



Highland Park Independent School District  
**Local District of Innovation Plan**

Effective  
2016-2017 to 2020-2021

# Highland Park Independent School District

## District of Innovation Plan

### I. Introduction

The 84th Texas Legislature passed House Bill 1842 in the summer of 2015, allowing public school districts to obtain the designation of District of Innovation and gain exemption from certain Texas Education Code provisions. This designation allows independent school districts to have flexibilities currently available to open enrollment charter schools. During Spring 2017, Highland Park ISD, having met the state's eligibility requirements, began consideration of developing an innovation that plan that reflects the unique needs of the district and allows the district to assume greater local control.

### II. District Guiding Principles

#### A. Mission

Highland Park Independent School District, with an unyielding commitment to excellence, will provide an exceptional academic program that recognizes the unique potential of each student and integrates the intellectual, social, cultural and physical aspects of learning.

This program will empower each student to become an eager lifelong learner committed to academic excellence, integrity, responsible citizenship and service to others.

#### B. Beliefs

- All students can learn.
- Learning is a life-long process.
- A rigorous, well-rounded academic education is a cornerstone to a successful life.
- Learning is enhanced by passionate teachers who pursue expertise in their fields and are highly valued by the entire community.
- Learning must include the ability to relate effectively amidst diverse cultures within a global economy.
- Education rightly occurs in environments where high standards of character and ethics are expected.
- Education is a shared responsibility among students, educators, parents and community.

#### C. Strategic Objectives

- We will create an innovative system of learning that empowers each student to realize the unique genius within.
- We will partner with families and community to ensure the physical, emotional and social well-being of each student.
- We will design creative methods to attract, support, develop and retain exceptional personnel.
- We will commit to new levels of partnership through effective and efficient information-sharing.
- We will guarantee the resources necessary to fulfill our mission.

#### D. Profile of the Learner for the Future

Our citizen for the future builds the knowledge, skills, attributes and dispositions to be an accomplished person and lifelong learner.

The Highland Park ISD learner is:

Academically prepared for college & career through

- Mastery & application of a globally competitive, comprehensive, rigorous & content-rich foundational curriculum
- Engagement in the arts
- Research & information literacy
- Competence with technologies

A critical, innovative thinker who

- Is intellectually curious
- Is creative & productive
- Questions assumptions & evaluates evidence
- Identifies, frames & solves complex & multidimensional problems
- Uses reason, analysis & synthesis to make informed predictions & decisions & to draw conclusions

An effective communicator & collaborator who

- Writes & speaks clearly & articulately for varied purposes & audiences
- Listens actively & respectfully to the opinions & perspectives of others
- Offers & accepts constructive criticism & feedback
- Works effectively within diverse teams, both as a contributor & a leader to accomplish a common goal

Motivated, confident & resilient through

- Disciplined management of self, learning, resources & time
- Reflection, self-evaluation & self-advocacy
- A willingness to take risks, persist in the face of challenge & adversity and learn from failure
- A balance of physical, mental & emotional health

A responsible person & engaged citizen who

- Makes ethical decisions & choices
- Is committed to service
- Demonstrates honesty & integrity
- Understands & values democratic ideals

A globally competent person who

- Is empathetic, compassionate & open-minded
- Has a diverse & knowledgeable world view
- Exhibits cross-cultural sensitivity & adaptability
- Communicates effectively in at least one language other than English
- Interprets & responds to global issues with an understanding of how history, geography & economics shape our world

## E. Profile of the Educator for the Future

Our educator for the future inspires each learner to develop the knowledge, skills, attributes, & dispositions to be an accomplished person & an engaged citizen.

