



CISD DISTRICT OF INNOVATION PLAN

I. Introduction

The District of Innovation concept, passed during the 84th Legislative Session in House Bill 1842, gives traditional independent school districts most of the flexibilities available to Texas' open enrollment charter schools. The flexibility derives from the district's ability to exempt itself from state mandates that may limit its ability to implement innovative ideas. The potential benefits of becoming a District of Innovation include increased local control to decide which flexibilities best suit local needs, freedom in customizing an innovation plan, and autonomy in that the innovation plan does not require state approval.

On January 9, 2017, recognizing the potential benefits of a District of Innovation designation, the Community Independent School District's Board of Trustees passed a Resolution to Adopt a District of Innovation Plan to increase local control over District operations to support innovation and local initiatives. On February 21, 2017 the Board appointed a 20 member District of Innovation District Advisory Committee composed of diverse leaders representing a cross section of the District's stakeholders.

The District Improvement Committee serves as the District's District of Innovation committee. The plan was up for renewal in April of 2022. In April of 2022, the plan was reviewed and approved by the CISD Board of Trustees for an additional five year term.

II. Term

The CISD District of Innovation Plan has a term of five years beginning April 2022 and ending April 2027, the plan will be renewed by April 2027. The plan may be amended, rescinded, or renewed by the district level committee and the Board of Trustees through the process outlined in TEC 102.1313.

III. Innovations

The District proposes flexibility in the following areas:



Long Range Energy Plan (TEC §44.902)

Requirement: TEC §44.902 The board of trustees of a school district shall establish a long-range energy plan to reduce the district's annual electric consumption by five percent beginning with the 2008 state fiscal year and consume electricity in subsequent fiscal years in accordance with the district's energy plan.

Rationale: CISD will address a long-range energy plan as we move forward in planning for our new/renovated facilities.



Professional Development / Mentor Teachers (TEC §21.451; TEC §21.458)

Requirement: TEC §21.451 prescribes staff development requirements for educators. TEC §21.458 sets eligibility requirements for teacher mentors and mentees. This provision states that the district may only assign a mentor to a teacher with less than two years of teaching experience,

Rationale: In providing timely professional development to employees, the District will exercise local discretion in determining the areas of need, content, duration, and frequency for professional development for its instructional and non-instructional staff based on newly emerging data and student needs.

Recognizing that a teacher at any level of experience may benefit from a mentor-mentee relationship, the District needs the flexibility to assign mentors to more experienced teachers as well. The statute also sets eligibility requirements for mentor teachers, which limits the available pool of mentor teachers. The District will exercise local discretion in assigning teachers to serve as mentors based on a variety of factors, including experience, knowledge, and areas of instruction targeted for improvement or innovation.



Inter-district Transfers (TEC §25.036)

Requirement: TEC §25.036 Any child, other than a high school graduate, who is younger than 21 years of age and eligible for enrollment on September 1 of any school year may transfer annually from the child's school district of residence to another district in this state if both the receiving district and the applicant parent or guardian or person having lawful control of the child jointly approve and timely agree in writing to the transfer, but TEC §25.036, has been interpreted to

require a transfer to be for a period of one school year.

Revised April 12, 2017

Rationale: Community ISD maintains a transfer policy under FDA (Local) requiring nonresident students wishing to transfer to file a transfer application each school year. In approving transfer requests, the availability of space and instructional staff, availability of programs and services, the student's disciplinary history records, work habits, and attendance records are also evaluated. Transfer students are expected to follow the attendance requirements, rules, and regulations of the district. TEC §25.036 has been interpreted to establish the acceptance of a transfer as a one-year commitment by the district. The Superintendent may revoke the provision of a one-year term for transfer students at any time during the year if the student is assigned discipline consequences of suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion. In addition, students not meeting the State's 90% attendance standard may also be subject to immediate revocation of the transfer status.



Kindergarten Start Age (TEC §29.151)

Requirement: TEC §29.151 The board of trustees of each school district shall establish and maintain one or more kindergartens for the training of children residing in the district who are at least five years of age on September 1 of the school year.

