
Harrold ISD

Districts of Innovation Plan

Approved / March 30, 2017

I. School Start and End Dates

TEC §25.0811; §25.0812

Status Quo Guidelines and Limitations:

Student instruction cannot start before the fourth Monday of August. Waivers are no longer allowed to alter start date. The last day of instruction may not occur before May 15 of any year. Again, no waiver is allowed. These changes occurred through the lobby of tourism groups which argued the loss of business due to local control of school calendars.

Our Innovative Plan:

To meet local community needs Harrold ISD will offer a more balanced calendar through the design of the instructional periods, start dates and end dates. Instruction will not begin before the second Monday of August and may end before May 15 if the district's instructional goals have been attained. Advantages are it will allow for first semester to end before holiday break and will achieve more balanced six-week grading periods and semester schedules. In addition with the new 75,600 minute requirements and state assessments given in early May, it may be possible to end the school year by May 15.

II. Teacher Certifications

TEC §21.003(a); TEC§ 21.057

Status Quo Guidelines and Limitations:

TEC §21.003(a) states 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 a subject outside of his or her certification, the district must request emergency certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or State Board of Educator Certification. TEC§ 21.057 requires that a school district provide parental notification if the district assigns an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher to the same classroom for more than 30 consecutive instructional days.

Our Innovative Plan:

Harrold ISD is committed to placing a life-changer in every classroom. In order to best serve Harrold ISD students, decisions on certification will be handled locally. The current state teacher certification requirements inhibit the District's ability to hire teachers who may be qualified but not officially certified. Harrold ISD seeks to establish its own local qualification requirements and its own requirements for training of professionals and experts to teach courses in lieu of the requirements set forth in law. By obtaining exemption from existing teacher certification requirements, the District will have the flexibility to hire applicants seeking assignments outside of their traditional certification area. This will enrich applicant pools in specific content areas and afford more students the opportunity to take dual credit courses if certified teachers are not available to teach those courses. In addition, this exemption will afford the District the flexibility to hire professionals in certain trades or vocations to teach the crafts of those trades or vocations (such as welding, fine arts, health sciences, law, etc.) if certified teachers are not available to teach those courses.

IV. Teacher Contract Day Requirements

TEC §21.401(b)

Status Quo Guidelines and Limitations:

TEC Chapter 21 defines a teacher contract as a ten month contract equivalent to 187 days. Since the number of school days required of students has been potentially lessened due to the current 75,600 minute school-year, the 187 day requirement for teachers is now seemingly arbitrary.

Our Innovative Plan:

The Harrold ISD plan would allow local Board of Trustees control over the teacher contract days. Teachers and staff on 10 month contracts will be required to work a minimum of 7 days beyond the scheduled student calendar instructional days. Staff development will include professional development and workdays for teachers. This plan will result in an increased daily rate of staff whose salary is attached to the state salary scale. Obviously this will enhance teacher recruitment, retention, and morale.

This will go into effect immediately upon approval of this plan (Spring 2017).

V. Teacher and Principal Evaluations

TEC §21.352; §21.353; §21.354; §21.3541

Status Quo Guidelines and Limitations:

The state of Texas has used the Professional Development and Appraisal System (PDAS) teacher appraisal system since 1997. The state is issuing a new teacher appraisal system in 2016-2017, called the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS) and the Texas Principal Evaluation and Support System (T-PESS). The domains within these systems are developed by the State to meet the needs of the entire State of Texas. These systems require that state standardized test scores be used as one of the evaluation measures for teachers and administrators. Harrold ISD believes relying on state standardized test scores for teacher evaluation purposes can lead to inaccurate assumptions since our small numbers of students tested could corrupt the resulting data. If a teacher only has three students testing in a certain instructional area, a poor testing result could very well be poor instruction. However, it could be the result of two out of three of the students having eaten bad seafood the night before. Bad clams should not result in a bad teacher or principal evaluation.

Our Innovative Plan:

In order to promote professional development that focuses on individual growth, the Harrold ISD needs to maintain local flexibility to continue its current practice of using various measures, including multiple observations, goal setting and tracking, and student growth progress toward learning objectives, as evaluation measures on teacher and administrator appraisals. Harrold ISD will develop its own teacher and administration evaluations.

This will go into effect immediately upon approval of this plan (Spring 2017).

VI. District Level and Site-Based Decision Making

TEC §11.251; §11.252; §11.253; §11.255

Status Quo Guidelines and Limitations:

Current TEC laws mandate district and campus committees, their positional makeup, and guidelines for plans that need updating yearly with Board of Trustee approval. These guidelines were made with large districts in mind since fulfilling those committee replacement requirements could very well utilize at least one-half to three-quarters of a small district employee list. In addition, the improvement guidelines required to be addressed are obvious to the required outcomes needed for a successful educational institution. Assembling a team and “updating” required goals (which may be suited for communities other than ours) and strategies on an annual basis can be mind-numbingly needless. The majority of the areas required to be addressed are “programs.” Harrold ISD doesn’t do “programs.” We help and educate “students” who have “issues” that in larger districts require an entire “program.” Because so much is to be considered as a part of the district and campus improvement plan (including federal and state law), leaders (both principals and teacher leaders) must have deep conversation prior to the site-based management committee meetings. Since the plan is extensive in nature, it must be written and prepared before the committee meets. As a result, the committee is merely a rubber-stamp committee with little de facto power.

If all of the above isn’t enough, many of these goals are required for maintaining eligibility for ESSA federal funds. Harrold ISD does not receive ESSA funds, and has not for at least a decade.

Our Innovative Plan:

Harrold ISD is claiming exemption from the specific provisions of Sec. 11.251 – 11.255 and shall determine the processes and memberships of its site-based management personnel. While Harrold ISD will continue to develop district and campus improvement plans based upon a local needs’ assessment, the district is claiming exemption from the specific mandates of these sections and shall determine the contents of its plans and required authors. Regardless of whether any adjustments or changes are made to site-based decision-making rules and laws, Harrold ISD believes this issue to be a local decision as opposed to a state mandate.