



Santa Fe Independent School District

Local District of Innovation Plan

- District Educational Improvement Committee Approval: 3/6/2017; 12/11/2017 (Revision)
- Board of Trustees Approval of Adoption: 4/17/2017; 12/18/2017 (Revision)
- District Of Innovation Renewal plan posted for public comments on 2/25/2022.
- Board of Trustees' Approval of Renewal: 3/28/2022
- DEIC approval of Amendments May of 2026 and Board of Trustee Approval on May 18, 2026

I. INTRODUCTION

The District of Innovation (DOI) designation is a concept passed by the 84th Texas Legislature through House Bill (HB) 1842 that gives traditional independent school districts most of the flexibilities available to open enrollment charter schools, including exemption from many requirements mandated in the Texas Education Code.

As a District of Innovation, Santa Fe ISD (SFISD) will have:

- greater local control as the decision makers over the educational and instructional model for students.
- increased freedom and flexibility, with accountability, relative to state mandates that govern educational programming; and
- power to innovate and think differently.

HB 1842 does not allow for exemptions from statutes including curriculum and graduation requirements or academic and financial accountability.

II. OUR PROCESS and DEVELOPMENT OF ORIGINAL DOI

On December 12, 2016, the Santa Fe ISD Board of Trustees ("Board") passed a Resolution to Initiate the Process of Designation of a District of Innovation Under HB 1842 in order to increase local control over SFISD operations and to support innovation and local initiatives to improve educational outcomes for the benefit of the students and the community. A public hearing to consider whether the District should develop a local innovation plan for the designation of the district as a district of innovation was held on December 12, 2016. After the public hearing, the Board appointed the Superintendent the responsibility of creating a District of Innovation Committee ("DOI Committee").

On January 23, 2017, the Board was presented with the DOI Committee, comprised of diverse leaders representing a cross-section of the SFISD's stakeholders including teachers, principals, parents/community members, and administrators. SFISD's District of Innovation Committee Members are as follows:

The District of Innovation Initial Timeline for Santa Fe ISD is below:

Santa Fe ISD District of Innovation Initial Timeline	
December 2016	<p>Adopt Resolution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☒ On December 12, 2016, the Santa Fe ISD Board of Trustees passed a resolution to investigate the possibility of becoming a District of Innovation <p>Hold Public Hearing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☒ Immediately after adopting the resolution, the Board held a public hearing concerning Districts of Innovation <p>Appointing Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☒ The Board of Trustees appointed the Superintendent to form the SFISD District of Innovation Committee
January 2017	<p>DOI Committee – Kickoff Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☒ On January 25, 2017, a group reflective of all areas of the district participated in an orientation meeting to set district priorities for DOI plan and exemptions
February – March 2017	<p>Plan Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☒ The Santa Fe ISD District of Innovation Committee will meet 2-3 times between February and March 2017 to discuss priorities and develop/finalize plan
March 2017	<p>Provide Plan for Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ Santa Fe ISD will post any plan developed on its website for 30 days. <p>Notify TEA of Intent to Vote</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ Santa Fe ISD Board of Trustees will notify the Commissioner of Education about the Board’s intention to vote on adoption of the proposed plan. <p>District Educational Improvement Council Vote on Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ DEIC will hold a public meeting to consider the final version of the proposed plan and must approve the plan by a majority vote
April 2017	<p>Board of Trustees Votes on Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ On April 17, 2017, the Santa Fe ISD Board of Trustees must adopt the proposed plan by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the Board in order to become a DOI. <p>Upon adoption of a local plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ SFISD will be designated as a DOI for the term specified in the plan but not longer than five calendar years. ☐ Shall begin operation in accordance with the plan. ☐ Will be exempt from state requirements identified under TEC, §12A.003(b)(2)
April 2017	<p>Texas Education Agency Commissioner Notified</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ The district shall notify the commissioner of approval of the plan along with a list of approved TEC exemptions by completing the agency form provided in the figure in this subsection

