



Comprehensive Local Innovation Plan (*Renewal with Amendments*) 2026-2027 through 2030-2031

House Bill 1842, passed by the 84th Texas Legislature, allows public school districts to obtain designation as Districts of Innovation. This designation provides school districts with local control and flexibility to implement innovative practices and to be exempt from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code, in order to better meet the needs of students and the community.

Introduction

Our Strategic Plan and District Improvement efforts require Sherman ISD to evolve and think differently about critical systemic components, including how we are organized, how we deliver instruction, how we recruit and retain high-quality staff, how we engage and support our families, and how we continuously improve as a learning organization.

This designation allows Sherman ISD to respond quickly to emerging district needs while supporting the implementation of strategic priorities focused on instructional effectiveness, leadership development, and student achievement.

The District of Innovation designation provides greater local control and flexibility, with accountability, relative to certain state mandates that govern educational programming. This flexibility allows Sherman ISD to better meet the needs of its students and community while maintaining compliance with all applicable state and federal laws.

An innovation plan cannot seek exemption from state or federal requirements applicable to curriculum, graduation requirements, academic accountability, or financial accountability.

The Sherman ISD District of Innovation Plan aligns with the Board of Trustees' adopted goals:

Goal I: Academic Growth

Sherman ISD will ensure every student achieves at least one year of academic growth each year through personalized, data-driven instruction that meets individual learning needs.

Goal II: Culture and Climate

Sherman ISD will cultivate a positive, inclusive, and respectful climate across all campuses, ensuring that students, staff, and families feel safe, valued, and connected.

Goal III: Community Engagement

Sherman ISD will strengthen partnerships with families and the broader community by increasing meaningful two-way communication, participation, and collaboration in school activities, decision-making processes, and student learning.

These goals serve as the foundation for the District of Innovation Plan and guide all innovation efforts outlined in this document. All exemptions and flexibility outlined in this plan are intended to support instructional quality, staff capacity, and student success.

This plan represents a renewal of Sherman ISD's District of Innovation designation and includes amendments to reflect updated district priorities and statutory requirements.

District of Innovation Team 2026 Renewal

Jazmine Softly	Community Rep	Brandy Wade	Teacher
Jennifer Snyder	Community Rep	Amber Whatley	Teacher
Martha Tapia	Business Rep	Andrea Wiggins	Teacher
Haley Banks	Business Rep	Dr. Gayle Smith	Interim Dir. Special Populations
Katrina Smith	Parent Rep	Julie Kerr	Dir. of Partners in Education
Marlicia Wilson	Parent Rep	Dr. Kelly Flowers	Elementary Dir.
Chandra Allivand	Asst. Principal	Blake Hays	Human Resources Dir.
Brenda Bennett	Teacher	Mandi Lewis	Chief Financial Officer
Stephanie Blankenship	Teacher	Jenifer Politi	Dir. of Student Services
Julie Brown	Teacher	Amy Porter	Dir of Acad Supp. & Leadership
Lisette Bugert	Teacher	Meghan Cone	Chief Communications Officer
Christiane Carrasco	Teacher	Dr. Mignon Plyler	Dir. of Instructional Tech
Kisha Christman	Teacher	Adam Patterson	Dir. of Technology
Leomar De Los Angeles	Counselor	Amy Pesina	Asst. Superintendent
Gena Graham	Teacher	Dr. Thomas O'Neal	Superintendent
Rina Hamilton	Asst. Principal	Jeff Chancellor	Principal
Blakely Hogan-Guedea	Teacher	Santos Flores	Principal
Christy Payne	Teacher	Lori Hartman	Principal
Adriene Percell	Teacher	Ali Holderby	Principal
KP Perez	Counselor	Nancy Jung	Principal
Kristi Peters	Nurse	Jim May	Principal
Cynetta Putsche	Teacher	Rebecca McCright	Principal
Rachel Reyes	Teacher	Dr. Kristen Perry	Principal
Jessica Reynolds	Teacher	Dr. Max Smith	Principal
Cicily Stone	Teacher	Steven Traw	Principal
Valeta Tollison	Counselor	Torie Washington	Principal
Devin Turk	Teacher	Julee West	Principal
Emma Villegas	Teacher	Ashley Woods	Principal

