



Coleman Independent School District District of Innovation Amended 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 The plan remains in effect for the period listed unless amended, rescinded, or renewed by Board action per state law or the Commissioner of Education terminates the plan. The plan must be amended, rescinded, or renewed by a majority vote of the District Improvement Team and requires a two-thirds majority vote of the Board to take effect.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.

On Monday, August 28, 2025, the District of Innovation Committee convened to review amendments to the district plan necessitated by changes from the Texas 89th Legislative Session. Following the review, the amended plan was submitted to the Board of Trustees for final approval on the same day, August 28, 2025.

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 17, 2022 - Final Version of Renewed DOI on the website for 30 days

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 21, 2022- Revision of the DOI Meeting

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 15, 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

August 25, 2025 District of Innovation Committee convened to review amendments

August 29, 2025 the amended plan was submitted to the Board of Trustees for final approval

District of Innovation Committee Members

Brandon McDowell, Superintendent

Kristi Greaves, Business Manager

Dr. Michael Heath High School Principal

Thomas King, Junior High Principal

Tim Richter, Elementary Principal

Jeremy Watson, Community Member

Becky Dobbins, Board of Trustee President

Bobby Cox, Parent

Jessica Elder, Teacher

Justin Henley, Teacher

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. 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.

6. 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.

7. Grievance Policy

(TEC § 26.011; TEC Chapter 26A)

The Texas Education Code and the Texas Constitution requires school boards to establish procedures for parents to file complaints if they believe their student's rights have been denied.

Current Law

Current law in TEC Chapter 26A requires each school district to adopt a standardized complaint policy with several burdensome requirements, including extended timelines for filing and compressed timelines for holding conferences at each level. The law requires a policy allowing

60 calendar days for a parent to file a grievance from the date on which the parent or person knew or had reason to know of the facts giving rise to the grievance, unless the parent engaged in informal attempts to resolve the grievance, in which case the parent could have up to 90 calendar days to file a grievance. The law further requires that such complaints be heard within ten calendar days of the complaint being filed. Moreover, in contradiction of existing law in the Texas Government Code, the recently adopted provisions in the Education Code would allow the person bringing the complaint to decide if it is heard in open or closed, rather than the person against whom the complaint is brought. Finally, parents and other grievants would be allowed to add issues and claims at any point during the grievance process, making it difficult to resolve concerns at the lowest possible level.

Proposed Exemption

Coleman ISD has always and will continue to adhere to an established grievance policy with procedures and timelines outlined in local Board policy. Such policies ensure thorough documentation of each step in the grievance process and provide adequate time for complaints to be filed and for complaints to be heard. All records related to grievances—including submitted forms, communications, investigations, findings, resolutions, and any corrective actions—are systematically maintained at the district level to ensure transparency, accountability, and compliance with legal and policy standards. The District is committed to monitoring the legality and appropriateness of every decision and action taken. The District is further committed to hearing, reviewing, and attempting to resolve all parent complaints as quickly and efficiently as possible, as well as to taking corrective action, where appropriate. It is imperative that grievances and complaints are filed in a timely manner to ensure the best prompt response.

Coleman ISD's long-standing grievance policy will ensure that all such complaints are carefully reviewed and that district responses are in alignment with state and federal regulations, as well as all other local board policies. Coleman ISD seeks to be exempt from a statewide grievance policy and will continue to follow established grievance procedures as outlined in district policy. This will allow the District to hear and consider parent and employee complaints in an orderly and responsive manner and to resolve those concerns as quickly as possible.

8. Instructional Plan

(TEC § 26.0062)

Coleman ISD is committed to supporting all efforts of each campus to involve parents and community members as active participants in the education of Coleman ISD students. The District strives to support the actions of our teachers and other instructional staff as they develop curriculum and effective instructional strategies.

Current Law

Under current law, each school district must post on the district's website at the beginning of each semester an instructional plan or course syllabus for each class offered in the district for

that semester. The policy would require each teacher to provide to district administration and to the parent of each student enrolled in the class such an instructional plan or syllabus before the beginning of each semester for each class for which the teacher provides instruction.

