

Proposed Amendment to Crandall ISD District of Innovation Plan



HB 1842, of the 84th Legislative Session, allows Texas districts to qualify as a District of Innovation. Districts of Innovation are able to gain local control of certain operations that are currently under the control of the Texas Education Agency that may inhibit the goals of the district as outlined in a locally adopted Innovation Plan.

Renewal Approved by Board, January 25, 2021

Area of Innovation:

Within our current local innovation plan, with regard to each area of innovation, the Crandall Independent School District declares exemption from the listed statutory provisions, as well as any implementing rules or regulations promulgated pursuant to those statutory provisions by any state agency or entity, including but not limited to the Commissioner of Education, Texas Education Agency, State Board for Educator Certification, and State Board of Education.

Innovation Plan Amendment Committee Members:

Dr. Holly Keown	Chief of Staff, Central Office
Billy McMahan	Elementary Teacher, Walker Elementary
Greg Hamilton	Secondary Teacher, Crandall Middle School
Kevin Morris	Secondary Teacher, Compass Academy
Clarissa Gordon	Elementary Teacher, Dietz Elementary
Gloria Pelcher	Elementary Teacher, Dietz Elementary
Mynetta Miles	Paraprofessional, Dietz Elementary
Stefani Cause	Non-Classroom Professional
Lynndee Rogers	Administrative Assistant, Central Office
Jacob Wilson	Elementary Teacher, Walker Elementary
Kimberly Allen	Elementary Teacher, Wilson Elementary
Erica Jander	Elementary Teacher, Wilson Elementary
Kristen Epp	Paraprofessional, Wilson Elementary
Wendy Dye	Non-Classroom Professional, Wilson Elementary
Breanna Zacca	Elementary Teacher, Martin Elementary
Susana Rogers	Elementary Teacher, Martin Elementary
Melinda Mangum	Non-Classroom Professional, Martin Elementary
Michelle Hope	Administrative Assistant, Martin Elementary
Bria Muriel	Elementary Teacher, Noble Reed Elementary
Laura Cates	Elementary Teacher, Noble Reed Elementary
Stephanie Reyes	Paraprofessional, Noble Reed Elementary
Nancy Soto	Elementary Teacher, Noble Reed Elementary
Amy McAfee	Principal, Crandall Middle School
Tanya Reyna	Secondary Teacher, Crandall Middle School
Teresa Ditmars	Paraprofessional, Crandall Middle School
John Yeary	Secondary Teacher, Crandall High School
Paul Phlieger	Secondary Teacher, Crandall High School
Taylor Magnifico	Administrative Assistant, Crandall High School
Brooke Merritt	Assistant Principal, Crandall High School
Brandon Fowler	Community Member
Shannon Barnett	Community Member and Parent
Cassie Willis	Community Member and Parent

Proposed December 13, 2021

Crandall ISD has determined a need to apply for an amendment to our District of Innovation Plan to allow exemptions for flexibility. The committee met on November 29, 2021 to review the current plan and proposed the following amendments:

Amendments:

1. Teacher Certification
2. Class Size
3. Probationary Contracts for 5 of 8 Teaching Experience

Teacher Certification

Texas Education Code §21.003 outlines state certification standards for teachers. A person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern or teacher trainee, librarian, educational aide, administrator, educational diagnostician, or school counselor by the district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued as provided by Subchapter B.

Rationale for Exemption

- An exemption from these requirements allows Crandall ISD to issue a contract to individuals who do not hold a teaching certificate, but whom the district deems best to teach in a particular area. Crandall ISD is committed to hiring the best staff available and lists “Train, support, and retain staff “as one of its district strategic goals. This exemption relates only to those positions the District identifies as difficult to fill and would be assessed on an individual basis. Staff hired under this exemption will benefit from the same rights and responsibilities as certified teachers within the district. After the required posting period, candidate interviews, and the principal has exhausted all means to hire a highly qualified teacher, a principal may pursue a candidate with a bachelor’s degree in that specified area of assignment for both elementary and secondary positions. Candidates with a bachelor’s degree, who would like to pursue teaching, would be given a grace period of a semester to be accepted into a Teacher Certification Program.