District of Innovation Renewal Timeline

DATES	WHAT	OBJECTIVE
April 27	Initial meeting Teaching & Learning	Review the current District of Innovation plan and update exemptions and language.
May 1	Public Posting	Post proposed District of Innovation renewal plan for public review for a minimum of 30 days.
May 14	District-Level Committee Meeting	Review and consider approval of the final proposed District of Innovation renewal plan.
June 15	Board of Trustees Meeting	Board of Trustees considers approval of the District of Innovation renewal plan with amendments.
After Approval	TEA Notification	Submit required notifications and documentation to the Texas Education Agency.

Innovations Recommended for Renewal

I. Class Size Student-Teacher Ratio (TEC §25.111, §25.112, and §25.113) (EEB LEGAL)

Current Provision:

State law requires districts to maintain a class size ratio of 22 students or less per teacher in Kindergarten through Grade 4 and to seek a waiver from the Texas Education Agency when exceeding this limit.

Benefit of Exemption:

Local control of class size allows the district to respond to enrollment fluctuations, staffing availability, and student needs without delays associated with the waiver process.

Proposed Innovative Strategies:

Sherman ISD will prioritize maintaining appropriate class sizes while retaining flexibility to respond to enrollment growth, staffing needs, and campus-specific circumstances without submitting a waiver to the Texas Education Agency. Campus administrators will consider factors such as enrollment, staffing, and student needs when determining class assignments.

II. Uniform Start Date (TEC §25.0811) (EB LEGAL)

Current Provision:

State law prohibits school districts from starting class before the fourth Monday in August, unless they are year-round districts.

Benefit of Exemption:

Flexibility in the school start date allows the district to design a calendar that better aligns with

instructional needs, assessment schedules, and community expectations while supporting high-quality instruction and efficient use of instructional time.

Proposed Innovative Strategies:

Sherman ISD will determine the instructional calendar annually based on district and community needs. This flexibility allows for balanced semesters, alignment with state assessments, and increased opportunities for instructional planning and student support. The district may also:

- Balance the number of semester days while finishing the first semester before the holiday break in December
- Provide an appropriate number of instructional days to support Advanced Placement exams, STAAR/EOC testing timelines, and dual credit courses
- Incorporate partial or full days for professional learning
- Honor teacher planning and preparation time to support high-quality instruction
- Build in additional time for inclement weather days
- Expand opportunities for summer school, internships, and professional certification experiences
- Develop innovative scheduling options to support a variety of student programs

III. Length of School Day (TEC §25.081, §25.082) (EC LEGAL)

Current Provision:

State law requires districts to provide a minimum number of instructional minutes per year and generally requires a set number of minutes per school day.

Benefit of Exemption:

Flexibility in structuring the school day allows the district to provide additional time for professional learning, student support, and instructional planning while maximizing the effective use of instructional time.

Proposed Innovative Strategies:

Sherman ISD will continue to meet annual instructional minute requirements while exercising flexibility in daily scheduling. This flexibility allows the district to:

- Provide professional learning opportunities for staff
- Support student interventions and targeted instructional time
- Allow time for parent conferences and campus-based needs
- Enhance collaboration through professional learning communities
- Develop innovative scheduling structures that support instructional effectiveness

IV. Teacher Certification (TEC §21.003, §21.053, §21.057) (DK LEGAL, DK LOCAL)

Current Provision:

State law requires educators to hold appropriate certification for their assigned teaching positions.

Benefit of Exemption:

In the event a district cannot locate a certified teacher for a position or a teacher is assigned outside of their certification area, the district would otherwise be required to seek approval through the Texas Education Agency or State Board for Educator Certification.