Proposed Exemption

Because teachers use data-driven instruction aligned with student mastery of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), instructional plans are regularly adjusted to support student learning. Teacher autonomy to modify instruction based on real-time data and effective strategies does not align with publishing a fixed, comprehensive semester-long plan. Coleman ISD will not adopt a policy or create a requirement for its teachers to post at the beginning of each semester an instructional plan or course syllabus for each class offered in the District. However, Coleman ISD will ensure that course overviews are available at the request of parents or guardians.

9. Local School Library Advisory Council

(TEC § 33.025)

Coleman ISD encourages and supports all campus efforts to involve District parents and community members as active participants in the education of Coleman students.

Current Law

Current law requires the school district to establish a **School Library Advisory Council** at any campus where either 10% of parents or 50 parents (whichever is fewer) submit a written request for such a council. The council would then be tasked with reviewing library materials, providing input on the selection and removal of resources, making recommendations to ensure materials are age-appropriate and aligned with community values, reviewing all books and other material objected to by any District parent, and advising on such objections.

Proposed Exemption

While these councils are not required to be formed until such a petition is received, once the petition is received, the Board will be statutorily required to create these councils. At that time, the council(s) will not be optional for the District. Coleman ISD seeks to be exempt from Texas Education Code §33.025, which mandates the creation of a School Library Advisory Council upon petition by 10% of parents or 50 parents. The District believes this requirement is redundant and unnecessary, as Coleman ISD already has strong, board-approved procedures in place for selecting, reviewing, and reconsidering library materials – led by certified librarians and educators and aligned with state-mandated requirements and guidance from the Texas Education Agency. Creating such advisory councils risks undermining the professional judgment of educators and librarians, introduces the judgment of non-certified individuals, introduces potential for politicization of instructional resources, and could very easily lead to inconsistency across campuses. Furthermore, the statute presents an administrative burden, requiring staff time and resources that would be better directed toward student learning and support. Coleman ISD's existing processes already allow for meaningful parental review and involvement, including

access to their child's library checkout records, formal challenge procedures, and transparency in material selection. In addition, concerned individuals may also speak with teachers, administration, and/or the school board through District complaint processes and/or during the open forum of any regularly scheduled board meeting. The District remains committed to ensuring age-appropriate and educationally sound resources while maintaining an efficient and effective oversight structure that includes educator expertise and parent input, without the disruption and/or duplication caused by the statutory requirements in §33.025.

10. Acquisition of Library Materials (TEC § 33.026)

Current Law

Current law outlines specific procedures school districts must follow before acquiring library materials. The law requires that materials be reviewed and approved in advance by a certified school librarian and be verified for compliance with age-appropriateness, educational suitability, and community standards. Additionally, it mandates a multi-step vetting process, documentation of acquisition decisions, and the public posting of selected materials for 30 days before they are made available to students. Finally, current law requires the Board of Trustees to approve every library book or other resource material acquired by or donated to the District.

Proposed Exemption

Coleman ISD will be exempt from this statutory provision because the District already has **robust, board-approved policies in place that govern** the acquisition of library materials in a manner that ensures transparency, appropriateness, and educational value. These policies and procedures are implemented by certified librarians and are fully compliant with the standards required by Texas law and guidance from the Texas Education Agency. The statutory process under §33.026 introduces **redundant and restrictive requirements** that may delay access to timely instructional and enrichment resources. It also places bureaucratic barriers in front of trained library professionals who are certified to select age-appropriate, curriculum-aligned materials, that are consistent with standards set by Texas law. Furthermore, the mandated documentation process creates an **administrative burden** that consumes time and resources better allocated to instructional support. While Coleman ISD fully supports transparency and parental engagement in the school library process, the rigid requirements of TEC §33.026 are **unnecessary and duplicative** of local safeguards already in place. This exemption allows Coleman ISD to preserve instructional flexibility, uphold librarian professionalism, and provide students with timely access to enriching and appropriate materials—without compromising accountability or community trust.