

East Central ISD



Local Innovation Plan

Renewal Date - Approval May 18, 2023

Effective until Date - Approval May 18, 2028

Amended - Approval October 16, 2025

Grievance Process, School Library Advisory Councils and Library Materials

Introduction

In 2015, the 84th Texas Legislature created Texas Education Code Chapter 12A, District of Innovation. The law allows traditional independent school districts to access most of the flexibilities available to Texas' open enrollment charter schools. To access these flexibilities, a school district must adopt an innovation plan. A local school district may pursue specific innovations in curriculum, instruction, governance, parent or community involvement, school calendar, human resources, budgeting, or other regulated areas. The innovation plan allows a school district to gain exemption from related Texas Education Code requirements. Innovation plans are about local control, flexibility, and autonomy. Upon approval of the Board to pursue the designation, a committee is formed to develop the local innovation plan to be presented to the public, the District Education Improvement Council, and the Commissioner of Education. The Board of Trustees must give the final approval of the plan before implementation.

District Vision

Every student engages in a high level academic journey, prepared to thrive in college, career, or military service after graduation.

District Mission

Every student grows at least one or more years academically every year. (+1+)

District of Innovation Planning Committee

Roland Toscano	Superintendent
Shane McKay	Assistant Superintendent
Judy Burns	Chief Financial Officer
Joette Barnes	Chief Instructional Officer
Stevie Gonzales	Executive Director of Staff and Student Support Services
Jonathan Hulbert	Director of Accountability and School Transformation
Meredith Rokas	Director of Purchasing and Child Nutrition
Yvette Sanders	Director of Personnel
Mary Alice Gomez	High School Principal
Kasey Beckett	Valor Middle School Principal
Stephanie Orsak	Honor Elementary School Principal
Erica Bratton	Tradition Elementary School Assistant Principal
Daniel Christian	East Central High School Associate Principal
Sarah Harrod	Highland Forest Elementary Assistant Principal
Robin Benson	East Central High School Academic Dean

Timeline of Events

December 18, 2018	Board of Trustees approves a Resolution to Consider Designation as a District of Innovation Board of Trustees conducts a Public Hearing to Consider Development of a Local Innovation Plan for Designation as a District of Innovation Board of Trustees approves to Pursue Designation as a District of Innovation and Appointment of a Committee to Develop a Local Innovation Plan
January 18, 2019 – January 30, 2019	Development of Local Innovation Plan

January 31, 2019 – March 4, 2019	Online Posting of Local Innovation Plan
January 31, 2019	Notification of Commissioner of Intent to Apply
March 5, 2019	DEIC Meeting to Approve Local Innovation Plan
March 21, 2019	Board of Trustees Approved Local Innovation Plan
March 22, 2019	Notify Commissioner of Approval
December 10, 2019	DEIC Meeting to Approve Local Innovation Plan Amendment
December 17, 2019	Board of Trustees Approved Local Innovation Plan Amendment
April 6, 2023	Online Posting of Renewal of Local Innovation Plan
April 6, 2023	Notify Commissioner of DOI plan proposed for renewal
April 10, 2023	Committee Approval in Public Meeting
May 18, 2023	Board of Trustees Approved Renewal of Local Innovation Plan
May 22, 2023	Notify Commissioner of Approval
September 25, 2025	DEIC Meeting to Approve Local Innovation Plan Amendment
October 16, 2025	Board of Trustees Approved of Local Innovation Plan Amendment

Areas of Innovation

The East Central Independent School District provides a comprehensive educational program, setting improvement goals in alignment with the district vision and mission. In order to more effectively meet the needs of the district, certain areas of innovation requiring

flexibility in statutory requirements have been identified. With regard to each area of innovation, the District declares exemption from the listed statutory provisions, as well as any implementing rules or regulations 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.