DATES OF RENEWAL OF LOCAL INNOVATION PLAN UNDER DISTRICT OF INNOVATION	ACTIONS OF RENEWAL OF LOCAL INNOVATION PLAN UNDER DISTRICT OF INNOVATION
February 16, 2022	Public Posting of District Education Improvement Committee ✓ Agenda Item Posted: Renewal of DOI
February 24, 2022	Plan Renewal Review ✓ A public meeting of the District Education Improvement Committee meets to review plan for 5-year renewal Plan must pass by majority vote by DEIC
February 25, 2022	Notice of Intent to Renew and Posting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o First notification email sent to commissioner of Boards intent to review DOI plan before adoption o Day one of public posting of District's renewal DOI plan on District website for 30 calendar days (Feb 25-March 26th, 2022)
March 28, 2022	Board of Trustees Votes on Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o On March 28, 2022, the Santa Fe ISD Board of Trustees must adopt the proposed renewal plan by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the membership of the Board in order to become a renewed DOI Upon adoption of a local plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o SFISD will be designated as a DOI for the term specified in the plan but not longer than five calendar years o Shall begin operation in accordance with the plan o Will be exempt from state requirements identified under TEC, §12A.003(b)(2)
April 2022	Texas Education Agency Commissioner Notified <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The district shall notify the commissioner of approval of the plan along with a list of approved TEC exemptions by completing the agency form provided in the figure in this subsection (no later than 15 days of renewal)

III. OUR PROCESS for RENEWAL of DOI

On February 24, 2022, the District Education Improvement Committee (DEIC), comprised of various District stakeholders reviewed each original Santa Fe ISD local innovation and unanimously approved to begin the process of renewal for the term of five-years. The timeline below will document the process of the 2022 DOI renewal.

IV. TERM

Upon Board adoption of renewal and expiration of original plan, the term of the plan for renewal is five years, beginning April 18, 2022, and ending April 18, 2027, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. If, within the term of this plan, other areas of operations are to be considered for flexibility as part of the Texas Education Code, Subchapter 12A, the SFISD Board of Trustees will nominate 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. Santa Fe ISD may not implement two separate plans at any one time.

V. Amendments

- Amendment I: The proposed amended DOI was presented for consideration to the District Education Improvement Committee on April 3, 2024, and was approved by a majority of the committee. The Board of Trustees approved the amended DOI Plan at the action meeting held on June 17, 2024.
- Amendment II: In May of 2026, the District Education Improvement Committee unanimously approved changes to the plan and the Board of Trustees approved the amended DOI plan on May 18, 2026. After a policy audit completed by TASB, the committee was presented the recommendations for their consideration. As a result, several innovations were removed, one policy was revised, and one policy added. The rationale for the revisions and removals are located after the District of Innovation plan. In addition, all retained innovations were updated with current wording and explanations of how the innovation would be utilized by the district.

VI. COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

The Plan's comprehensive educational program is guided by and aligned with the Board's vision, mission and goals.

Vision Statement:

Santa Fe ISD is an innovative district that is building a legacy of excellence in partnership with our community.

Mission Statement:

Santa Fe ISD is an academic leader committed to excellence through continuous improvement by instilling high standards, building strong community partnerships, providing innovative opportunities, and empowering students for lifelong success.

District Goals:

- Goal 1: **Safety**- Ensure an exceptional learning experience for all SFISD students in a safe and positive learning environment.
- Goal 2: **Achievement**-Promote academic achievement and success in SFISD through student engagement, innovation, rigorous and relevant learning.
- Goal 3: **Culture**- Maintain a collaborative district culture that promotes partnerships among all SFISD students, staff, families, and community stakeholders.
- Goal 4: **Recruitment**- Recruit, retain, and support a world-class team of employees in SFISD.
- Goal 5: **Resources**- Maximize our use of financial resources to ensure the greatest effectiveness and benefit for all SFISD students.

The purpose of the plan is to advance:

- innovative curriculum.
- instructional methods.
- community participation.
- governance of campuses.
- and parental involvement.