The Highland Park ISD educator is:

An academically prepared instructor

Highland Park ISD's high academic expectations for its students require educators with strong content knowledge. The academically prepared instructor:

- Demonstrates command of the subjects taught
- Recognizes concepts central to a discipline, as well as inter- and intra-disciplinary relationships
- Understands the evolution of the discipline
- Utilizes knowledge of prerequisite skills and concepts to scaffold learning activities appropriately
- Identifies and works to eliminate common student misconceptions within a discipline
- Seeks and incorporates professional learning opportunities to remain current on new information, research, and resources

A designer of instruction & facilitator of learning

Advancements in brain research and information accessibility have changed the role of teacher to that of facilitator, one who designs lessons that require active minds to persist in challenging work. The designer of instruction and facilitator of learning:

- Cultivates rich environments for learning
- Designs authentic and appropriately challenging experiences
- Supports all students' specific needs and learning styles
- Creates opportunities for students to connect personal interests and prior understandings to current learning
- Strategically selects tools and resources to deepen student learning
- Applies current and confirmed brain research
- Implements subject-specific best practices in instruction, including technology

A skilled assessor

By fully and accurately assessing student learning, educators inform instruction, optimize learning, and communicate progress. The educator for the future designs and implements multiple forms of assessment that reflect each student's integrated story of progress and performance. The skilled assessor:

- Designs meaningful assessments to match learning targets
- Utilizes an appropriate variety of assessment types to collect multiple forms of data
- Elicits higher-order thinking and reflective learning by incorporating quality questions
- Gauges the quality of student work
- Provides timely descriptive feedback to allow students to self-reflect, set goals, and track their growth for future learning
- Uses formative measures to guide the design of instruction and customize learning experiences

A critical & innovative thinker

The world is transforming at an exponential rate. In order to meet the needs of learners, the educator for the future is adaptable and exhibits critical and innovative thinking skills. The critical and innovative thinker:

- Uses reason, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and reflection to design differentiated learning experiences
- Makes research-based and data-driven predictions, decisions, and conclusions
- Engages in complex and multidimensional problem solving as part of a global community
- Searches for multiple solutions to a problem
- Demonstrates intellectual curiosity, imagination, and creativity
- Takes risks, persists in the face of challenge and adversity, and learns from failure
- Analyzes future trends in order to pose critical questions and create authentic learning opportunities

#### A role model

The educator for the future must serve as a positive role model of community and global citizenship and demonstrate effective interpersonal skills. The role model:

- Demonstrates caring, support, respect, and empathy when interacting with others
- Conducts oneself ethically and professionally
- Collaborates with diverse groups of people
- Communicates and listens respectfully to others' opinions
- Appreciates diversity, respects other cultures, and fosters global connections
- Uses constructive conflict-resolution strategies
- Displays confidence and enthusiasm toward teaching and lifelong learning
- Invests in the school community and the teaching profession
- Builds positive relationships in and beyond the classroom

#### F. District for the Future

Highland Park Independent School District prides itself in its exceptional academic and extracurricular programs, extensive student commitment to community service, high level of parental involvement, and numerous community partnerships that have been fostered over its 100-year history. We recognize the potential of each student and believe in the integration of the intellectual, social, cultural, and physical aspects of learning.

As a learning organization, we recognize that the world is constantly changing. We embrace that change and strive to be responsive to the various needs of our students and our community. In 2012, the district assembled a study team to identify the knowledge, skills, attributes and dispositions we believe students need to be successful in their future endeavors. After months of study, discussion and collaboration, the team produced the HPISD Profile of the Learner for the Future.

Building on that work the following year, a new team created the Profile of the Educator for the Future to identify the attributes and skills our educators will need in order to support our students. The Educator for the Future serves as a snapshot of valuable characteristics as the district maps a path for its future.

The Learner for the Future and the Educator for the Future were produced by dedicated study teams that included stakeholders from across the HPISD community; the teams were comprised of current students, recent graduates and alumni, teachers, principals, district administrators and university professors. Every member of both teams selflessly contributed their time and intellectual energy to ensure the profiles reflected the vision and goals of the district moving forward.

This work has led us to reflect on the district's capacity to support the work that is required in response to the profiles of the Learner and the Educator. We want to ensure that the necessary systems and structures are in place, as well as appropriate allocation of resources, so that both our students and educators can be successful. The bulleted items below are the characteristics and attributes critical to an organization that supports this vision.

