

# Henderson ISD

## District of Innovation Plan 2026 - 2031



*Posted 2/4/26*

*Adopted*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The 84th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2015, passed HB 1842, allowing eligible Texas school districts to be designated Districts of Innovation. 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.

### **DOI COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

	<b>Campus/Role</b>	<b>DEIC Team</b>
WPS	Admin	Morse, Jodie
	Teacher	Lewis, Heather
	Teacher	Thane, Lucy
WES	Admin	Crow, Angela
	Teacher	Ellis, Amy
	Teacher	Bradham, Kaylie
	Teacher	McNew, Melissa
NS	Admin	Baker, Leslie

	Teacher	Leuschner, Julie
	Teacher	Graham, Melanie
	Teacher	Larmeir, Amanda
HMS	Admin	Driver, Nikki
	Teacher	Martin, Shelby
	Teacher	Jones, Brandon
	Teacher	Richardson, Heather
HHS	Admin	Dickerson, Shannon
	Librarian	Rushing, Amanda
	Teacher	White, Kenneth
	Teacher	Radford, Taylor
MAC	Admin	Wilson, Holly
	Teacher	Lisa McAlister
District	Supt.	Bowman, Brian
	Ast Supt.	Henry, Dea
	Tech Coord	Bryan, Kevin
	C&I Coord	Rucker, Mindy
	SPED Director	Whiteaker, Tracy
	Bilingual Coord.	Sugg, Regina
	CTE Coord.	McCreary, Lisa
	Peims	Gunz, Kim
	Finance	Warner, Jessica
	Counselor	Brown, Kelly
	Communication Director	Chenault, David
	School Board	Dorsey, Loy
	School Board	Williams, Jean
Community/Parent	Parent	Ballenger, Morgan
	Parent	Vasquez, Perla
	Parent	Plunkett, Jena
	Community	McAlister, Peggy
	Community	Jones, Brent
	Community	Gardner, Gena

<b>Additional Members for DOI</b>		
Shannon Coats	Stacey Johnson	Rebecca Garner

Leah Vickers	Amy Hogberg	Cindy Hathorn
Casey Orr	Russel Wylie	

## **UNIFORM SCHOOL START DATE**

### **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**

- 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.
- The state required uniform school start date pushes the end of the school year into June.
- The majority of professional development is held in August. Henderson ISD teachers and administrators would prefer it throughout the year.
- There is a need to maximize instructional time before administering state assessments.
- 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.

## **PREKINDERGARTEN – GRADE 4 CLASS SIZE RATIO**

### **Currently**

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

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

Prekindergarten – 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**

- Applying for a waiver that is never rejected is a bureaucratic process.
- 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**

- Hiring decisions will be based on projected 22:1 ratios.
- 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 Prekindergarten-Grade 4 homeroom class.
- In the event a single grade level in grade Prekindergarten –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.

- 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.
- A TEA waiver requests and related notifications shall not be necessary when a Prekindergarten - 4th classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio.

## **PROBATIONARY CONTRACTS**

### **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 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**

### **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.

### **Problems**

Rural, high-poverty districts experience significant difficulty filling positions with quality instructors, particularly in non-foundation and enrichment subject areas where statewide shortages exist. Fewer individuals are pursuing educator preparation programs through institutes of higher education, resulting in a reduced pool of certified candidates. Rural districts are therefore faced with increasing instructional needs and fewer certified applicants to fill vacancies.

When a district cannot locate a certified teacher for a position in a non-foundation subject area, the district is currently required to request emergency or local certification through the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and/or the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC). This process is burdensome and does not adequately account for the unique financial, staffing, and instructional realities of rural districts. Additionally, there have been instances in which individuals meeting the criteria outlined in TEC §21.057 have been denied local certification due to technical certification pathway requirements, despite possessing relevant professional experience and content expertise.

Henderson ISD will continue to prioritize hiring certified teachers and maintaining high standards for instruction in non-foundation and enrichment subjects. However, when it is not reasonably possible to staff non-foundation subject areas with appropriately certified personnel, the district seeks limited

flexibility to allow knowledgeable and qualified individuals to serve students in Career and Technical Education (CTE) and other enrichment subject areas.

### **Proposed**

Henderson ISD requests the ability to issue District Teaching Permits (local certification) only for non-foundation subjects, including Career and Technical Education (CTE) and other enrichment areas, in order to better meet the educational needs of students.

Proposed

#### 1. Local Decision-Making Authority

To best serve Henderson ISD students, decisions related to teacher certification and assignments in non-foundation subject areas only will be handled locally.

#### 2. Certified Teachers Teaching Outside Certification (Non-Foundation Only)

The campus principal may submit to the Superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach one non-foundation subject in a related field for which the teacher is not certified.

a. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document the credentials, experience, or training that qualify the teacher to instruct the non-foundation subject.

b. Emergency staffing, enrollment changes, or financial constraints creating the need for the assignment must also be documented.

