

**CEDAR HILL  
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**



# INNOVATION PLAN





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# DISTRICT OF INNOVATION TIMELINE

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<b>January 9, 2017</b>	Board Presentation: Overview of District of Innovation (DOI)
<b>February 13, 2017</b>	Board adopts Resolution Board votes to develop Local Innovation Plan Board delegates authority to Superintendent to appoint District of Innovation Committee
<b>February 17, 2017</b>	Executive Leadership met to discuss Local Innovation Plan
<b>February 21, 2017</b>	District of Innovation Committee met to identify possible areas for exemptions
<b>February 27, 2017</b>	District of Innovation Committee met to identify possible areas for exemptions
<b>March 7, 2017</b>	District of Innovation Committee met to finalize Local Innovation Plan
<b>March 10, 2017</b>	District of Innovation Committee vote to approve plan by majority vote.
<b>March 10, 2017 – April 10, 2017</b>	Plan posted to District website for public review & comment with notification of intent to vote
<b>April 10, 2017</b>	Board of Trustees vote to adopt Local Innovation Plan
<b>December 2, 2019</b>	Board Presentation: Overview of District of Innovation Amendment Process
<b>December 16, 2019</b>	Board Presentation: Timeline for District of Innovation Amendment Process
<b>December 17, 2019</b>	District of Innovation Committee met to discuss & identify possible areas for exemption through the amendment process
<b>January 17, 2020</b>	Proposed amendments posted to District website for public review & comment
<b>February 21, 2020</b>	DEIC vote to approve amendments by majority vote
<b>February 29, 2020</b>	Board of Trustees vote to adopt amendments to Local Innovation Plan
<b>March 3, 2020</b>	Notification of Amendment to TEA Commissioner

*Innovation Plan adopted 2017-2018 and amended 2019-2020.*

## **I. Introduction**

House Bill 1842 passed during the 84<sup>th</sup> Legislative Summary, permits Texas public schools districts to become Districts of Innovation and to obtain exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. On February 13, 2017, Cedar Hill Independent School District's Board of Trustees passed a resolution to initiate the process of designation of a District of Innovation (DOI). The purpose of passing the Resolution was to increase local control over District operations and to support innovation and local initiatives to improve the educational outcomes for the benefit of students, staff, and the community.

Comprised of diverse leaders representing a cross-section of the District's various stakeholders, including students, teachers, administrators, parents, and community members, the District of Innovation Committee met on February 21, 27, and March 7, 2017, to discuss and draft this Local Innovation Plan ("Plan") Based on direction provided by the Board and input from various District stakeholders, the Committee proposed the original Plan.

Remaining members of the original District of Innovation Committee met on December 17, 2019 to review the current plan and identify additional areas for exemption to further increase local control and improve effectiveness.

## **II. Term**

The term of the Plan is for five years, beginning at the start of the 2017–18 school year and concluding at the end of the 2021–22 school year, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. The Committee will continually monitor the effectiveness of the Plan and recommend to the Board any suggested modifications to the Plan.

Although amended in the 2019-2020 school year, the plan will remain in effect through the end of the 2021-22 school year. At that time, the District of Innovation Committee will evaluate the current needs of the District and determine what, if any, flexibilities are necessary to improve the educational outcomes for the benefit of CHISD students, staff, and stakeholders.

### **III. Comprehensive Educational Program**

The Plan's comprehensive educational program is guided by and aligned with the Board's Vision, Mission, and Priorities for the District.

#### **a. Vision**

The Cedar Hill Independent School District will become a premier school district providing innovative opportunities and academic challenges preparing all students for the global marketplace.

#### **b. Mission**

The mission of Cedar Hill Independent School District is to develop confident students with: character, knowledge and skills to maximize their potential and excel in any endeavor they pursue.