District of Innovation flexibility allows Sherman ISD to hire qualified individuals for hard-to-fill positions, including Career and Technical Education, dual credit, and specialized subject areas, when certified candidates are not available. This flexibility supports student access to specialized programs and opportunities aligned to college and career readiness.

Proposed Innovative Strategies:

Sherman ISD will maintain flexibility in hiring for hard-to-fill positions. The Superintendent or designee may approve local teaching assignments for individuals who do not hold traditional certification when certified candidates are not available. The district will:

- Prioritize hiring certified teachers when available
- Utilize flexibility for Career and Technical Education, dual credit, and specialized instructional areas, i.e. Bilingual/ESL
- Require candidates to demonstrate relevant content knowledge, professional experience, or industry credentials
- Provide appropriate support and oversight for individuals serving in these roles

Sherman ISD acknowledges statutory changes to certification requirements under the Texas Education Code. Beginning with the 2026–2027 school year, District of Innovation exemptions may no longer be used to hire uncertified teachers for Kindergarten through Grade 5 reading and mathematics positions. Beginning with the 2027–2028 school year, District of Innovation exemptions may no longer be used for remaining foundation curriculum courses.

Sherman ISD will comply with these requirements. The district will also implement provisions under TEC §21.0032 to delay certification requirements for certain existing teachers of record, as permitted by law.

Sherman ISD will comply with all applicable state and federal requirements related to educator employment and assignment.

VI. Transfer Students (TEC §25.036) (FDA LEGAL, FDA LOCAL)**Current Provision:**

State law allows students to transfer between school districts with approval from both the sending and receiving districts.

Benefit of Exemption:

Local control of transfer decisions allows the district to manage enrollment, maintain program quality, and ensure that students meet district expectations.

Proposed Innovative Strategies:

Sherman ISD retains the authority to approve, deny, or revoke transfer status at any time during the year based on student behavior, attendance, academic performance, program capacity, staffing, and campus needs. The district will:

- Require transfer students to meet district expectations
- Monitor student performance and behavior
- Revoke transfer status when expectations are not met
- Establish administrative procedures to ensure consistent and fair application of transfer decisions

VII. Grievance Procedures (LOCAL CONTROL)**Current Provision:**

State law establishes procedures related to grievances, including requirements under Chapter 26A of the Texas Education Code regarding complaints alleging violations of parental rights.

Benefit of Exemption:

Maintaining local control of grievance procedures allows Sherman ISD to continue utilizing established processes that provide due process, clear timelines, and consistency for students, parents, and employees without creating duplicative or conflicting procedures.

Proposed Innovative Strategies:

Sherman ISD has exercised its District of Innovation authority to opt out of the grievance requirements established under Chapter 26A of the Texas Education Code.

The district will continue to operate under existing local policies:

- FNG (LOCAL) for student and parent complaints
- DGBA (LOCAL) for employee complaints

These policies provide:

- Clearly defined procedures and timelines
- Due process protections for all parties
- Consistent and transparent handling of concerns

Sherman ISD will ensure all grievance procedures are implemented in a manner that supports fairness, efficiency, and effective district operations while remaining compliant with applicable law.

In response to legislative changes under Senate Bill 12 and House Bill 12, Sherman ISD convened a District-Level Committee meeting on August 14, 2025 to review the requirements of Chapter 26A of the Texas Education Code. The committee reviewed the new statutory grievance requirements, compared them to the district's existing grievance procedures under FNG(LOCAL) and DGBA(LOCAL), and determined that the district's current processes already provide clear timelines, due process protections, and transparency. Following discussion, the District-Level Committee voted to utilize District of Innovation authority to opt out of the Chapter 26A requirements and maintain existing local grievance procedures.

Following the District-Level Committee recommendation, the Sherman ISD Board of Trustees considered and approved the amendment to the District of Innovation Plan on August 18, 2025. This action formally authorized the district to opt out of the grievance procedure requirements established under Chapter 26A of the Texas Education Code and to continue operating under existing local policies FNG (LOCAL) and DGBA (LOCAL).