Benefit of Exemption for CISD

- This will allow the district to fill open positions quickly and eliminate the need for a long-term substitute in the classroom until a certified applicant is hired.
- Crandall ISD will continue to seek certified candidates for all teaching positions; however, the district will have the flexibility to hire applicants with a bachelor’s degree in the specified area of assignment.

Proposed December 13, 2021

Local Guidelines

- The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request based on the bachelor's degree for the prospective teacher that would qualify the individual to teach that subject/or subjects.
- The superintendent must approve the selection and report the action to the Board at the first board meeting following the assignment.
- The District and local campus will assess appropriate training needs for any teacher hired under this exemption.
- The applicant will be required to enter into a Teacher Certification Program by the end of the first semester and to obtain the required certification for the assignment.
- This is a local certification only and does not transfer to another school district. The contract issued will allow the district to separate if needed at the semester if the employee has not met the requirements of securing a Teacher Certification Program.
- We will provide a contract that has the option to end the agreement if the employee does not enter into a Teacher Certification Program by the end of the semester.

Note: These exemptions would not include educators serving in Bilingual or Special Education Programs (Federal Funding).

Class Size

Texas Education Code (TEC 25.112) Except as otherwise authorized by this section, a school district may not enroll more than 22 students in a prekindergarten, kindergarten, first, second, third, or fourth grade class. That limitation does not apply during:

- (1) any 12-week period of the school year selected by the district, in the case of a district whose average daily attendance is adjusted under Section [48.005\(c\)](#); or
 - (2) the last 12 weeks of any school year in the case of any other district.
- (b) Not later than the 30th day after the first day of the 12-week period for which a district whose average daily attendance is adjusted under Section [48.005\(c\)](#) 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 later of:
- (1) October 1; or
 - (2) the 30th 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.

Rationale for Exemption

- While the maximum number of students in K-4 classrooms may be addressed by a state waiver, the waivers must be applied for annually. Due to the fast growth in Crandall ISD, we are seeking the exception from TEC 25.112, the district would have the flexibility for all campuses and classrooms for the duration of the District of Innovation Designation and would not be required to seek waivers annually. While the District intends to remain within the guidelines of the current education code as much as possible, the District seeks flexibility to provide the best learning environment for our K-4 students, including more flexibility when teaching, creative ways of delivering instruction, different types of instructional delivery and the ability to manage the increase in class sizes.

Local Guidelines

- In the event a classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio in grades K-4, the class sizes will be reviewed by the appropriate district and campus administration.
- The Board of Trustees will be informed of K-4 classes that exceed 22:1.
- TEA waivers and parent notification for class sizes in grades K-4 exceeding 22 will not be required.
- This gives Crandall ISD the flexibility without having the bureaucracy of waivers within the Texas Education Agency.

Probationary Contracts for 5 of 8 Years Teaching Experience

Under current guidelines (Texas Education Code 21.102b), probationary contract may not be for a term exceeding one school year. The probationary contract may be renewed for two additional one-year periods, for a maximum permissible probationary contract period of three school years, except that the probationary period 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 by the district.

Rationale for Exemption

- This period of time may not be sufficient to evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom since teacher contact timelines demand that employment decisions must be made prior to the availability of the end of the year classroom and student data. For experienced teachers, new to Crandall ISD, who have been employed in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, a second probationary contract may be offered when needed to benefit the teacher and students served.

Local Guidelines

- This action requires principal recommendation, in collaboration with the appropriate human resources administrator and consideration and approval by the superintendent.
- This amendment will give Crandall ISD campus administrators the option to recommend a second year probationary contract to teachers who are new to the district, but have taught at least five of the last eight years in public education.