



Coleman Independent School District

District of Innovation Plan

Introduction

HB 1842 was passed during the 84th Texas Legislative Session in Spring 2015, and provides Texas public school districts the opportunity to be designated as Districts of Innovation. To access these flexibilities, a school district must adopt an innovation plan, as set forth in the Texas Education Code Chapter 12A. Districts of Innovation may be exempted from a number of state statutes and will have:

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

Districts are not exempt from statutes including curriculum and graduation requirements, and academic and financial accountability.

Term

The term of the District of Innovation plan, as constituted by statute, may not exceed five years. Upon board approval, the renewed CISD DOI plan begins with the 2022-2023 school year is valid through the end of the 2026-2027 school year. The plan remains in effect for the period listed unless amended, rescinded, or renewed by Board action per state law or the Commissioner of Education terminates the plan. The plan must be amended, rescinded, or renewed by a majority vote of the District Improvement Team and requires a two-thirds majority vote of the Board to take effect. The school district must notify TEA within five business days of rescission of the plan and provide a date, not to be later than the start of the following school year, to comply with all sections of the Texas Education Code.

Process

The Board of Trustees appointed the District of Innovation Committee to discuss and draft this Local Innovation Plan. This committee represents various stakeholders across the district, including teachers, parents, campus administration, and district administration. The committee met on March 7, 2017. On March 27, 2017, the Coleman ISD Board of Trustees held a public hearing on whether the District should pursue the designation as a District of Innovation. The plan went to the Board of Trustees for final approval on August 28, 2017.

In October 2022, the District began the process of renewing the plan and posted it online for at least 30 days. Following the 30 days online, the District's Renewal of the Plan of Innovation will go back to the Board for approval.

Timeline for Renewal:

October 12, 2022 - Meeting to discuss the local innovation plan.

October 17, 2022 - Plan given to CISD Board of Trustees for public hearing.

October 18, 2022 - Board of Trustees has notified the commissioner of education of the board's intention to vote on the adoption of the proposed plan

November 15, 2022- Meeting to discuss the final local innovation plan.

November 15, 2022 - Final Version of Renewed DOI on the website for 30 days

December 15, 2022 – Public Meeting to consider the final version of the proposed plan

December 15, 2022 - The board of trustees adopts a proposed local innovation plan by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the membership of the board

December 16, 2022 - The district notifies the commissioner of approval of the plan along with a list of approved TEC exemptions (Not later than the 15th day after the date on which the board of trustees finalizes a local innovation plan either through adoption, amendment, or renewal, the district shall provide a copy of [link to] the current local innovation plan to the Texas Education Agency for posting on the agency website.)

January 1, 2023 Implementation of Plan

District of Innovation Committee Members

Brandon McDowell, Superintendent

Joy Thompson, Director of Special Programs and School Improvement

Kristi Greaves, Business Manager

Diana Dobbins, High School Principal

Thomas King, Junior High Principal

Justin Gartman, Elementary Principal

Pam Cohea, Community Member

Mark Martinez, Board of Trustee

Maria Hernandez, Parent

Jessica Elder, Teacher

Nicole Hale, Special Education

Micah McDowell, Counselor

Areas of Innovation

With regard to each area of innovation, the District declares exemption from the listed statutory provisions, as well as any implementing rules of regulation, 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.

1. Uniform School Start and End Date Exemption

(EB LEGAL)(TEC 25.0811, TEC 25.0812)

Current Statute: First and Last Day of Instruction – A school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August, with no exceptions, or end school before May 15th.

Rationale: This exemption will allow CISD the flexibility to make a local decision on each school year's start and end date to best meet the needs of the students and local community. This empowers us to personalize learning, increase college and career readiness, and balance the amount of instructional time per semester. In addition, by having flexibility at the start and end of the school year, students will be able to enroll in college courses that start in early June, thereby increasing college and career readiness. Removing the uniform start date could also let the CISD start classes as a short week, easing the transition for students entering kindergarten, middle school, and high school. This will also allow for more flexible professional development opportunities for our staff. CISD will not start school prior to the 2nd Monday of August.

2. Certification Required, Failure to Obtain Certification; Contract Void, Presentation, and Recording of Certificates, and DBA(LEGAL) Employment Requirements and Restrictions – Credentials and Records

TEC Section 21.003, TEC Section 21.0031, TEC Section 21.053(a)

Current statute: TEC Section 21.003(a) mandates that an individual holds the appropriate certificate or permit to be employed by a school district in any of the following positions: teacher, teacher intern, teacher trainee, librarian, educational aide, administrator, educational diagnostician and school counselor. TEC Section 21.0031 states that any contract entered into with a person who lacks the appropriate certificate or permit is void. TEC Section 21.053(a) states that a local school board is not obligated to honor a contract or pay for teaching duties performed until a person holds and presents a valid certificate to the district.

Rationale: CISD wants to recruit and ensure the early hiring of teachers. An exemption would allow Coleman ISD to hire early and give teachers that have passed some of the tests the chance to start their professional careers and have an opportunity later in their first year of teaching to complete the final certification examination they need. An exemption from the

presentation and recording of certificates would allow Coleman ISD to hire a teacher the candidate that is waiting on the posting of a certificate. Both of these strategies would give the District the hiring edge it needs to fill job vacancies by being able to offer opportunities more quickly than other districts. Exemption from these code sections would allow Coleman ISD to be more competitive in its recruitment, selection, and hiring processes. The ability to hire staff without the handicap of waiting on untimely authorizations from TEA and SBEC would give Coleman ISD a competitive edge to lock in applicants for job vacancies in the District, all with the goal of securing a diverse and effective workforce. In addition, exemption from these statutory provisions would enable Coleman ISD to hire highly qualified industry professionals to teach its CTE courses and expand career pathway offerings in each of its high schools. It would also afford the District the opportunity to hire college and university professors directly to teach dual credit courses at our high school campuses. This could greatly expand the dual credit offerings Coleman ISD could provide its students.