VII. INNOVATIONS

Under Texas Education Code, Subchapter 12A, districts may identify certain requirements imposed by the Texas Education Code (TEC) “that inhibit the goals of the plan and from which the district should be exempted on adoption of the plan. . .” Because SFISD’s Strategic Plan and its local Innovation Plan are comprehensive and impact areas in the TEC, and because SFISD seeks to maximize local control of educational decisions for each student, SFISD seeks exemption from the following provisions of the TEC:

DETERMINE A FLEXIBLE SCHOOL START AND END DATE	
Texas Education Code §25.0811 and §25.0812	EB(LEGAL)
<p>Rationale for the Exemption:</p> <p>The Texas Education Code currently imposes specific limitations on the school calendar through §25.0811 and §25.0812, which respectively establish a uniform start date and restrict the earliest allowable last day of school. Under §25.0811, school districts are prohibited from beginning instruction prior to the fourth Monday in August, except under limited statutory exceptions. Additionally, §25.0812 prohibits districts from ending the school year prior to May 15. While these provisions were originally intended to create statewide consistency, they also impose a rigid calendar structure that may not reflect the unique instructional, operational, and community needs of our district.</p>	
<p>Innovation:</p> <p>The district will exercise the flexibility afforded under its District of Innovation designation to establish locally determined first and last instructional days. The Board of Trustees authorizes the development of a school calendar that best supports student achievement, instructional effectiveness, and operational efficiency.</p> <p>The District will be permitted to begin instruction prior to the fourth Monday in August and may conclude the school year prior to May 15, as determined by the locally adopted calendar. The District will annually develop the academic calendar through a local process that includes meaningful input from stakeholders, such as the District Educational Improvement Committee (DEIC) and campus representatives.</p> <p>Through this flexibility, the District will be able to maximize instructional time and improve student readiness for state assessments by ensuring that a greater portion of instruction occurs prior to testing windows. The District will also be able to create more balanced semesters that support effective grading practices and instructional pacing, allowing for a more consistent delivery of curriculum throughout the school year.</p> <p>In addition, the District will have the opportunity to better align its academic calendar with college and workforce expectations, including dual credit schedules, Advanced Placement timelines, and postsecondary transition opportunities for students. This flexibility will further enable the District to develop a more responsive, locally driven calendar that reflects the needs and priorities of the community, while supporting family and staff planning.</p> <p>Finally, the District will be able to intentionally embed opportunities for professional learning and collaboration throughout the school year, increasing the capacity for data-driven instruction and continuous improvement aligned to student performance outcomes.</p>	

DETERMINE SCHOOL DAY INTERRUPTIONS	
Texas Education Code §25.083	EC(LEGAL)
<p>Rationale:</p> <p>The Texas Education Code §25.083 requires school districts to adopt and strictly enforce policies that limit interruptions to instructional time during the school day. Specifically, the statute mandates that nonacademic interruptions—such as announcements or activities—be minimized, including limiting announcements to no more than once per day. It also restricts the removal of students from class for purposes such as remedial tutoring or test preparation if such removal would cause the student to miss more than ten percent of instructional time in that course, unless parental consent is obtained.</p> <p>Under the current statute, the limitation on removing students from class for intervention services may restrict the District’s ability to provide timely and targeted academic support. In practice, students who require intensive intervention, accelerated instruction, or specialized programming may benefit from temporary removal from certain classes in order to address learning gaps, particularly in foundational subject areas. The statutory cap on time removed from a class can limit the District’s ability to deliver these interventions in a manner that is both responsive and effective, especially when attempting to accelerate students to grade level or prepare them for high-stakes assessments.</p> <p>Additionally, the requirement to strictly limit interruptions such as announcements does not fully account for the operational realities of modern school systems. Campuses often need flexibility to communicate important information related to student safety, academic programming, extracurricular participation, and campus operations in a timely manner. A rigid, one-size-fits-all limitation on interruptions may hinder effective communication and reduce a campus’s ability to respond to immediate needs.</p>	
<p>Innovation:</p> <p>Under this innovation, the District will exercise the flexibility afforded through its District of Innovation designation to implement local policies governing interruptions to the instructional day and the removal of students from class for academic support services.</p> <p>Through this flexibility, the District will establish locally determined guidelines that prioritize the protection of instructional time while also permitting strategic and purposeful interruptions when necessary to support student learning and campus operations. Campus leadership will have the discretion to structure communication practices, including announcements and other nonacademic activities, in a manner that ensures timely dissemination of important information while minimizing disruption to instruction.</p> <p>In addition, the District will implement a more flexible framework for student interventions and supports. This will allow educators to make data-driven decisions regarding the temporary removal of students from scheduled classes for targeted instruction, acceleration, or remediation based on individual student needs. Rather than being constrained by a fixed statutory limitation, campuses will balance the need for uninterrupted core instruction with the need to provide intensive support in critical content areas, particularly for students requiring accelerated learning to meet grade-level expectations.</p> <p>The District will ensure that all decisions related to instructional interruptions and student scheduling remain focused on maximizing academic outcomes and supporting the whole child. Local procedures will be developed to guide campuses in the appropriate use of instructional time, safeguard essential learning opportunities, and ensure that parents remain informed of significant changes to their child’s instructional schedule when applicable.</p>	