Chapter 21 - Educators	Rationale	District Decision
<p>TEC 21.003 Certification Required (a) 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 issued as provided by Subchapter B.</p>	<p>The district will always seek to hire a certified and highly effective teacher; however, greater flexibility is needed for hard to fill positions for Pre-K - 12.</p>	<p>The district will establish its own local qualification requirements for high demand and hard to fill positions, with the exception of bilingual, special education and Pre Kindergarten teachers.</p> <p>Specifically:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Industry based experts will not be required to obtain a teaching certificate in order to be an instructor in Career and Technology Education courses. 2. Other high demand or hard to fill positions must hold a bachelor's degree and will be required to obtain a teaching certificate within 3 years of their employment. The 3 year period for those hired after January 1 would not start until August 1 of that year. 3. For grades 6-12, in all subjects, the campus principal may submit to the Superintendent a request for a local certification that will allow a certified teacher to teach limited sections of subjects in a related field of their current certification for which he/she is not certified.
<p>TEC 21.102 Probationary Contracts (b) A probationary contract may not be for a term exceeding one school year. The probationary contract may be renewed for two</p>	<p>This limited period is insufficient in some cases to fully determine the effectiveness of personnel in their professional roles. This will allow more time for training, support,</p>	<p>The district will have the option to extend the probationary contract for 1 additional year for all Professional Educators, including but not limited to teachers, counselors, librarians, nurses, or administrators that have more than 5 years experience.</p>

<p>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.</p>	<p>observations, and gathering of performance data for teachers, counselors, librarians, nurses, and administrators before considering termination of the probationary contract or offering a term contract.</p>	
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Chapter 25 - Admission, Transfer, and Attendance	Rationale	District Decision
<p>TEC 25.036 Transfers (a) 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. (b) A transfer agreement under this section shall be filed and preserved as a</p>	<p>East Central ISD is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one-year commitment in accepting transfer applicants. On rare occasions, student behavior warrants suspension (in and out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion. In addition, student attendance may fall below the TEA truancy standard. In these rare cases, and following reasonable corrective measures, East Central ISD seeks exemption from the one year transfer commitment.</p>	<p>Nonresident students who have been accepted as inter-district transfer students may have such transfer status revoked by the superintendent 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.</p>

<p>receiving district record for audit purposes of the agency.</p>		
<p>TEC 25.0811 First Day of Instruction (a) Except as provided by this section, a school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August.</p> <p>TEC 25.0812 Last Day of School (a) Except as provided by Subsection (b), a school district may not schedule the last day of school for students for a school year before May 15.</p>	<p>Currently, state law requires that students may not start school before the 4th Monday in August and not end school before May 15. More flexibility is needed in order to more effectively reach desired student and staff outcomes</p>	<p>The district will gain local control to develop a calendar with a flexible start and end date that best meets the needs of students, staff, and community. Benefits include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Allow the district to balance out the number of instructional days between the first and second semester ● Allow the first semester to end before Christmas Break and the second semester to finish before Memorial Day, or soon thereafter. ● Allow an increase of instructional days before standardized testing ● Allow to strategically embed professional learning days ● Align with college schedules so that students and staff can take advantage of summer offerings at institutions of higher learning ● Allow flexibility to align with other area school districts <p>The length of the adopted school calendar will remain 187 days, with additional days for new teachers.</p>

<p>TEC 25.112 Class Size (a) Except as otherwise authorized by this section, a school district may not enroll more than 22 students in a kindergarten, first, second, third, or fourth grade class.</p>	<p>When any class exceeds the statutory limit, the district must complete and file a waiver with the Texas Education Agency. These waivers are never rejected by TEA, create time consuming paperwork, and are an unnecessary step.</p>	<p>ECISD believes in an appropriate student to teacher ratio in all classrooms. Each elementary campus will continue the practice of maintaining a student to teacher ratio of 22:1 or less in each K-4 class. In the event that any class size exceeds a 24:1 ratio during the school year, at the Superintendent's discretion steps will be taken to address the class size to assure an appropriate ratio. Decisions regarding appropriate student to teacher ratios will be made at the local level. These decisions will be made based on the age/grade level of the students, the subject matter of the class, the needs of individual teachers and student groups, and the availability of additional instructional staff members.</p>
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Chapter 26 - Parental Rights	Rationale	District Decision
<p>TEC 26.011, 26A.001, 26A.002, 26A.003 - Grievance procedures: Texas Education Code requires the Board of trustees of each school district to adopt a grievance procedure that complies with Chapter 26A under which the board shall address each grievance that the board receives concerning a violation of a right guaranteed by this chapter, of a board of trustees policy, or of a provision of this title.</p>	<p>East Central ISD has and will continue to adhere to an established grievance policy with procedures and timelines as outlined in its local Board's policies DGBA, FNG and GF. 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,</p>	<p>East Central ISD follows long established and functional grievance procedures as outlined in district policy, specifically in relation to the timelines for filing an appeal prior to Texas Education Code §26.002 and for hearing such complaints. The district believes that a requirement for complaints to be submitted within 15 district business days from the date the grievant either knows, or with reasonable diligence, should have</p>

