



Rockwall

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Rockwall ISD District of Innovation Plan

Call to Action

Rockwall ISD empowers learners to embody independence, value relationships and achieve excellence as thriving members of a dynamic global community.

Our Goals

1. We will provide authentic and innovative learning experiences for every learner.
2. We will ensure consistent instructional processes to achieve and maintain high performance for all learners.
3. We will ensure continuous improvement through maximizing fiscal efficiency to address growth.
4. We will partner with our community to enhance the learner experience.
5. We will engage in consistent and interactive communication.
6. We will ensure a safe and civil environment that is responsive to the needs of our diverse community.
7. We will attract, recruit, develop and retain high-quality professional staff.

Introduction

House Bill 1842, passed during the 84th Legislative Session, permits Texas public school districts to become Districts of Innovation and to obtain exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code (TEC). On February 20, 2017, the Rockwall Independent School District's Board of Trustees ("Board") passed a Resolution to initiate the process of designation as a District of Innovation in order to increase local control over District operations and to support innovation and local initiatives to improve educational outcomes for the benefit of students and the community.

In September 2017, a twelve member District Innovation Committee ("Committee") composed of diverse leaders representing a cross-section of the District's various stakeholders, including principals, parents, community members, and administrators was assembled. The Committee met to discuss and draft the original Rockwall ISD District of Innovation Plan ("Plan"). At a public joint meeting of the District of Innovation Committee and the District Education and Improvement Committee ("DEIC") on November 7, 2017, the DEIC voted to approve this plan.

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In the fall of 2022, the District of Innovation Committee reconvened to review the plan and consider updates for renewal of the plan. A public hearing was held on September 12, 2022, and the District of Innovation renewal plan was approved by the DEIC on September 12, 2022. The revised plan is being presented for renewal to the Rockwall ISD Board of Trustees on November 14, 2022.

Subsequently, the District of Innovation Committee reconvened to review the plan and consider updates for amendment of the plan. The District of Innovation amended plan was approved by the District of Innovation Committee on August 26, 2025. The amended plan was presented and approved by the Rockwall ISD Board of Trustees on September 22, 2025.

Term

The term of the Plan is for five years, beginning November 14, 2022 and ending November 14, 2027, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board in accordance with the law. If, within the term of the Plan, other areas of operations are to be considered for flexibility as part of HB 1842, the Board will appoint a committee to consider and propose additional exemptions in the form of an amendment. Any amendment adopted by the Board will adhere to the same term as the original plan. The District may not implement two separate plans at any one time.

Innovations

To achieve the District's Call to Action and to align the District practices and operations with the District's goals, the District needs the flexibility to exert local control to modify:

- School Start Date
- Teacher Certification Requirements
- Grievance Timeline, Processes and Procedures
- Parent/Teacher Conferences
- Instructional Plans and Syllabus
- Inter-District Transfer Students

I. School Start Date

Exemption from: TEC §25.0811

Manner in which law inhibits Board Goals

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

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The flexibility of a start date allows the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of the students, parents, and our local community. The flexibility to begin instruction earlier in August will enable the district to develop a

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calendar that best meets the needs of the students in RISD. This will also allow for flexible professional development scheduling for district staff.

II. Teacher Certification Requirement

Exemption from: TEC §21.003, TEC §21.053

Manner in which law inhibits Board Goals

TEC §21.003 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 submit a request to the Texas Education Agency (“TEA”) to hire without certification, with requirement to obtain certification in a specified time. 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 if the educator does not hold a valid certificate at the time.

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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. Rockwall 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 could include CTE, languages other than English, and other hard to fill positions. Teachers with industry experience and native speakers with qualified experience could be eligible to teach a course through a local teaching certification. Additionally, Rockwall 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. Grievance Timeline, Processes and Procedures

Exemption from TEC §26.011 (a) & (c), §26A.001, §26A.002, §26A.003

Manner in which law inhibits Board Goals

According to Texas Education Codes Sections 26.011(a) & (c), 26A.001, 26A.002, 26A.003 the Board of Trustees of each school district must 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. This legislation resulting from the 89th

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Regular Legislative Session specifically expands the timelines for parent grievances to be filed from 15 days to 60-90 days.

