



FORNEY ISD DISTRICT OF INNOVATION PLAN

Forney ISD is driven by Four Board Goals developed in conjunction with our parents, community, and stakeholders. These goals drive all decisions regarding teaching and learning in Fisd.

1. We will have a sound, safe, and efficient learning organization that supports learning, provides opportunities, and prepares for the future.
2. We will design and implement an innovative curriculum that meets the academic, social emotional, and future ready skills for all learners.
3. We will foster a culture of excellence that builds positive relationships and empowers our diverse population to achieve life-long successes.
4. We will develop school, family, and community partnerships that expand opportunities for all.

In order to best serve our students and align our learning to the Fisd board goals, we have developed a five-year District of Innovation Plan to provide opportunities that allow the Fisd Board of Trustees the ability to use their best judgement to make decisions regarding the students of Fisd. Fisd is a community with diverse students and unique challenges. Giving the board local control of these decisions will provide lasting effects on our students, parents and community. This DOI Plan is in effect as of 06/01/2021 and was amended on 9/8/2025.

I. First Day of Instruction - Board Goal 1

Exemption From: TEC §25.0811, TEC §25.0812

Manner in which law inhibits Board Goals:

TEC §25.0811 states that a school district may not begin student instruction before the 4th Monday of August. For many years this was the rule; however, districts had the option of applying for a waiver to start earlier, even as early as the 2nd Monday in August.

TEC §25.0812 states that a school district may not schedule the last day of school before May 15.

Innovative Plan: These laws restrict flexibility in the design of annual calendars to fit the needs of the school district and community. The flexibility to begin instruction earlier in August will enable the district to develop a calendar that best meets the needs of the students in Fisd. An earlier start date allows a better balance between semesters, more instructional days prior to mandatory testing, and a

school end date prior to June. By ending earlier, FISD can support students who need remediation, as well as students who are entering college or trade school. An earlier school start date allows these students to register for summer classes and attend new student orientation meetings without missing instructional time.

II. Teacher Certification Requirements - Board Goal 2

Exemption From: TEC §21.003(a) TEC §21.053, TEC §21.055, TEC §21.057

Manner in which law inhibits Board Goals:

TEC §21.003(a) states that a person may not be employed as a teacher by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued by the appropriate state agency. In the event a district cannot locate a certified teacher for a position or a teacher is teaching a subject outside of their certification, the district must request emergency certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or State Board of Educator Certification. This system is burdensome and does not take into account the unique financial and/or instructional needs of the district.

TEC §21.053 requires a teacher to present his or her certificate to the District before their employment contract will be binding, and prohibits the District from paying an educator for a teacher if the educator does not hold a valid certificate at the time.

TEC §21.055 states that if a teacher is not certified, the district may issue a teaching permit to employ the individual. This process requires notice to the Commissioner and its usefulness is extremely limited. Additionally, the language of this section could be construed to prohibit the employment of a teacher without a teaching certificate or a school district teaching permit obtained under this section.

TEC §21.057 requires that the District provide written notice to parents if an inappropriately or uncertified teacher is assigned to a classroom for more than 30 consecutive instructional days.

Innovative Plan: The district will maintain its current expectations for employee certification and will make every attempt to hire individuals with appropriate certifications for the position in question. However, when that is not reasonably possible, the district will have the flexibility to hire individuals who are knowledgeable in the area and equipped to effectively perform the duties of the position in question. Forney ISD would like the ability to locally certify teachers in areas of high demand, to better meet the educational needs of our students. These areas would include, but are not limited to CTE, bilingual education, and languages other than English. Teachers with industry certifications and native speakers with qualified experience could be eligible to teach a course through a local teaching certification. Additionally, Forney ISD will notify parents if a locally certified teacher is employed for their child's class. This process will allow more flexibility in our scheduling, and provide more options for our students in class offerings leading to industry recognized certifications.

III. Probationary Contracts - Board Goal 1

Exemption From: TEC §21.102(b)

Manner in which law inhibits Board Goals:

TEC §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.