As a learning organization, Highland Park ISD:

- Is student-centered and goal-driven and ensures that its shared beliefs, values, and vision guide decisions within the organization
- Nurtures a culture of trust, innovation, and risk-taking that is supported by everyone within the organization
- Has a clear focus on the quality of work provided to students
- Empowers teachers to design quality work for students that encourages creative, innovative, and critical thinking
- Values and nurtures the public-private partnership that has created a legacy of excellence in the Highland Park Independent School District for generations
- Thoughtfully and purposefully allocates District resources such as facilities, time, people, information, and technology in order to ensure commitments to continuous growth and innovation are met
- Aligns professional learning and training with the direction of the organization
- Uses evaluation systems to assess progress at the student, classroom, program, and organizational levels. The evidence collected is comprehensive and organized for use by those who need it to make strategic decisions
- Ensures structures are in place to prioritize, facilitate, and sustain a culture of collaboration for students and staff
- Systematically considers the critical qualities and characteristics defined in the Profile of the Educator for the Future in its recruitment, induction, development and evaluation efforts

Enter to learn. Go forth to serve.

### III. Process

A. The Board of Trustees approved the existing District Leadership Council, with its varied and extensive membership, to create and approve the local district of innovation plan.

District Leadership Council Member	Role
Cynthia Brogdon	Community Member
Lana Cairns	HPMS Teacher
Jaime Callahan	HPMS Teacher
Dansby Erwin	Hyer Parent
Kristi Gardere	Hyer Teacher

Sally Gatlin	MIS Teacher
Natalie George	UP Teacher
Jeremy Gilbert	Hyer Principal
Kathryn Hoover	MIS Parent
Eric Inboden	Bradfield Teacher
Cynthia Jones	HPHS Teacher
Shirley Kochman	Community Member
Richard Luo	HPHS Sophomore
Meredith Mabus	Armstrong Parent
Jack McRoberts	HPHS Senior
Dr. Kelly Moeller	HPHS Assistant Principal
Debbie Morrison	MIS Special Ed Coordinator
Susan Nichol	HPMS Parent
Chris Palmer-Steger	Bradfield Parent
Melissa Rieman	HPMS Parent
Will Roberts	HPHS Junior
Rachel Rogers	HPHS Junior
Benjamin Smith	HPHS Freshman
Heather Smith	HPHS Teacher
Holly Sutton	UP Parent
Kim Thornton	HPMS Teacher
Jayci Underwood	Armstrong Teacher
Lydia Walden	Director of Academic & Support Services
Stacy Wang	HPHS Freshman
Brenda West	Executive Director of Personnel

Whitney Wilbur	HPHS Teacher
Lisa Wilson	Assistant Superintendent for Education Services
Mindy Woods	HPMS CIT
Dr. Melynda Wright	HPHS Teacher
Alexandra Yeager	HPHS Sophomore

#### B. District of Innovation Timeline

Timeline	Date
Curriculum and Instruction Board Workshop is presented information about Districts of Innovation	January 10, 2017
Board of Trustees approves resolution to develop District of Innovation plan	January 10, 2017
Board of Trustees holds Public Hearing	January 10, 2017
Board appoints District Leadership Counsel to serve as the District of Innovation Committee	January 10, 2017
Survey is sent to district administrators for suggestions and feedback	January 11, 2017
District of Innovation opportunity is introduced to PTA Presidents	January 11, 2017
District of Innovation is discussed at Principals' Meeting	January 12, 2017
District of Innovation Committee develops innovation plan	January 11-February 8, 2017
District Leadership Council meets to discuss proposal	February 9, 2017
Proposal is reviewed by District counsel	February 2017
Curriculum and Instruction Board Workshop reviews District of Innovation Plan	February 14, 2017
Proposal is posted on the district website for 30-day public review	February 15-March 16, 2017
Board notifies Texas Commissioner of Education of its intent to vote on adoption of proposed plan	February 15, 2017
District Leadership Council (DLC) holds Public Meeting and votes to approve plan by majority vote	March 7, 2017
Board of Trustees approves the District of Innovation Plan by unanimous vote	March 21, 2017
Board formally notifies Texas Commissioner of Education of plan's adoption	March 23, 2017
Board of Trustees conducts annual review of Innovation Plan	Annually through school year 2020-2021

## C. Innovation Plan Development

The Local District of Innovation Plan was developed through a series of steps.

1. A survey was sent to the campus principals and district administrators. Each was asked to consider the possible exemptions available and indicate those for which they wished to have additional discussion.
2. The PTA presidents were introduced to the concept.
3. The options were discussed during a Principals' Meeting.
4. Meetings were held with district administrators.
5. District counsel was consulted.