Rationale: Community ISD would have flexibility in enrolling students for Kindergarten by considering the following innovations:

- Develop a local criteria to determine eligibility of students who are not yet 5 years old by September 1st and allow those students meeting the locally determined eligibility requirements to optionally enroll with all the same district financial benefits of those students who are 5 years old by September 1st. (Local Criteria: Turn 5 between September 2nd and 30th and show proficiency on a locally developed kindergarten readiness examination including factors in academic achievement and social emotional readiness).
- This exemption will provide the flexibility to enroll sooner and immerse students in an academic and social/emotional learning environment that provides a strong foundation in early literacy and growth development.
- Students who are ready for school can develop a strong foundation of literacy and numeracy to prevent potential gaps in achievement and accelerate their learning.
- The district will establish a local committee of various stakeholders (e.g., teachers, community members, district staff) to develop and recommend a local criteria for Kindergarten readiness to the Superintendent/Board of Trustees, as appropriate.

Revised August 2025



First Day of Instruction (§25.0811)

Requirement: TEC §25.0811 states that a school district may not begin instruction before the 4th Monday in August.

Rationale: This flexibility of start date allows the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of the students, parents, and local community. This empowers the district to increase college and career readiness and balance the amount of instructional time per semester. By having the flexibility in beginning instruction before the 4th Monday of August, students will be able to enroll in college courses that start in early June. Removing the state required uniform school start date could allow the district the flexibility to start instruction as a shortened school week, easing the transition for students. This will also allow for flexible professional development scheduling for district staff.



Teacher and Principal Evaluations (TEC §21.351; TEC §21.352)

Requirement: TEC §21.351. Recommended Appraisal Process and Performance Criteria (a) The commissioner shall adopt a recommended appraisal process and criteria on which to appraise the performance of teachers. The criteria must be based on observable, job-related behavior, including; (2) the performance of teachers' students.

TEC §21.3541 The commissioner by rule shall establish and shall administer a comprehensive appraisal and professional development system for principals.

TEC. §21.352. Local Role. (a) In appraising teachers, each school district shall use:(1) the appraisal process and performance criteria developed by the commissioner; or (2) an appraisal process and performance criteria:

Rationale: While the district currently uses both the T-TESS and TPESS, the district would like the option to exercise local control of decisions regarding teacher and administrative appraisals.



Probationary Contracts (TEC §21.102)

Requirement: 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: This exemption from probationary contracts being limited to one year for a person who has been employed as a teacher or administrator in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment by the district will allow CISD extended time for the evaluation and training of new personnel. CISD is committed to effectively managing teacher contracts and this exemption will provide the district with the flexibility to keep all professional employees new to the district on probationary contracts for a maximum permissible period of

three school years.



Length of School Day (TEC §25.082A)

Requirement: A school day shall be at least seven hours each day, including intermissions and recesses.

Rationale: For each school year each school district must operate so that the district provides for at least 75,600 minutes of instruction, including intermissions and recesses, for students. Exemption from the 420-minute day requirement would allow Community ISD the flexibility needed to alter the school day schedule on selected days whenever it was locally determined as necessary or beneficial to the district and its stakeholders. While there is a waiver process available to request exemption from this requirement, the waiver is limited to a 6-day maximum number for the school year. Exempting completely from the 420-minute requirement would give the district a significant amount of local control over scheduling (above and beyond the 6-day maximum as needed) without the fear of diminishing state funding or losing credit for instructional time that might cause the district to fall out of compliance with annual minute requirements. This would allow the district the flexibility to schedule non-instructional days into the schedule to allow for teachers to analyze student data and engage in targeted, relevant professional development. Community ISD does not have any intentions to shorten the school day on a regular basis, or without specific purpose. To the greatest extent possible, “early release” days would be planned ahead of time and noted in the district calendar, which is approved by the Board of Trustees. The school calendar is published and distributed to stakeholders in advance of the school year and is made available through multiple district communication outlets.