Student/Teacher Ratios; Class Size	
Texas Education Code §§25.111, 25.112, and 25.113	EEB(LEGAL)
<p>The Texas Education Code §§25.111, 25.112, and 25.113 establish state-mandated class size limits for kindergarten through fourth grade, generally requiring that classes not exceed a specified student-to-teacher ratio and requiring districts to seek a formal waiver when those limits are exceeded. These statutes also impose procedural requirements, including notification to parents and reporting obligations when class sizes exceed the allowable threshold.</p> <p>While these provisions are intended to support favorable student-to-teacher ratios, they also create operational constraints that may inhibit the District’s ability to make timely, strategic staffing and scheduling decisions based on local needs. The District seeks exemption from these requirements through its District of Innovation plan in order to provide greater flexibility in managing class sizes in a manner that supports both instructional quality and operational efficiency.</p> <p>In practice, fluctuations in student enrollment, particularly at the campus or grade level, can result in temporary or unforeseen increases in class sizes beyond the statutory limits. Under current law, districts are required to either rapidly reassign staff or seek formal waivers, which can be time-consuming and may not align with the immediate needs of students or available staffing resources. These constraints can lead to inefficiencies in staffing, disruption to instructional continuity, and challenges in maintaining stable classroom environments.</p> <p>Exemption from §§25.111, 25.112, and 25.113 would allow the District to respond more effectively to enrollment changes by making locally informed decisions regarding class size and staffing. Rather than relying on a waiver process, the District would have the ability to evaluate classroom conditions holistically, considering factors such as teacher effectiveness, available instructional support, student needs, and campus resources when determining appropriate class configurations.</p> <p>Additionally, this flexibility supports the District’s ability to allocate resources in a manner that maximizes overall student benefit. In some cases, slightly larger class sizes may allow the District to preserve specialized programs, maintain smaller class sizes in critical content areas, or provide targeted support such as intervention teachers, instructional aides, or co-teaching models. The rigid application of class size caps can limit the District’s ability to deploy these resources strategically.</p> <p>The District remains committed to maintaining high-quality instructional environments and will continue to monitor class sizes closely to ensure that students receive effective instruction and appropriate support. Local guidelines and administrative oversight will be used to ensure that class size decisions are made in the best interest of students and aligned with the District’s academic goals.</p>	
<p>Innovation:</p> <p>Under this innovation, the District will exercise the flexibility provided through its District of Innovation designation to establish local class size expectations and management practices in lieu of the requirements outlined in Texas Education Code §§25.111, 25.112, and 25.113. These statutes generally require districts to maintain class sizes at or below state-mandated limits and to seek waivers and provide notifications when those limits are exceeded. Through this exemption, the District will no longer be subject to the statutory cap or waiver process and will instead implement locally determined guidelines for class size management.</p> <p>The District will utilize this flexibility to respond more effectively to fluctuations in student</p>	

enrollment, staffing availability, and programmatic needs at both the campus and grade level. Campus and district leadership will have the authority to make data-informed decisions regarding class size, taking into consideration factors such as student academic needs, teacher effectiveness, available support personnel, and the overall instructional environment. This approach allows the District to maintain stability in classroom assignments and avoid frequent schedule changes that can disrupt continuity of instruction.

