently

Under Texas Education Code 25.001, a district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district. Under TEC 25.036, a transfer is interpreted to be for a period of one school year.

Proposed

Harmony 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, work habits, and attendance records are also evaluated. Transfer students are expected to follow the attendance requirements and the rules and regulations of the District. TEC 25.036 has been interpreted to establish the acceptance of a transfer as a one year commitment by the District. The District is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one year commitment in accepting transfer applications for the following circumstances:

- Student behavior warrants suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion;
- Student attendance falls below the TEA truancy standard.