Teacher Certification: (TEC §21.003a) (TEC §21.057a-e)

Requirement: TEC §21.003 A person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern or teacher trainee, librarian, educational aide, administrator, educational diagnostician, or school counselor by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit. §TEC 21.057 A school district that assigns an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher to the same classroom for more than 30 consecutive instructional days during the same school year shall provide written notice of the assignment to a parent or guardian of each student in that classroom.

Rationale: This would allow CISD to more easily hire teachers for hard-to-fill teaching positions. Local qualifications and training requirements would be established. This exemption also supports the new requirements in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). CISD will have the flexibility to hire applicants that do not have traditional state certifications, which will enrich applicant pools in specific areas. In addition, this exemption will afford the district the flexibility to hire professionals in certain trades or vocations to teach the crafts of those trades or vocations if certified teachers are not available to teach those courses.



Staff Work Days Exemption from: TEC §21.401 (New Addition to DOI 2022)

Requirement: TEC §21.401 requires a contract between a school district and an educator to be for a minimum of 10 months service with a minimum of 187 days. Proposed Innovation: With the change in requirements for student instruction time, the calendar for educators became difficult. Community ISD believes that local control of increased flexibility in educator contracts will allow the district to continue providing days spread throughout the year for holidays and staff development while not having too many days to require educators to fulfill when students are not in attendance.

Rationale: Exempting from TEC §21.401 will have the following benefits: • Teachers and staff will have all days scheduled with purpose and intention. • Teachers and staff will follow a calendar closer to and balanced with the student calendar. • Teachers and staff will be motivated and morale will increase. • Retention and recruitment will experience a positive impact. Local Guidelines: • The DEIC will determine the staff days annually with the creation of the school calendar. • There will be no change in salary as a result of a change in the required work days. • The educator contracts will remain Chapter 21 contracts with all other provisions and protections. • The contracts will be based on 10 months and “the number of minimum days established by the DEIC each year.” • Non-contract employee's days will be adjusted by the same number of days as the contracted employees. • Contract and non-contract employees will have days adjusted without an impact on salary. • Ten month contract days will not be above 187. • New teachers to the district will be required to work 2 days more than teachers already in the district without additional compensation.



Required Professional Development Exemption from: TEC §21.451 (New Addition to DOI 2022)

Requirement: TEC §21.451 states the staff development provided by a school district to an educator other than a principal must be conducted in accordance with standards developed by the district and designed to improve education in the district. Proposed Innovation: Community ISD faculty are well trained in required staff development. Mandating these trainings annually only serves to add redundancy to back to school work that can be better utilized in preparing for the students to return.

Rationale: Exempting from TEC §21.451 will have the following benefits: • Staff have more time to prepare and plan for students. • Staff is required to review and retrain every three years Local Guidelines: The district will set up and maintain a cycle system for all employees. All district employees will participate in the formal training following a three year schedule in the following areas: • Harassment and sexual harassment • Bullying prevention for teachers, administrators, and staff • Child abuse, sexual abuse, sex trafficking, dating violence and other maltreatment of children • FERPA (student privacy) • Suicide prevention • Anaphylaxis and Auto-Injectors, Food Allergies • Blood Borne Pathogens • Diabetes Overview • Illegal Steroid Use • CIPA (Children's Internet Protection Act) • Texas Behavior Support • Section 504 • Dating Violence • Digital Learning, Technology use and CIPA (Children's Internet Protection Act) • General ED Teachers Implementing IEPs • Concussions – except for teachers, administrators and staff who are required to have annual training per UIL rules All teachers, faculty, and staff new to the district will complete the compliance training during the first year of employment in the district. Everyone will complete the training during the first year of the three year cycle. District and campus administrators may assign compliance training to an employee or group of employees at any time as needed during the three year cycle.