	<p>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 complaints, as well as to taking corrective action, where appropriate. East Central ISD's long-standing grievance policies 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.</p>	<p>known, of the decision or action that is the subject of the grievance ensures prompt attention and a resolution of concerns. In cases where the grievant does not receive the requested relief at the prior grievance level, or if the response deadline has passed without a reply, the parent may proceed by requesting a conference with the Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee to appeal the previous decision. This appeal must be submitted in writing, using the district-provided form, within ten (10) district business days of receiving the written response from Level One or Level Two. If no written response is provided, the appeal must be submitted within ten (10) days following the deadline for the response at the applicable level. The District's current grievance policies also provide for a Level Three grievance to the board of trustees, except for grievances related to extracurricular activities. In addition, disciplinary appeals will be heard by the Superintendent's designee through the formal appeals process in accordance with board policy FOC (Legal). Accuracy of information and access to individuals that are needed to provide necessary information surrounding an issue could be compromised after 60 to 90 days. It is imperative that grievances and complaints are filed in a timely manner to ensure the best prompt response.</p> <p>The District therefore requests relief from the timelines, processes and procedures imposed by 26.011, 26A.001, 26A.002,</p>
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		26A.003 and will maintain its current grievance forms, processes and procedures for all grievants including parents and students, employees and the public at large.
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Chapter 33 - Service Programs	Rationale	District Decision
<p>TEC 33.025 and 33.025(b) - School Library Advisory Councils</p> <p>(a) Requires school districts to establish a School Library Advisory Council at any campus where 10% or parents or 50 parents (whichever is fewer) submit a written request for such a council. The law also requires districts to notify parents of their rights to request council formation and to maintain transparency through open meetings, public records, and timely reporting of council activities and decisions.</p>	<p>Creating such advisory councils will create inconsistencies across campuses. Such advisory councils risk undermining the professional judgement of educators, librarians, and introducing judgement of non-certified individuals, and introduces potential for politicization of instructional resources. SLACS also presents a heavy administrative burden, requiring staff time and resources that would better be directed toward student learning and support. ECISD's existing process already allows for meaningful parental review and involvement, including accessing their child's library checkout records if review and involvement, formal challenge procedures, and transparency in material selection. In addition, concerned individuals may also speak with the teacher, administrator, and or school board through the district complaint process.</p>	<p>The district 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. The district remains committed to ensuring age-appropriate and educationally sound resources while maintaining efficient and effective oversight structure that includes educator expertise and parent input, with the disruption and/or duplication caused by statutory requirements in 33.025 and 33.025(b).</p>

<p>TEC 33.026 - Acquisition of Library Materials</p> <p>(a) Current law outlines specific procedures school districts must follow before acquiring library materials. It mandates a multi-step vetting process, document of acquisition decisions, and the public posting of selected materials before they are made available to students.</p>	<p>The district already has robust, board-approved policies, implemented by certified librarians in place that govern the acquisition of library materials in the manner that ensures transparency, appropriateness, and educational value. They are in full compliance with 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. The public pre-approval requirement undermines the expertise of the certified educators and creates delay and roadblocks in getting library materials to students who benefit from them.</p>	<p>East Central ISD fully supports transparency and parental engagement in the school library process. The rigid requirements are unnecessary and duplicative of local safeguards in place. This exemption allows East Central 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.</p>
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Chapter 37 - Discipline; Law and Order	Rationale	District Decision
<p>TEC 37.0012 Campus Behavior Coordinator</p> <p>(a) A person at each campus must be designated to serve as the campus behavior coordinator. The person designated may be the principal of the campus or any other campus administrator selected by the principal.</p>	<p>The law requires one person at each campus to be designated to serve as the campus behavior coordinator. This designee is responsible for maintaining student discipline and the implementation of Chapter 37, Subchapter A. Designation of a sole individual for this responsibility is not in alignment with district goals and practices.</p>	<p>The district's approach to discipline is more collaborative, with multiple people providing emotional, behavioral and social support to students, rather than just one person. The district will also continue to utilize PBSI, restorative discipline and implement the ECISD Student Code of Conduct.</p>