#### **c. Goals and Priorities**

At CHISD, we will:

- a. Design and implement a rigorous instructional learning system that is data driven, fosters student engagement, and produces college and career-ready students
- b. Remain efficient, trustworthy, and transparent in our financial practices and business processes
- c. Align the budget process to achieve district goals
- d. Recruit, develop, and retain highly effective and engaging employees in an environment that embraces diversity
- e. Provide a safe, efficient, healthy, and orderly learning environment
- f. Foster an environment of respect, cooperation, and open communication with parents and community partners

#### **IV. Granted and Requested Amendments to Texas Education Code Currently Inhibiting District Goals and Priorities**

##### **A. Instructional Calendar (TEC 25.0811)**

Texas Education Code Section 25.0811 inhibits the District's goals by prohibiting the District from beginning instruction before the fourth Monday in August. Flexibility to begin instruction earlier in the calendar year will enable the District to be more responsive to students by balancing the amount of instructional time in each semester, which will allow teachers to better pace and deliver instruction before and after the winter break. In addition, the flexibility to start and end the school year earlier enables students to enroll in college courses that begin in early June, thereby increasing college and career readiness.

##### **B. Teacher Certification (TEC §21.003)**

Texas Education Code Sections 21.003, as well as 19 Texas Administrative Code Chapter 231, limits the ability to hire teachers in highly specialized or hard to fill areas. Through an exemption from existing teacher certification requirements for career/technical credit teachers, Cedar Hill ISD will be granted the flexibility to hire professionals in specialized trades and vocations to teach identified career and technical courses. This exemption permits these professionals to meet the Highly Qualified designation for the State and permits the District to obtain the same weighted funding as would be available should the professional hold a traditional teaching certification for the course.

Through additional exemption from existing teacher certification requirements for Languages Other than English (LOTE) courses as well as hard to fill, high demand dual credit courses, the District will have the flexibility to hire community college instructors, university professors, instructors with real world/native-expertise.

### **C. Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Final Grade (TEC §25.092)**

Texas Education Code Section 25.092, inhibits the District goals by not allowing the District to issue class credit or a final grade for a class if a student is not in attendance ninety percent of the time that a class is offered. In other words, the law currently requires the District to award class credit to students based on “seat time” rather than based on content mastery. This exemption will provide educational advantages to students by promoting engaged learning through innovative methods, locations, and times for instruction, thereby accommodating students with legitimate scheduling conflicts, reducing dropouts, and increasing the number of qualifying graduates. Students in traditional courses not impacted by this exemption would still be required to meet the current 90% attendance requirement.

### **D. Kindergarten Start Age (TEC §29.151)**

Texas Education Code Section 29.151 prohibits a student from entering kindergarten who is not 5 years old by September 1 of the current school year. Children mature and demonstrate readiness for school at varying rates, and their social/emotional development can be affected by a wide range of factors. The September 1<sup>st</sup> deadline for entering public kindergarten does not provide the flexibility needed for the district to serve students who are ready for school slightly earlier than the established date. Parents of students who are ready for kindergarten curriculum and learning environments are enrolling their children in private kindergarten, and then requesting to skip ahead to first grade once they enter public schools the following year, thus they have not participated in any district kindergarten program.

### **E. Probationary Contracts (TEC §21.102)**

Under current statute, probationary contracts for newly hired teachers who have been in public education for at least five of the previous eight years cannot exceed one year. This limited period is insufficient in some cases to fully determine the teacher’s effectiveness in the classroom. Exemption from Texas Education Code Section 21.102 will permit the Cedar Hill ISD the option to issue a probationary contract for a period of up to two years for experienced teachers, counselors, or nurses. This will better allow the District to evaluate their effectiveness.

## **F. Uniform Group Coverage Program (TEC §22.004)**

Texas Education Code Section 22.004 states that a school district may not make group health coverage available to its employees after the date the District implements the program of coverages provided under Chapter 1579 of the Texas Insurance Code. The current process inhibits the design of group health insurance benefits to fit the needs of Cedar Hill ISD employees. This provision also prohibits the District from procuring group health insurance benefits that may provide better coverages for its employees and at a lower cost. Increased local control of the group health benefits plan allows the District to be responsive to employee and community needs.

## **V. Local Innovation Plan Summary**

This plan reflects:

- A modified calendar addressing the local need of balanced instructional time and additional enrichment and intervention opportunities for students.
- An exemption from specified rules regarding teacher certification in order to increase flexibility when hiring in specialized areas.
- An exemption from the specified attendance requirements over location, method, and times of instruction in order to award course or grade credit.
- An innovative instructional method to expand curriculum offerings to students who demonstrate readiness for school earlier than current statute allows.
- An exemption from specified rules regarding probationary contracts for newly hired teachers, counselors, or nurses who have been in public education for at least five of the previous eight years.
- An innovative method to provide group health benefit options to employees.