Once the exemptions were compiled, each was discussed and evaluated on the basis of the following criteria:

- Identify the challenge intended to overcome.
- Describe how enacting the exemptions will address the identified challenge(s).
- Discuss how the plan assists in achieving district goals.
- Identify any budget considerations arising from adoption of the plan.
- Determine the measures that will determine whether or not the plan assists in meeting the goals.

The committee also developed strategies, in collaboration with HPISD Communications, to ensure that the plan will be communicated effectively with the entire HPISD community.

## IV. Innovation Plan Exemptions

Under the flexibility provided by the District of Innovation Plan, HPISD seeks exemption from several laws currently under the Texas Education Code and will instead implement unique, local guidelines that better meet the needs of the students, staff and community.

### A. First day of instruction

Exemption from Texas Education Code §25.0811(a)

Other: Board policy EB(LEGAL), EB(LOCAL)

#### *Current Statute*

TEC §25.0811 First day of instruction

(a) "Except as provided by this section, a school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August."

#### *Rationale*

This law restricts the District from having the flexibility to design its calendar to best meet the needs of its students, staff and community. Because the community expects the fall semester to end with final exams before the Winter Break, the restricted start date creates a significant imbalance in the number of instructional days in each semester. By

starting earlier, not only will there be greater balance, particularly important in semester-long courses, but it will allow more instructional days prior to state testing dates. This exemption could also result in an earlier end date, closer to the Memorial Day holiday, which is also an expressed preference of the community. Finishing school closer to the Memorial Day holiday will better allow students to enroll in summer school classes within the district as well as institutions of higher learning.

#### *Local Innovation Plan*

With input from staff and community stakeholders, the District Calendar Committee will develop its annual calendar recommendation for approval by the Board of Trustees. Through the exemption, the first day of instruction can begin prior to the fourth Monday in August. Preference will be given to starting instruction around the third week in August with assurances to the community that it will not begin prior to the second Monday in August.

#### B. Teacher certification

Exemption from Texas Education Code §21.003, TEC §21.057

Other: Board policy DBA(LEGAL), DBA(LOCAL), DK(LEGAL), DK(LOCAL), DK(EXHIBIT)

#### *Current Statutes*

TEC §21.003(a) Certification Required

“A person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern or teacher trained, librarian, educational aide, administrator, educational diagnostician, or school counselor by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued as provided by Subchapter B.”

TEC §21.057(a-e) Parental Notification

(a) “A school district that assigns an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher to the same classroom for more than 30 consecutive instructional days during the same school year shall provide written notice of the assignment to a parent or guardian of each student in that classroom.”

(b) “The superintendent of the school district shall provide the notice required by Subsection (a) not later than the 30<sup>th</sup> instructional day after the date of the assignment of the inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher.”

#### *Rationale*

Current laws require a district to submit a request to TEA when the district is unable to hire a certified teacher or if a teacher is teaching outside of his/her certification area. Relief from these statutes will allow the district flexibility to make local decisions in determining who is hired in the hard to fill areas, such as career and technical education (CTE) and science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM).

#### *Local Innovation Plan*

The district fully intends to maintain its commitment to hire certified professionals and will continue to seek employees with appropriate certifications. However, this exemption will permit district leadership to have the flexibility to establish its own criteria in hiring quality

personnel who may have knowledge in the hard-to fill areas of CTE and STEAM but lack the traditional certifications. This would permit hiring community college instructors, university professors, and individuals from trades, industries and vocations with real world experience and industry knowledge of the field. The district will establish its own criteria for such hiring under this exemption.

