

# Charlotte Independent School District



**District of Innovation Plan  
2021-2022 to 2025-2026**

## **Background**

During the 84th Texas Legislative Session in the Spring of 2015, House Bill 1841 was passed, which provides the opportunity for Texas public school districts to pursue the designation of District of Innovation (DOI) for five years, provided the District continues to meet performance requirements in both academics and finance. This provides local districts the opportunity to seek exemptions from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code (TEC) to afford more flexibility and local control for innovative programming.

Districts of Innovation may be exempt from a multitude of state statutes and will have:

- Greater local control as the decision maker over the educational and instructional model for students;
- Increase freedom and flexibility, with accountability, relative to state mandates that govern educational programming; and
- Empowerment to innovate and think differently

## **Process to become a District of Innovation**

The Board of Trustees approved a resolution to become a District of Innovation on March 10th, 2021. A public hearing on becoming a District of Innovation was held, and the Board of Trustees appointed the District Advisory Committee to develop the Innovation Plan.

The District Advisory Committee met on March 19, 2021, and composed a District of Innovation Plan based on district needs.

The proposed District of Innovation Plan will be posted on March 22 - April 30, 2021, on the district website for the required 30 days, and Charlotte ISD will notify the Commissioner of intent to adopt the District of Innovation Plan.

On May 3, 2021, the District Advisory Committee will hold a public meeting to consider the final plan and vote on the plan.

The Board of Trustees will vote on the adoption of the District of Innovation Plan on May 12, 2021.

The District of Innovation Plan will be posted on the district website on May 6, 2021, if approved by the Board.

The District of Innovation Plan was amended on July 28, 2022.

- Section Amended: **Innovation:** Teacher Certification

The District of Innovation Plan was amended on August 31, 2023

- Section Amended: **Innovation:** Teacher Certification/Parent Notification and Class Size

## **Term**

Under current law, the plan may have a term of up to five years, and it may be amended, rescinded, or renewed during that time period. The Charlotte ISD Innovation Plan will begin with the 2021-2022 school year and conclude at the end of the 2025-2026 school year.

## Charlotte Independent School District

### District of Innovation Plan

The CISD District of Innovation Committee members, comprised of the District Advisory Committee, developed the Local Innovative Plan. Three exemptions are included in the Charlotte ISD Innovation Plan, which will be in effect beginning with the 2021-2022 school year and conclude at the end of the 2025-2026 school year.

**Innovation:** First Day of Instruction (School Start Date)

**Current Statute:** Texas Education Code Section 25.0811: A school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August.

**Proposed Innovation:** The Charlotte ISD District of Innovation Committee has determined a school calendar that offers the option to begin the first day of instruction prior to the fourth Monday in August (as currently required by the TED) will provide the District the ability to effectively meet the instructional needs of all students. Such a calendar will better prepare our students for college and career readiness by aligning start/end dates with local colleges in partnerships with the District and all more instructional time for students before state assessments.

**Innovation:** Probationary Contracts

**Current Statute:** Texas Education Code Section 21.102(b) 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.

**Proposed Innovation:** The Charlotte ISD District of Innovation Committee has determined experienced employees, subject to Chapter 21, that have been employed in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, are subject to a probationary contract issued for up to two years from the last date of district employment. Partial years will not qualify toward the two-year requirement. This will allow the district more time to sufficiently evaluate staff members' effectiveness.

**Innovation:** Teacher Certification

**Current Statute:** Texas Education Code Section TEC §21.003, §21.044, §21.053 AND §21.057 requires that a person may not be employed as a teacher by a district unless the person holds an appropriate certification or permit issued by the appropriate state agency.

**Proposed Innovation:** The Charlotte ISD District of Innovation Committee has determined decisions on certification for teachers in the Career and Technical Education courses, and to hire teachers to teach outside of their field/grade level in situations where vacancies are not filled. It is the intent of the District to limit the use of this exemption and the District will always seek to hire certified and highly qualified teachers. All special education and ESL teachers will continue to be SBEC certified. The District will move to establish its own local criteria/qualifications for hard-to-fill positions. The district will not be required to provide parental notification as long as the teacher meets district standards for local certification approval. The Board of Trustees must approve all assignments of teachers who do not have proper certification annually as recommended by the superintendent. This will allow more flexibility in course offerings for our students and alleviate some difficulty in filling teaching assignments in areas that have historically been difficult to fill due to our rural area.

**Local Guidance:**

- The campus principal must submit the request and reason for the request to the superintendent to allow a certified teacher to teach outside of their field or grade level along with any documentation or credentials the certified teacher possess that qualifies them to teach the subject.
- The campus principal must submit the request and reason for the request to the superintendent for local certification for uncertified individuals along with any documentation or credentials the individual possesses that qualify them to teach the subject.
- The superintendent will approve or deny requests for local certification and will submit approved requests to the Board of Trustees for approval prior to the individual beginning employment.
- Uncertified teachers will be provided with a teacher mentor, and have increased observation feedback, professional development, instructional resources, and other supports.

## **Innovation: Class Size**

**Current Statute:** Texas Education Code §25.111-13, §25.112(A-G), §25.113(A-B)  
A 22 to 1 student/teacher ratio is required by State law for Kindergarten to 4<sup>th</sup> grade classes. When a class exceeds this limit, the district must complete and file a waiver with the Texas Education Agency, and the district must notify parents of waivers to class size limits.

**Proposed Innovation:** While the district intends to keep a 22:1 ratio for the past several years, a class size waiver to TEA has been required. Based on our observations, we believe that a local solution to class size adjustments should be made without submitting waivers to TEA. Charlotte ISD will continuously monitor enrollment at the elementary campuses. In the event a class size exceeds 22:1 ratio a waiver will not be submitted but the Superintendent will provide the Board of Trustees with updated enrollment numbers and action plans