Three year cycle will be 2022-23 – 2025-26, 2026-27 – 2029-30, 2031-32 – 2034-35



Class Size Requirements for Elementary Grades Applicable Provisions from the Texas Education Code: TEC 25.111, TEC 25.112 and TEC 25.113 (New Addition to DOI 2022)

Requirement: TEC 25.111 requires districts to employ a sufficient number of teachers certified to maintain an average ratio of not less than one teacher for each 20 students in average daily attendance except as provided by section 25.112. TEC 25.112 prohibits a school district from enrolling more than 22 students for Kindergarten – fourth grade classes, unless a school district receives an exemption through the TEA waiver process. TEC 25.113 requires a district to notify parents of waiver or exceptions to class size limits as stated within the Code. According to these statutes, districts are to maintain a 22:1 student to teacher ratio for Kindergarten through fourth grade. When any class exceeds that limit, the district must complete and file a waiver with the Texas Education Agency. Historically, these waivers are never rejected by the TEA. This proves to represent an unnecessary step for the education of our students. Additionally, a letter must be sent home to the parents of each student in the class exceeding the limit to inform them that a waiver has been filed. This statute does not take into consideration the logistics/difficulties of adding staff mid-year and the impact of a student being transferred to new classrooms in the middle of the school year. While we believe that small class size plays a positive role in lower elementary classrooms, we do not believe it has a negative effect when adding one or two more students. Many times it is not the number of the students but the makeup and chemistry of the classroom which influence the learning environment.

Rationale: By providing for local autonomy, the district seeks to: • Locally monitor and maintain appropriate class size without the necessity of waivers; • Provide flexibility regarding when we hire personnel as we face growth; and • Not be required to submit a TEA waiver when a K-4th classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio. **ADDITIONAL STIPULATIONS:** - Community ISD will, to the extent possible, begin each school year with enough teachers to establish a homeroom student to teacher ratio of no more than 22:1 per Kindergarten – 4th grade homeroom class. - Staffing planning and hiring decisions will be based on projected 22:1 ratios. - Existing class sizes will be considered when accepting transfer students.



Bank Depository Contract: TEC 45.205, 45.206

Requirement: TEC 45.205, 45.206 requires the district to renew its depository contract every two years. The two-year contract term begins and ends in odd-numbered years. In accordance with the Texas Education Code, the District must use a uniform bid or proposal blank in the form prescribed by the State Board of Education.

Rationale: The District is seeking an exemption from TEC 45.205 and 45.206 to allow the District's banking contract to be extended beyond the allowable contract term, if the District determines contract-pricing remains competitive and there is no operational or financial reason to send the District's banking services out for bid. This exemption lessens the administrative burden related to preparing and reviewing a Request for Proposal (RFP) when there is a limited number of banking institutions available to bid on the District's business.

Local Guidelines

The District will only go out for bid if it is determined that contract-pricing is not competitive and there

is an operational or financial reason to send the District's banking services out for bid. The District will continue with two year contracts for our banking depository.



Requirement to Post Full Course Syllabus: TEC 26.0062

Requirement: (a) Each school district shall adopt a policy to make available on the district's Internet website at the beginning of each semester an instructional plan or course syllabus for each class offered in the district that semester. (b) The policy adopted under Subsection (a) must: (1) require each teacher to provide before the beginning of each semester a copy of the teacher's instructional plan or course syllabus for each class for which the teacher provides instruction to: (A) district administration; and (B) the parent of each child enrolled in the class; and (2) provide for additional copies of an instructional or course syllabus to be made available to a parent of a student enrolled in the class on the parent's request.

Rationale: Community ISD is opting out of this provision in order to reduce administrative burdens and preserve instructional flexibility. The district already ensures transparency through readily available curriculum resources, open parent communication, and established procedures for reviewing instructional and library materials. Requiring additional compliance would divert time from instruction and limit teachers' ability to use timely, creative, and student-centered materials. This decision supports our goal of fostering innovation while maintaining strong parent partnerships and academic accountability.

IV. Timeline

January 24, 2022	School Board appoints District of Innovation committee
February 28, 2022	District of Innovation Committee holds first meeting
March 14, 2022	District of Innovation Committee holds second meeting
March 15, 2022	Innovation Plan is posted to the district's website
April 25, 2022	District holds public hearing on the Innovation Plan
April 25, 2022	School Board votes on the Innovation Plan
June 27, 2022	School Board Amended DOI Plan Removing TEC 28.025 (b-2)
September 15, 2025	School Board Amended DOI Plan.
On/Before April 25, 2027	School Board will need to renew