Innovative Plan: Due to the unique nature of FISD, including our initiatives and processes, this period of time may not be 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. Upon exemption from TEC §21.102(b), all new contract employees will be subject to the probationary period set out in TEC §21.102(c), in order to allow more time for the district to fairly and thoroughly assess an employee's performance.

IV. Duty Free Lunch - Board Goal 1

Exemption From: TEC §21.405

Manner in which law inhibits Board Goals:

TEC §21.405 states that Except as provided by Subsection (c), each classroom teacher or full-time librarian is entitled to at least a 30-minute lunch period free from all duties and responsibilities connected with the instruction and supervision of students. Each school district may set flexible or rotating schedules for each classroom teacher or full-time librarian in the district for the implementation of the duty-free lunch period. The implementation of this section may not result in a lengthened school day. c) If necessary because of a personnel shortage, extreme economic conditions, or an unavoidable or unforeseen circumstance, a school district may require a classroom teacher or librarian entitled to a duty-free lunch to supervise students during lunch. A classroom teacher or librarian may not be required to supervise students under this subsection more than one day in any school week. The commissioner by rule shall prescribe guidelines for determining what constitutes a personnel shortage, extreme economic conditions, or an unavoidable or unforeseen circumstance for purposes of this subsection.

Innovative Plan: Teachers will eat lunch with their students to keep students socially distanced during lunch. This exemption is an emergency exemption that we will only use until the pandemic ends.

V. Class size Waiver - Board Goal 1

Exemption From: TEC §25.112, TEC §25.112(d)

Manner in which law inhibits Board Goals:

Each school district in Texas is required to review its class size enrollment to determine whether its class sizes for grades Kindergarten through 4th grade meet the requirements of TEC §25.112. If the review indicates that any class for grades K-4 exceeds the allowable class size limit of 22 students per class (22:1), the District must submit a request for exception under TEC §25.112(d). The District must also submit requests as additional classes exceed the 22:1 state ratio

Innovative Plan: In order to provide flexibility during covid 19 we will utilize online learning in addition to face to face learning. In order to keep the in-person learning environments small and safe, the face-to-face numbers will exceed the 22:1 state class sizes in grades K-4. This exemption is not intended to create large face-to-face classrooms, and all efforts will be made to create a standard 22:1 ratio.

VI. Group Health Care Coverage - Board Goal 4

Exemption From: TEC §22.004(i)

Manner in which law inhibits Board Goals:

Forney ISD currently participates in TRS ActiveCare Health Insurance and is prohibited from offering additional or alternative group health coverage to employees that may provide better coverages at lower costs. The high cost of TRS ActiveCare Health plan premiums has created financial hardships for employees with some staff opting not to have health care coverage offered by the district due to the high percentage of their income that the monthly premiums would consume.

Innovative Plan: Increased local control of the group health benefits plan would allow Forney ISD to be responsive to employee and community needs by offering alternative group health coverage in tandem with TRS ActiveCare

VII. Additional Requirements for Grievance Policy and Procedure - Board Goal 4

Exemption From: TEC §26.011, 26A.001, 26A.002, 26A.003

Manner in which law inhibits Board Goals:

Texas Education Code §26.011, as impacted by HB2 and HB 3241, inhibits our board goals by preventing the district from requiring informal resolution of complaints, thereby funneling more issues directly into time-consuming formal grievance processes. This increased administrative burden and delayed resolution diverts valuable district resources from instructional support and student programs. Furthermore, by discouraging early intervention and direct communication, the statute hinders positive relationship building and de-escalation, fostering a more litigious and less collaborative environment that can damage parent-staff relationships, conflicting with our goal of developing parent and community partnerships that promote relationships that expand opportunities for students.

Innovative Plan: To address these challenges, Forney ISD seeks the flexibility to establish a local grievance resolution framework that better meets the diverse needs of our schools, families, and community. This innovative approach will empower the district to design a process that encourages efficient, localized resolution and proactive communication, while ensuring accessibility and transparency for all stakeholders. This increased local control will foster stronger relationships, improve responsiveness, allow for data-driven improvement, and preserve parental rights, ultimately enhancing our community partnerships and benefiting our students.