#### 3. District Teaching Permits (Local Certification) – Non-Foundation Subjects Only

*Henderson ISD may issue District Teaching Permits (local certification) solely for non-foundation instructional areas, based on skills and experiences outside the traditional teacher certification pathway.*

*a. Individuals who are not certified teachers may be eligible to teach in non-foundation, enrichment, or Career and Technical Education (CTE) positions, including:*

- *Career and Technical Education (CTE)*
- *Fine Arts*
- *Health*
- *Languages other than English*
- *Other enrichment or elective courses*

*b. Individuals must demonstrate the ability and content knowledge necessary to fulfill the requirements of the assigned position.*

*c. The campus principal may submit a written request to the Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee for a District Teaching Permit, outlining the individual's credentials and qualifications.*

*d. Qualifications that may be considered include, but are not limited to:*

- *Professional work experience*
- *Formal training or education*
- *Active industry-recognized certification or licensure*
- *A combination of work experience, education, and training*
- *Demonstrated successful experience working with students*

*e. The Superintendent or designee may approve the request if the individual is deemed to possess the knowledge, skills, and experience necessary to positively impact student learning.*

*f. Employees working under a District Teaching Permit will be employed on an at-will basis and will not be issued a term contract.*

*g. All determinations will be made on a case-by-case basis.*

#### 4. TEA Submission

Teacher certification waivers, state permit applications, or related paperwork will not be submitted to TEA for individuals serving under a District Teaching Permit in non-foundation subject areas.

#### 5. Professional Standards

Employees working under a District Teaching Permit will adhere to the same professional standards, ethics, and expectations as certified teachers.

#### 6. Appraisal

Employees working under a District Teaching Permit will be appraised using the district-adopted teacher appraisal system, consistent with district requirements.

#### 7. Parent Notification

Henderson ISD will notify parents when a teacher working under a District Teaching Permit is assigned to their child's non-foundation or enrichment course.

#### 8. Annual Posting

Henderson ISD may annually post positions covered under this District of Innovation exemption and continue efforts to recruit certified, experienced teachers. If a certified candidate is not secured, the individual serving under the District Teaching Permit may be considered for continued assignment the following year.

#### 9. Foundation Subject Certification – House Bill 2 Compliance

Certification and assignment of teachers in Foundation Subjects shall be governed by House Bill 2 (HB 2), passed by the 89th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2025, and all applicable provisions of Texas Education Code and State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) rules.

Under HB 2:

- a. District Teaching Permits may still be issued for foundation subjects, but only when all statutory criteria are met and when no appropriately certified teacher is reasonably available.
- b. Each District Teaching Permit for a foundation subject shall be reviewed and approved by the Board of Trustees on an individual, case-by-case basis in accordance with HB 2 requirements.
- c. The district shall maintain documentation verifying that:
  - The individual meets the eligibility and qualification requirements established under HB 2; and
  - The district has made a good-faith effort to hire a fully certified teacher for the assignment.
- d. Nothing in this District of Innovation plan shall be interpreted to waive, override, or conflict with the certification, approval, or reporting requirements established by HB 2 for foundation subject assignments.

## **TEACHER APPRAISAL SYSTEM**

### **Currently**

Beginning with the 2016-2017 school year, the state issued a new teacher appraisal system called the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS).

### **Problems**

Henderson ISD is currently using T-TESS. While this system is designed to meet the needs of the entire state, HISD seeks to customize certain aspects of the system to better meet the needs of its teachers.

### **Proposed**

HISD is seeking flexibility within the recommended Texas appraisal process for teachers and staff evaluated using the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS). HISD seeks to continue utilizing portions of the T-TESS model as the teacher evaluation appraisal instrument, while desiring exemption from the Student Growth Measure. Data provided from district and campus local assessments will continue to be utilized to determine overall student growth and performance.

While the district currently uses T-TESS, the district would like the option to exercise local control of decisions regarding teacher and administrative appraisals in alignment with Board Policy DNA (Legal).

## **STUDENT TRANSFERS**

### **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.

- 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.
- In addition, students not meeting the required 90 percent attendance standard may also be subject to immediate revocation of the transfer status.

## **DEPOSITORY CONTRACT**

#### **Currently**

Texas Education Code (TEC) §45.205 requires that a school district's depository contract:

- Serve for a term of **two years** and until a successor is selected and qualified;
- Allow the district and the depository bank to **extend the contract for up to three additional two-year terms** by mutual agreement;
- Require that the **contract term and any extensions coincide with the district's fiscal year**; and
- Require districts to **re-bid depository services** at specific statutory intervals, even when the district is satisfied with the services and rates provided.

#### **Problems**

Requiring districts to re-bid depository services on a fixed statutory timeline can be unnecessarily disruptive and inefficient. When a district has established a strong working relationship with a depository bank and is receiving competitive rates and satisfactory service, mandatory re-bidding expends time and resources without clear benefit.

For rural and mid-sized districts, the re-bidding process can also create operational disruptions and uncertainty, particularly when transitions coincide with critical financial periods. The statutory timelines do not always align with local needs, financial planning cycles, or the stability of district banking operations.

#### **Proposed**

Henderson ISD seeks an exemption from TEC §45.205 to allow the district **greater local flexibility** in managing depository contracts.

Under this exemption:

- The district may **extend the term of its depository contract beyond the statutory timeline**, when it is in the district's best interest to do so.

- Extensions may be granted when the district is satisfied with the quality of service, financial stability, and rates provided by the depository bank.
- Prior to any contract renewal or extension, the depository bank will submit a **written proposal** outlining proposed services, fees, and terms for district review.
- This exemption will allow the district to **avoid unnecessary re-bidding**, reduce administrative burden, and maintain continuity of financial operations while still ensuring fiscal responsibility and oversight.