Additionally, the District will use this flexibility to allocate resources in a manner that maximizes overall student benefit. In situations where enrollment shifts create temporary increases in class size, the District may determine that maintaining existing classroom structures—while providing additional support such as instructional aides, co-teaching arrangements, or targeted interventions—better serves students than reassigning staff or creating new sections mid-year. This innovation supports a more comprehensive and strategic use of personnel and instructional resources.

The District remains committed to providing high-quality instructional environments and will establish local procedures to ensure that class size decisions are made in alignment with student learning needs and district performance goals. Campus administrators will continue to monitor class sizes and instructional conditions, and the District will maintain transparency with stakeholders as appropriate regarding class size and staffing decisions.

Campus and District Planning and Decision Making	
Texas Education Code §§11.251, 11.252 and 11.253	BQ(LEGAL), BQA(LEGAL), BQA(LOCAL), BQB(LEGAL) and BQB(LOCAL)
<p>Rationale:</p> <p>The Texas Education Code §§11.251, 11.252, and 11.253 establish prescriptive requirements for district- and campus-level planning, including the composition and operation of site-based decision-making committees, as well as the development, review, and approval of district and campus improvement plans. Specifically, §11.251 requires districts to implement formal planning and decision-making process that includes defined committee structures with representation from professional staff, parents, business representatives, and community members. Section 11.252 further requires the development of a comprehensive district improvement plan on an annual basis with detailed components, including needs assessments, measurable objectives, and specific strategies for student performance. Section 11.253 extends these requirements to the campus level, mandating campus improvement plans with specific elements, timelines, and evaluation measures developed through campus-level committees.</p> <p>Under the current statutory framework, the required committee composition, meeting structures, and procedural requirements may limit the District’s ability to utilize more efficient, streamlined, and responsive planning processes. The mandated structure does not always allow for flexibility in how stakeholder input is gathered, nor does it account for evolving district practices related to strategic planning, performance management, and continuous improvement cycles. In practice, this can result in compliance-driven processes that emphasize documentation and procedural adherence rather than meaningful engagement or timely decision-making.</p>	
<p>Innovation:</p> <p>Under this innovation, the District will exercise the flexibility provided through its District of Innovation designation to develop and implement a locally designed planning and decision-making framework in place of the prescriptive requirements outlined in Texas Education Code §§11.251, 11.252, and 11.253. While these statutes establish specific structures for district- and campus-level committees and require detailed processes for the development of improvement plans, this innovation allows the District to streamline and align its planning processes with its strategic priorities and continuous improvement model.</p> <p>The District will continue to ensure meaningful stakeholder engagement as a critical component of the planning process. Professional staff, parents, community members, and business representatives will remain actively involved in the development, review, and monitoring of district and campus improvement efforts. While the District will not be bound to the statutorily prescribed committee structure, it will continue to provide opportunities for stakeholder input through advisory committees, focus groups, surveys, and other engagement strategies designed to ensure broad representation and meaningful participation.</p> <p>This innovation will allow the District to reduce duplication across multiple planning documents, streamline administrative processes, and ensure that planning efforts are directly tied to measurable outcomes for students. The District will prioritize data-driven decision-making, strategic resource allocation, and alignment of instructional practices with identified needs across all student groups.</p> <p>Through this locally designed planning framework, the District will enhance organizational effectiveness, strengthen stakeholder engagement, and ensure that all planning and decision-making processes remain focused on improving student achievement while reflecting the unique needs of the District and its community.</p>	