Chapter 22 - School District Employees and Volunteers	Rationale	District Decision
<p>TEC 22.003 Minimum Personal Leave Program</p> <p>(a) A state minimum personal leave program consisting of five days per year personal leave with no limit on accumulation and transferable among districts shall be provided for school district employees.</p>	<p>The law requires the district to provide five state personal days for all employees. Some employees are occasionally employed on a part-time basis after retirement to complete administrative or other tasks. These employees are paid on an hourly basis in order to maintain compliance with TRS requirements. Since they are only working for the district to complete specific tasks on an as needed basis, the use of leave time defeats the purpose of the agreement or position.</p>	<p>Retired individuals that are hired for part-time, non-permanent positions will not receive leave days, nor will they be able to use leave days from prior to retirement. Exceptions to this rule are individuals who retired prior to September 1, 2005.</p>
Chapter 11 School Districts		
<p>TEC 11.252. District Level Planning and Decision Making</p> <p>(a) Each school district shall have a district improvement plan that is developed, evaluated, and revised annually, in accordance with district policy, by the superintendent with the assistance of the district-level committee established under Section 11.251. The purpose of the district improvement plan</p>	<p>The District has adopted a Continuous Growth (CG) Process for district and campus improvement planning which incorporates elements of the Effective Schools Framework and High Reliability Organizations Levels organized through the lens of our Community-Based Accountability System as outlined by a committee of employees, community members, parents, business partners and</p>	<p>The specific requirements outlined in TEC 11.252 and 11.253 are of a compliance nature and are not focused on the needs of our District and community. The District will continue to develop improvement plans following our CG Process, focusing on the pillars of our Community-Based Accountability System, based on identified needs in the Comprehensive Needs Assessment and aligned to the</p>

<p>is to guide district and campus staff in the improvement of student performance for all student groups in order to attain state standards in respect to the achievement indicators adopted under Section 39.053(c). The district improvement plan must include provisions for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) a comprehensive needs assessment addressing district student performance on the achievement indicators, and other appropriate measures of performance, that are disaggregated by all student groups served by the district, including categories of ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sex, and populations served by special programs, including students in special education programs under Subchapter A, Chapter 29; (2) measurable district performance objectives for all appropriate achievement indicators for all student populations, including students in special education programs under Subchapter A, Chapter 29, and other measures of student performance that may be identified through the comprehensive needs assessment; (3) strategies for improvement of student performance that include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (A) instructional methods for addressing the needs of student groups not achieving their full potential; (B) evidence-based practices that address 	<p>higher education partners. A comprehensive needs assessment is completed annually. District, department, and campus goals and annual results measures are developed based on the needs assessment. Strategic activities and progress monitoring measures are established with timelines for assessment of progress towards goals established throughout the year. Progress is reported regularly to the Board and the community.</p>	<p>District’s vision and mission. The plans will be focused on the highest leverage strategies that address the identified needs of the students and designed to meet the Annual Results Measures.</p>
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the needs of students for special programs, including:

- (i) suicide prevention programs, in accordance with Subchapter G, Chapter 38, which include a parental or guardian notification procedure;
 - (ii) conflict resolution programs;
 - (iii) violence prevention programs; and
 - (iv) dyslexia treatment programs;
 - (C) dropout reduction;
 - (D) integration of technology in instructional and administrative programs;
 - (E) positive behavior interventions and support, including interventions and support that integrate best practices on grief-informed and trauma-informed care;
 - (F) staff development for professional staff of the district;
 - (G) career education to assist students in developing the knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary for a broad range of career opportunities;
 - (H) accelerated education; and
 - (I) implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program under Section 33.005;
- (4) strategies for providing to elementary school, middle school, junior high school, and high school students, those students' teachers and school counselors, and those students' parents information about:
- (A) higher education admissions and financial aid opportunities, including state

financial aid opportunities such as the TEXAS grant program and the Teach for Texas grant program established under Chapter 56;

- (B) the need for students to make informed curriculum choices to be prepared for success beyond high school; and
- (C) sources of information on higher education admissions and financial aid;

(5) resources needed to implement identified strategies;

(6) staff responsible for ensuring the accomplishment of each strategy;

(7) timelines for ongoing monitoring of the implementation of each improvement strategy;

(8) formative evaluation criteria for determining periodically whether strategies are resulting in intended improvement of student performance;

(9) the policy under Section 38.0041 addressing sexual abuse and other maltreatment of children; and

(10) the trauma-informed care policy required under Section 38.036.

TEC 11.253. Campus Planning and Site-based Decision Making

(a) Each school district shall maintain current policies and procedures to ensure that effective planning and site-based decision-making occur at each campus to

direct and support the improvement of student performance for all students.

(b) Each district's policy and procedures shall establish campus-level planning and decision-making committees as provided for through the procedures provided by Sections 11.251(b)-(e).

(c) Each school year, the principal of each school campus, with the assistance of the campus-level committee, shall develop, review, and revise the campus improvement plan for the purpose of improving student performance for all student populations, including students in special education programs under Subchapter A, Chapter 29, with respect to the achievement indicators adopted under Section 39.053(c) and any other appropriate performance measures for special needs populations.

(d) Each campus improvement plan must:

(1) assess the academic achievement for each student in the school using the achievement indicator system as described by Section 39.053;

(2) set the campus performance objectives based on the achievement indicator system, including objectives for special needs populations, including students in special education programs under Subchapter A, Chapter 29;

(3) identify how the campus goals will be met for each student;

(4) determine the resources needed to implement the plan;

(5) identify staff needed to implement the plan;

(6) set timelines for reaching the goals;

(7) measure progress toward the performance objectives periodically to ensure that the plan is resulting in academic improvement;

(8) include goals and methods for violence prevention and intervention on campus;

(9) provide for a program to encourage parental involvement at the campus; and

(10) if the campus is an elementary, middle, or junior high school, set goals and objectives for the coordinated health program at the campus based on:

(A) student fitness assessment data, including any data from research-based assessments such as the school health index assessment and planning tool created by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention;

(B) student academic performance data;

(C) student attendance rates;

(D) the percentage of students who are educationally disadvantaged;

(E) the use and success of any method to ensure that students participate in moderate to vigorous physical activity as required by Section 28.002(1); and

(F) any other indicator recommended by

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<p>the local school health advisory council. (e) In accordance with the administrative procedures established under Section 11.251(b), the campus-level committee shall be involved in decisions in the areas of planning, budgeting, curriculum, staffing patterns, staff development, and school organization. The campus-level committee must approve the portions of the campus plan addressing campus staff development needs.</p>		
<p>TEC 45.205 term of contract, TEC 45.206 Bid request for proposal notices; bid and proposal forms, TEC 45.208 depository contract; bond,</p>	<p>The District's choices for its depository bank that are located in the District or close proximity are limited. This exemption is to allow the District's existing bank contract to be extended beyond the total 6 years 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.</p> <p>This exemption lessens the administrative burden related to preparing and reviewing a Request for Proposal (RFP) when there is a limited number of area banking institutions available to bid on the districts business. This will further mitigate any</p>	<p>The time saved by the administration by not having to deal with the ministerial duty every two years will allow the administration more time to focus and support the District's financial needs.</p>

	<p>impact to the Administrative staff that would have to change the many banking services each time a new depository occurs. This also allows the district flexibility with respect to banking relations. With this exemption in place, none of the additional requirements related to the bid or request for proposal detailed in Sec. 45.206 through 45.209 would be applicable.</p>	
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