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Rockwall 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 provides 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 complaints, as well as to taking corrective action, where appropriate. Rockwall 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.

Rockwall ISD follows established grievance procedures as outlined in district policy, specifically in relation to the timelines for filing an appeal prior to Texas Education Code §26A.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 known, of the decision or action that is the subject of the grievance ensures prompt attention and 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.

District's current grievance policies also provide for a Level Three grievance to the board of trustees, except for grievances related to extracurricular activities. 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.

Rockwall ISD therefore requests relief from the timelines, processes and procedures imposed by 26.011(a) & (c), 26A.001, 26A.002, 26A.003 and will maintain its current grievance forms, processes and procedures for all grievants.

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IV. Parent Conferences

Exemption From: TEC § 28.022(a)(1)

Manner in which law inhibits Board Goals

Texas Education Code § 28.022(a) requires the Rockwall ISD Board of Trustees to adopt a policy that provides for at least two opportunities for in-person conferences during each school year between each parent of a child enrolled in the district and the child's teachers.

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Prior to the 2025 Legislative Session, State law required the board of trustees of each school district to adopt a policy that provides for a conference between parents and teachers. Rockwall ISD is proud to collaborate and partner with parents and has a practice of offering at least one parent/teacher conference per year, on dates set forth on the campus calendar. In addition, Policy EIA(LOCAL) directs, "In addition to conferences scheduled on the campus calendar, conferences may be requested by a teacher or parent as needed."

Each campus welcomes parents to schedule time to meet with teachers, counselors, principals and other staff members, as may be appropriate, to address any concerns they have concerning their child's education. Rockwall ISD believes the number of in-person parent/teacher conferences required each year is best left to the discretion of the local Board of Trustees, the District's Superintendent, and/or campus principals, in collaboration with parents. In addition, parent conferences are also available at any time upon request.

V. Instructional Plans and Syllabus

Exemption From: TEC § 26.0062

Manner in which law inhibits Board Goals

Texas Education Code § 26.0062 requires the Board to 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 for that semester. Further, the policy requires 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 (1) district administration and (2) the parents of each student enrolled in the class and provide for additional copies of an instructional plan or course syllabus to a parent of a student enrolled in the class on the parent's request.

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The additional requirement of making the instructional plan or course syllabus for each class offered in the District by the specific timeline specified in law places additional administrative burdens that impacts District and campus preparations for the semester. Similarly, the requirement for teachers to provide copies of the instructional plan or course syllabus before the beginning of each semester to parents of each student enrolled

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in their classes places additional burdens on teaching staff by a timeline that does not take into account the multiple duties and responsibilities teachers must fulfill in a limited timeframe after they return to work from either the summer or winter breaks. Rockwall ISD maintains Parent Content Guides on the school district website that meet the instructional plan requirement for core content courses. If a teacher of a non-core course receives a request from a parent for a copy of the instructional plan or course syllabus for a class in which their student is enrolled, the District will respond to such request.

VI. Inter-District Transfer Students

Exemption from TEC §25.036

Manner In which the Law Inhibits Board Goals

Currently, a school district may choose to accept students who are not entitled to enroll in the District through the student transfer process. The transfer time frame under state law is interpreted to be for a period of one school year. Rockwall ISD has a transfer policy permitting certain non-resident students the opportunity to apply for an inter-district transfer each school year. Recognizing that the addition of transfer students adds to the District's community and culture, as school budgets and resources become more limited, the District has a vested interest in seeing that District resources are focused on resident student's educational opportunities. In considering transfer requests under policy, the Superintendent must consider the availability of space and instructional staff, disciplinary history and attendance records.

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The District will be able to revoke a student's transfer during the academic year based on changed circumstances initially qualifying a non-resident student for a transfer based on an exception under the policy. Additionally, if any information is misrepresented in the transfer application or any transfer documentation, the student transfer may also be revoked during the school year. Finally, violation of the terms of the agreement may result in revocation of a transfer during the school year or in a transfer request not being approved the following school year.

Implementation

This Innovation Plan is designed to create parameters within which the District will operate, in order to provide additional student opportunities. The appropriate campuses and departments will develop specific implementation plans.

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