Probationary Contracts	
Texas Education Code §21.102	DCA(LEGAL)
<p>Rationale:</p> <p>Texas Education Code §21.102 establishes statutory limitations on the length of probationary contracts for teachers, generally restricting the probationary period based on whether the educator has prior experience as a teacher in public education. These provisions limit a district’s ability to uniformly apply a longer probationary period to all newly hired teachers, particularly those with prior teaching experience in other districts.</p> <p>While intended to provide employment protections for educators, these statutory limitations may inhibit the District’s ability to ensure consistent evaluation, support, and alignment of all new instructional staff with district expectations, instructional frameworks, and organizational culture. The District seeks exemption from TEC §21.102 through its District of Innovation plan to allow for a locally determined probationary period of up to three years for all teachers new to the District, regardless of prior experience.</p> <p>Under the current statute, teachers with prior experience may be eligible for shorter probationary periods, which can limit the District’s opportunity to fully assess instructional effectiveness, professional performance, and alignment with district standards before awarding a term contract. This constraint may result in insufficient time to evaluate teacher impact on student achievement, particularly within the context of the District’s instructional model, data driven practices, and performance expectations.</p>	
<p>Innovation:</p> <p>Through this flexibility, the District will utilize a three-year probationary contract period as a structured timeframe to support, develop, and evaluate all new teachers in alignment with the District’s instructional expectations, performance standards, and organizational practices. This approach ensures that all educators, regardless of prior experience, have sufficient time to demonstrate effectiveness within the specific context of the District, including alignment to curriculum, instructional frameworks, assessment systems, and student performance expectations.</p> <p>During the probationary period, teachers will receive ongoing support through targeted professional development, instructional coaching, mentoring, and regular performance feedback. Campus and district leadership will use this extended timeframe to conduct comprehensive evaluations of instructional effectiveness, classroom management, student growth, and contribution to campus and district goals. This process will be grounded in data-driven decision-making and aligned to the District’s performance expectations and strategic priorities.</p> <p>The District will establish and maintain local procedures to ensure that all probationary employees are provided with clear expectations, consistent evaluation practices, and meaningful opportunities for growth and development. Decisions regarding contract status, including movement from probationary to term contracts or nonrenewal, will be based on documented performance and aligned to the District’s commitment to high-quality instruction and student outcomes. This innovation will allow the District to strengthen the quality and consistency of its teaching workforce by ensuring that all new educators are fully prepared to meet the needs of students prior to receiving longer-term contractual protections. Additionally, it supports the District’s ability to retain high-performing teachers while addressing performance concerns in a timely and appropriate manner.</p>	

Mentor Teacher Requirements	
Texas Education Code §21.458	FDA Legal & Local
<p>Rationale:</p> <p>The Texas Education Code §21.458 establishes requirements for the assignment of mentor teachers to novice educators, including expectations regarding mentor qualifications, years of experience, and required training. Specifically, the statute requires that mentor teachers possess at least three years of teaching experience and complete prescribed training programs, and that districts assign mentors to new teachers for defined time periods.</p> <p>While these provisions are intended to ensure quality support for early-career teachers, they can limit a district’s ability to provide flexible, timely, and context-specific mentorship structures that better align with local staffing realities and instructional needs.</p>	
<p>Innovation:</p> <p>Santa Fe Independent School District will utilize the flexibility provided through exemption from Texas Education Code §21.458 to design and implement a locally responsive, data-driven mentoring and teacher support system that better aligns with district priorities, staffing realities, and instructional goals.</p> <p>Rather than adhering strictly to prescriptive statutory requirements regarding mentor eligibility and assignment, SFISD will establish a locally developed mentoring framework that prioritizes instructional effectiveness, subject-matter expertise, and demonstrated leadership capacity. Under this innovation, mentor teachers may be selected based on multiple measures, including appraisal data, student performance outcomes, Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) designations, and principal recommendations, rather than years of teaching experience alone.</p> <p>SFISD will intentionally match mentor teachers with novice or developing educators based on job-like assignments, including grade level, content area, and specialized program needs (e.g., bilingual/ESL, special education, and Career and Technical Education). This approach ensures that mentorship is practical, relevant, and directly aligned to classroom instruction, particularly in a district setting where the number of available mentors in specific subject areas may be limited. The district will embed mentoring within a broader teacher induction and support system, aligned to SFISD priorities such as MTSS implementation, instructional best practices, and TIA performance pathways. Mentoring will not function as a stand-alone compliance activity but as an integrated component of a comprehensive support structure that includes instructional coaching, professional learning communities, targeted professional development, and ongoing performance feedback.</p> <p>Through this flexibility, SFISD will also differentiate the intensity, duration, and type of mentoring support provided to teachers. While all novice teachers will receive structured support, the district will use local data (e.g., T-TESS appraisal results, walkthrough feedback, and student achievement data) to determine individualized levels of support. This may include extending mentorship beyond two years when needed or providing more intensive coaching in high-need instructional areas.</p>	