VIII. Commissioner Standardized GPA Rules - Board Goal 2

Exemption From: TEC §28.0252

Manner in which law inhibits Board Goals:

Texas Education Code §28.0252, which governs rules for GPA calculation, inhibits our board goal of developing academic and future-ready skills for learners by imposing a standardized weighting system for courses. This statutory requirement restricts our district's ability to locally determine which courses receive the highest ranking based on the unique needs of our students and community, as defined by our "future ready profile of a graduate." The inability to align GPA weighting with locally identified priorities means that students may not be adequately incentivized to pursue rigorous coursework most relevant to their post-secondary success and the demands of our local workforce, thereby hindering our efforts to implement research-based curriculum through relevant, engaging, and innovative instruction that meets the needs of all learners.

Innovative Plan: Forney ISD seeks the flexibility to determine GPA weighting that directly supports our "future ready profile of a graduate," as collaboratively defined by all stakeholders. This innovative plan will allow the district the ability to assign higher GPA weights to courses that are identified as critical for developing essential academic and future-ready skills, including those in career and technical education, advanced sciences, and other areas deemed vital for student success in our community. By exercising local control over GPA rules, we can better incentivize student enrollment in courses that align with our strategic vision for graduate preparedness, ensuring that our curriculum and student pathways are truly responsive to the evolving needs of our diverse learners and the community.

IX. Acquisition and Appeal of Library Materials - Board Goal 2

Exemption From: TEC §33.026 and 33.027

Manner in which law inhibits Board Goals:

Texas Education Code §33.026 and 33.027 outlines specific procedures for challenging or appealing library materials. While recognizing the importance of community input, the prescriptive nature of this statute can lead to protracted and resource-intensive processes for material review. This inhibits our board goal of having a sound and efficient learning organization that supports learning, as the current framework can create unnecessary administrative burdens and divert focus from the core educational mission of providing diverse and relevant learning resources. The rigid process may also hinder the timely acquisition and accessibility of materials that align with our curriculum and the evolving needs of our student learners.

Innovative Plan: Forney ISD seeks the flexibility to address the challenge and appeal of library materials in a manner tailored to meet the specific needs and values of our community, ensuring a streamlined and efficient process. This innovative approach will focus on fostering open communication and collaborative dialogue between the district, parents, and community members

regarding library content, aiming to resolve concerns efficiently at the campus level where appropriate, and reducing the need for extensive formal appeals. This flexibility will enable the district to maintain a responsive and diverse library collection that supports our curriculum and student learning, while upholding our commitment to transparency and community engagement, thereby strengthening our learning organization.

X. Planning and Preparation Time - Board Goal 1

Exemption From: TEC §21.404

Manner in which law inhibits Board Goals:

Texas Education Code §21.404 requires that each classroom teacher is provided at least 45 minutes for planning and preparation during each school day, which must be consecutive. This statutory requirement, while intending to ensure planning time, limits the district's flexibility in scheduling and maximizing overall planning opportunities for teachers. Our board goal of having a sound and efficient learning organization that supports learning is inhibited by this rigid mandate, as it can create scheduling constraints that prevent optimal utilization of teacher time for collaborative planning, professional development, and individualized student support, ultimately hindering the efficiency and effectiveness of our learning environment.

Innovative Plan: Forney ISD seeks the flexibility to prioritize local control over teacher planning time. This innovative plan will allow the district to optimize teacher schedules to better meet the diverse needs of our schools, parents, and community, fostering a more adaptable and effective learning organization. This innovative plan will allow the district flexibility in how planning time is allocated, potentially including non-consecutive blocks, longer blocks on certain days, or dedicated time for collaborative team planning. This flexibility will enable us to optimize teacher schedules to best support curriculum development, data analysis, differentiated instruction, and professional learning communities. By providing more adaptable planning solutions, we will enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of our learning organization, directly supporting our teachers in delivering high-quality instruction and preparing for transitions.