### C. Class size limits in grades K-4

Exemption from TEC §25.112a-g, TEC §25.113a-b

Other: Board policy BF(LEGAL), EEB(LEGAL)

#### *Current Statutes*

##### TEC §25.112                      Class Size

- (a) "Except as otherwise authorized by this section, a school district may not enroll more than 22 students in a kindergarten, first, second, third or fourth grade class."
- (b) "Not later than the 30<sup>th</sup> day after the first day of the 12-week period for which a district whose average daily attendance is adjusted under Section 42.005(c) is claiming an exemption under Subsection (a), the district shall notify the commissioner in writing that the district is claiming an exemption for the period stated in the notice."
- (c) "In determining the number of students to enroll in any class, a school district shall consider the subject to be taught, the teaching methodology to be used, and any need for individual instruction."
- (d) "On application of a school district, the commissioner may except the district from the limit in Subsection (a) if the commissioner finds the limit works an undue hardship on the district. An exception expires at the end of the school year for which it is granted."
- (e) "A school district seeking an exception under Subsection (d) shall notify the commissioner and apply for the exception not later than the the later of:
- (1) October 1; or
  - (2) the 30<sup>th</sup> day after the first school day the district exceeds the limit in Subsection (a)."
- (f) "If a school district repeatedly fails to comply with this section, the commissioner may take any appropriate action authorized to be taken by the commissioner under Section 39.131."
- (g) "[Expired Acts 2009, 81<sup>st</sup> Leg., ch 1347, ..."

##### TEC §25.113                      Notice of Class Size

- (a) "A campus or district that is granted an exception under Section 25.112(d) from class size limits shall provide written notice of the exceptions to the parent of or person standing in parental relation to each student affected by the exception...."
- (b) "The notice required by Subsection (a) must be provided not later than the 31<sup>st</sup> day after:
- (1) the first day of the school year; or

(2) the date the exception is granted after the beginning of the school year.”

#### *Rationale*

State law limits class sizes to a maximum of 22 students in kindergarten through grade four. If any class exceeds that limit, the district notifies the Board and is required to file a waiver with the Texas Education Agency that is typically approved without exception. Upon notification of TEA's approval, the district is then required to notify parents of the approved class size exception via a highly specified notice. Frequently these class sizes fluctuate during the course of the year with this process only accounting for the often limited time during which a class exceeds 22 students.

#### *Local Innovation Plan*

The district fully intends to continue its practice of maintaining reasonable class sizes in kindergarten through grade four. Those standards include staffing at 23:1 with a maximum K-4 class size of 24:1. However, flexibility from these statutes will allow principals to make decisions about reasonable class sizes based on local factors such as the concept of neighborhood schools, the needs and interactions of the particular students involved, the age of the students, the subjects to be taught, and the teacher's skill and experience. The administration will continue to consider the timing in the school year, available space and the need for another teacher or teacher aide to ensure that decisions about class size continue to be made in the best interest of the students. This exemption would provide relief from the reporting encumbrances currently required by state law.

#### D. Credit by examination without prior instruction

Exemption from TEC §28.023

Other: Board policy EHDC(LEGAL)

#### *Current Statute*

TEC §28.023                      Credit By Examination

(c) “A school district shall give a student in grade level six or above credit for a subject on the basis of an examination for credit in the subject approved by the board of trustees under Subsection (a) if the student scores in the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile or above on the examination or if the student achieves a score as provided by Subsection (c-1).

#### *Rationale*

During the 84<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislative Session, state law changed the passing rate required by students for acceleration through credit by examination. The previous requirement was a score of 90 or higher; the new requirement is a score of 80 or above in order to receive credit for a course without prior instruction.

#### *Local Innovation Plan*

Relief from this statute would permit the district to increase the standard required to become eligible for acceleration. If the innovation is approved, the passing standard will

be determined by a district committee and will not exceed the previously required score of 90.

During the two years during which the lower score was required, the district found that students were being given credit to advance in courses for which they were proving less equipped to be successful. Requiring a higher score ensures that the student has more thoroughly mastered the content and will be better prepared to succeed in the next course or in post-secondary courses.

## V. Term

The Highland Park ISD Local District of Innovation Plan has a term of five years, beginning with the 2016-2017 school year and concluding at the end of the 2020-2021 school year. The Board of Trustees has the right to amend or terminate the plan at any time and will review the plan annually. If additions or revisions are recommended, the review process will resume with the District Leadership Council, move through the required web posting and notification to the Commissioner and continue with a majority vote by the DLC. Finally, a 2/3rds majority vote of the Board will be required for final approval of the revision. Through this increased autonomy and greater local control, HPISD hopes to better meet the needs of its students and community.