Revised Innovation in May of 2026:

State Certification Requirements for Teachers and Other Educators	
Texas Education Code §21.003, and §21.053	DBA(LEGAL), DPB(LEGAL), DK(LEGAL)
<p>Rationale:</p> <p>Texas Education Code §21.003 requires that a school district may not employ a teacher or other instructional staff member unless the individual holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued by the State Board for Educator Certification.</p> <p>Additionally, the Texas Education Code §21.053 requires that an educator presents a valid certificate prior to employment and prohibits payment for services rendered before a valid certificate is issued.</p> <p>While these provisions are intended to ensure that educators meet state certification standards, they can limit a district's ability to respond flexibly to staffing needs, particularly in specialized, hard-to-fill, or rapidly evolving instructional areas.</p>	
<p>Innovation:</p> <p>Santa Fe Independent School District will utilize the flexibility provided by exemption from the Texas Education Code §§21.003 and 21.053 to implement a strategic, locally managed staffing model that ensures all students have access to qualified instruction while maintaining continuity of services in critical and hard-to-fill teaching areas.</p> <p>Under this innovation, SFISD will continue to prioritize the hiring of fully certified educators; however, when certified candidates are not available, the district will exercise flexibility to employ individuals who possess relevant academic preparation, industry experience, or subject-matter expertise aligned to the assignment. This approach allows the district to address staffing shortages while maintaining instructional quality.</p> <p>All teachers employed under this exemption will receive targeted instructional support, including mentoring, instructional coaching, and professional development aligned to district curriculum and expectations. Campus administrators will monitor teacher effectiveness through appraisal systems, classroom observations, and student performance data.</p> <p>Finally, SFISD acknowledges recent legislative changes impacting certification exemptions and will ensure that implementation of this innovation remains aligned with state requirements, including limitations on certification exemptions for foundation curriculum courses. The district will utilize this flexibility primarily in allowable areas and, where applicable, will develop and implement transition plans to support teachers in obtaining full certification within required timelines.</p>	

Added Innovation in May of 2026:

INTER-DISTRICT TRANSFER STUDENTS	
Texas Education Code §25.036	FDA Legal & Local
<p>Rationale: TEC §25.036: Currently, a district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district. The State interprets the statute to require the transfer period to be one school year. Eanes ISD maintains a transfer policy requiring non-resident students wishing to transfer into the district must file a transfer application each school year. In approving transfer requests, SFISD considers the following: (1) Timely application; (2) A transfer shall not violate existing statutes; (3) A transfer shall not be approved that would limit the educational opportunities of resident students; (4) Applications for transfers shall be considered on an annual basis; (5) To the extent permitted by law, attendance, academic performance, including grades and results of the state-mandated assessment system, and the disciplinary history. (See FDA (Local)).</p>	
<p>Innovation: The district seeks exemption from the one-year commitment in accepting transfer applicants by allowing the district to rescind a transfer at any time during the school year (i.e. from the first day of class to the last day of class). While accepting transfer students can add value to a school district's finances and culture, there may be exceptional situations not foreseen at the time of application (e.g., attendance, academic performance or disciplinary issues) when a transfer student's enrollment could inhibit the educational opportunities of resident students. As public school budgets become tighter, the district has a vested interest in the application of its resources going to resident student's educational opportunities. Therefore, the superintendent is authorized to accept or reject any transfer requests, provided such action is without regard to race, religion, color, sex, disability, national origin, or ancestral language.</p> <p>A resident student who becomes a non-resident during a semester may, at the discretion of the Superintendent or designee, be permitted to continue in attendance as a transfer student for the remainder of the semester.</p> <p>A non-resident student wishing to transfer into the district shall file an application for transfer each school year with the Superintendent or designee. In approving transfers, the Superintendent or designee shall review available space, instructional service needs and staffing, the student's disciplinary history, threat assessment, grades, assessment results, attendance records, and special considerations. A transfer student shall be notified in the written transfer agreement that he/she must follow all rules and regulations of the district. In extenuating circumstances without satisfactory resolution, the district may rescind a transfer student at any time during the school year and is not required to fulfill a one-year commitment. Therefore, violation of the terms of the agreement may result in revocation of the transfer agreement during the school year and/or may result in a transfer request not being approved the following school year.</p>	

Removed or Revised Innovations May of 2026 after careful consideration and vote from the DEIC committee and approval from the Board of Trustees on May 18, 2026.