3. Teacher Employment Contracts

(DC LEGAL)(TEC 21.401)

Current statute: an educator employed under a 10-month contract must provide a minimum of 187 days of service. With the implementation of TEC 25.081, which changed the required number of “days of instruction” to “minutes of instruction,” the law did not address contract days for teachers to better align with the “minutes of instruction” requirement.

Rationale: CISD would like to have the freedom to consider the reduction in contract days to better align teacher contracts with the number of days students are in attendance.

4. Probationary Contracts

(DCA LEGAL)(TEC 21.102)

Current Statute: Under current guidelines, probationary periods 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.

Rationale: This period of time is not sufficient to evaluate the teacher’s effectiveness in the classroom since teacher contract timelines demand that employment decisions must be made prior to the availability of end-of-year classroom and student data. For experienced teachers, counselors, or nurses new to the district that has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, a probationary contract may be issued for up to two years. All other teachers, new to the profession or with less than five years of experience, hired in the district may remain on probationary status for three years and may be issued the fourth year of probation in accordance with TEC 21.102(c).

5. Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator

Ed Code 37.0012 (Related Board Policy FO (legal))

Current statute: State law requires districts to name one individual per campus to serve as a behavior coordinator. This requirement can create inefficiencies and limit the effectiveness of our administrators. The burden of placing this on one person is not sustainable, and the possible delays it creates for staff, students, and families should be avoided.

Rationale: The specific duties of the Campus Behavior Coordinator will be given to the campus principal who may divide and/or delegate duties to other principals as needed. The discipline plan of the campus

will be in the control of the campus principal and consideration will be taken to account for multiple administrators assisting with discipline. This will allow a more collaborative approach to the social and emotional support of all students on campus.

6. Transfer Students

Ed Code 25.036 (Related Board Policy FDA (local))

Current Statute: A district may choose to accept students as transfers, even if they are not entitled to admission in the district. TEC 25.036, however, has been interpreted to require a student transfer to be for a period of one school year.

Rationale: The district seeks an exemption from the one-school-year enrollment requirement for transfer students, allowing the district to accept at-risk transfer students. This exemption would allow the district to consider transfer students seeking a school change in hopes of a fresh start regarding grades, attendance, and discipline. This type of student would likely not be accepted because of the one-year requirement. Coleman ISD maintains a transfer policy under FDA (Local), requiring nonresident students to file a transfer application each school year. Out-of-district transfer requests are considered based on class size, staff availability, and the type of programs required to serve the transfer student. Additionally, campus principals review the student's discipline history, academic grades, state assessment results, and attendance records before approving or denying the transfer request. If approved, transfer students will comply with district policies and attendance requirements or be subject to revoking their transfer by the Superintendent or designee.

7. School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) Meetings

TEC §28.004(d-1) (Board Policy (BDF Legal))

Current statute: It is required for the School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) to meet a minimum of four times per year.

Rationale: The district seeks an exemption from the number of required SHAC meetings (4). The exemption would allow local control by the board of trustees and the committee members to determine the need to convene the SHAC. District size and consistency of SHAC members do not warrant meeting four times during the school year. District leaders keep SHAC members informed on the health and safety needs of students. The CISD SHAC does not need to meet four times to accomplish its intended purpose.

8. DAEP, Teacher

TEC §37.008(a)(7), Board Policy FOCA (Legal))

Current statute: Mandates that school districts provide a disciplinary alternative education program that employs only teachers who meet all certification requirements.

Rationale: An exemption from this requirement would give the district flexibility in scheduling teachers and aides as needed. A district our size has very few students assigned to a DAEP setting during the school year. Employing a full-time certified teacher specifically for DEAP is not financially feasible for our district. If a student requires a DAEP placement, the district will ensure that the student is appropriately supervised and receives the instructional support necessary to succeed academically. The campus principal will ensure appropriate supervision for students assigned to DAEP by a full-time paraprofessional trained in positive behavior supports and restorative discipline practices. Students assigned to the district's DAEP will receive instructional support from appropriately certified teachers to ensure they remain on track to complete their core academic classes.

9. Attendance:

FEC Local, Texas Education Code 25.092

Current statute: The state of Texas mandates a student may not be given credit or a final grade for a class unless the student is in attendance for at least 90% of the days the class is offered. In addition, if a student is in attendance greater than 75% and less than 90% they may be given credit or a final grade for the class if the student completes a plan approved by the campus administrator and meets the instructional requirements for the class.

Rationale: The 90% rule is an arbitrary percentage, which means school districts award credit based on attendance rather than mastery of content. This exemption will allow the students to not be penalized for missing class due to extra/co-curricular activities, academic activities, or other extenuating circumstances. It will allow the district to award credit to students when they show an understanding of the concepts regardless of their attendance rate. CISD will have the flexibility to set attendance requirements that reflect a student's specific situation and expectations. This exemption does not impact or alter existing compulsory attendance requirements or UIL rules. All students will still be held accountable for all compulsory attendance requirements. Further, opting out of Section 25.092 in no way limits or modifies a teacher's right to determine the finality of a grade in accordance with Texas Education Code Section 28.214, nor does it restrict or alter a teacher's right to assign grades in accordance with Texas Education Code Section 28.0216.