

HISD PRESS RELEASE

Public invited to give feedback on new plan to increase HISD autonomy in local educational decisions

March 23, 2021 – The Houston Independent School District has developed a plan that could increase the district’s influence on local educational decisions, and the public is invited to provide feedback and learn more during a virtual public hearing on Thursday.

The District of Innovation Planning Committee has produced a draft of the local innovation plan to allow the HISD to become a District of Innovation (DOI). See the draft at HoustonISD.org/DOI.

By adopting District of Innovation status, HISD would be able to choose to exempt itself from specific statutes in the Texas Education Code, giving the district greater control over decisions directly impacting HISD students and their educational outcomes.

While districts across the state have implemented District of Innovation in a variety of ways, the HISD administration, in partnership with the HISD Board of Education, set the following parameters that outline the district’s plan to the following exemptions from state law:

1. Texas Education Code Sections 21.003 and 21.053 which limit the District’s ability to hire teachers to teach high-demand Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses when high-quality, certified teachers are not available
2. Texas Education Code 25.0811 which prohibits the District from beginning instruction before the fourth Monday in August
3. Texas Education Code 25.092 which prohibits a student from being given credit or a final grade for a class unless the student is in attendance for at least 90 percent of the days that the class is offered

These exemptions allow HISD to monitor the needs of district students and families and make decisions that better fit local needs. This draft represents many hours of research, discussion, and work by the District of Innovation Planning Committee, which brought a wide diversity of perspectives to the planning process.

Focus groups were conducted to receive critical feedback from a variety of stakeholders, including community members, teachers, campus leaders, students, and central office staff.

“We are excited about the opportunities that these increased flexibilities will provide to HISD students,” said Interim HISD Superintendent Grenita Lathan. “As a district, we remain steadfast in exploring every means possible to ensure that every HISD student receives a high-quality education.”

As a next step, the District Advisory Committee (DAC) will hold a public hearing on the plan at 5 p.m. on Thursday, March 25. This will be an opportunity for the public to share input.

If you would like to speak at the meeting, please register at <http://bit.ly/DACSpeakers>.

To view but not participate in the public hearing, visit HoustonISD.org/LiveTV.

If the DAC affirms the vote by a simple majority vote, the plan will proceed to a vote of the HISD Board of Trustees on Thursday, April 8. For the plan to be adopted, the board must pass it with a two-thirds majority vote.

If approved, the plan would begin at the start of the 2021-2022 school year and would stay in effect until the end of the 2025-2026 school year.

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The Houston Independent School District is the largest school district in Texas and the seventh-largest in the United States, with 280 schools and more than 209,772 students. The 333-square-mile district is one of the largest employers in the Houston metropolitan area, with more than 27,000 employees.

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