Minutes of Instruction (§25.081)

Component	Details
Decision	☐ Approve (Retain) ☐ Revise ☒ Remove (Deny)
Recommended Action	Remove (Deny)
Rationale (TASB Guidance)	No longer necessary due to HB 2442 (2017) minute requirement revision.
District Notes	The committee voted to remove it due to new legislation. This innovation is no longer needed.

Planning & Preparation (§21.404)

Component	Details
Decision	☐ Approve (Retain) ☐ Revise ☒ Remove (Deny)
Recommended Action	Approve (Retain)
Rationale (TASB Guidance)	May be retained to preserve scheduling flexibility.
District Notes	The committee voted to remove this innovation and the exemption. The law allows flexibility for state testing days and for variations over a one and two-week period. Therefore, this innovation is not necessary for the function of our schools and reducing planning time does not align with our district goals.

Minimum Attendance (§25.092)

Component	Details
Decision	☐ Approve (Retain) ☐ Revise ☒ Remove (Deny)
Recommended Action	Remove (Deny)
Rationale (TASB Guidance)	Statute already allows credit via mastery—exemption unnecessary.
District Notes	The committee voted to remove this innovation as state law allows for the principal and the attendance committee to make decisions to approve credit and to create plans for students. This innovation was redundant.

SECTION 6 — Professional Development (§21.451)

Component	Details
Decision	☐ Approve (Retain) ☐ Revise ☒ Remove (Deny)
Recommended Action	Approve (Retain)
Rationale (TASB Guidance)	Appropriate if aligned with district PD practices.
District Notes	TASB recommended keeping the innovation if the district practices were aligned. However, the district practices are to offer more than the state minimum of Professional Development. In addition, the district has offered exchange days to further teacher learning. The committee voted to remove this innovation because it does not align with district goals.

Teacher Appraisal (§21.352)

Component	Details
Decision	☐ Approve (Retain) ☐ Revise ☒ Remove (Deny)
Recommended Action	Remove (Deny)
Rationale (TASB Guidance)	Districts already have local appraisal authority.
District Notes	The committee voted to remove this innovation because SFISD has used state law to develop its own locally approved appraisal system, SFTAS.

Campus Behavior Coordinator / Chapter 37

Component	Details
Decision	☐ Approve (Retain) ☐ Revise ☒ Remove (Deny)
Recommended Action	Remove (Deny)
Rationale (TASB Guidance)	HB 6 (2025) removes DOI exemption authority.
District Notes	The committee voted to remove the innovation because it is no longer an allowable exemption under HB 6.

State Certification

Component	Details
Decision	☐ Approve (Retain) ☒ Revise ☐ Remove (Deny)
Recommended Action	Revise
Rationale (TASB Guidance)	Cannot exempt parent notification requirements.
District Notes	The committee voted to revise the innovation to remove the TEC 21.057 because it is no longer an allowable exemption.

Minimum Service Required (§21.401)

Component	Details
Decision	☐ Approve (Retain) ☐ Revise ☒ Remove (Deny)
Recommended Action	Remove (Deny)
Rationale	No longer necessary due to SB 2073.
District Notes	The committee voted to remove this innovation because it is no longer necessary because SB 2073 allows the district to have more flexibility in teacher contract days.

SHAC Requirement

Component	Details
Decision	☐ Approve (Retain) ☐ Revise ☒ Remove (Deny)
Recommended Action	Remove (Deny)
Rationale	SB 12 requires SHAC—cannot be exempted.
District Notes	The committee voted to remove this innovation as SB 12 no longer allows the exemption.

DAEP Placement (E-Cigarettes)

Component	Details
Decision	☐ Approve (Retain) ☐ Revise ☒ Remove (Deny)
Recommended Action	Remove (Deny)
Rationale (TASB Guidance)	Chapter 37 exemption removed under HB 6.
District Notes	The committee voted to remove this innovation as HB 6 no longer allows the exemption.