



CISD DISTRICT OF INNOVATION PLAN

I. Introduction

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

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

II. Term

The CISD District of Innovation Plan has a term of five years beginning at the start of the 2017-2018 school year. The plan may be amended, rescinded, or renewed by the district level committee and the Board of Trustees through the process outlined in TEC 102.1313.

III. Innovations

The District proposes flexibility in the following areas:



Long Range Energy Plan (TEC §44.902)

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

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



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

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

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

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



Inter-district Transfers (TEC §25.036)

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

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



Kindergarten Start Age (TEC §29.151)

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

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

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



Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator (TEC §37.0012)

Requirement: TEC §37.0012 requires the designation of a campus behavior coordinator on each campus.

Rationale: The proposal is for the District to seek exemption from the statute requiring each school to have a designated campus behavior coordinator. The relationships that are established between the campus administrator, counselor, student, and parent are the

foundation for promoting and maintaining positive behavior. Utilizing a local district process allows the administrator who currently has a relationship with the parent and student to be the person to make parental contact. The administrator notifies the parent of discipline or behavior concerns, rather than having contact by a campus behavior coordinator, who may not know all the students, providing a much more individual and personal approach.



First Day of Instruction (§25.0811)

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

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



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

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

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

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

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



Probationary Contracts (TEC §21.102)

Requirement: The probationary contract may be renewed for two additional one-year periods, for a maximum permissible probationary contract period of three school years, except that the probationary period may not exceed one year for a person who has been employed as a

teacher in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment by the district.

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



Length of School Day (TEC §25.082A)

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

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



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

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

classroom.

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



High School English Requirement (TEC §28.025(b-2))

Requirement: High School Diploma and Certificate/Course Sequence Texas Education Code §28.025(b-2) Currently Action by the 83rd Session of the Texas Legislature and the rule-making authority of the Texas State Board of Education imposed pre-requisite requirements for high school students taking English IV. Effective August 2016, all students entering high school in the 2014-2015 school year are required to take English I, II, and III, prior to taking English IV. This is an unnecessary and problematic requirement that adversely impacts students seeking to recover credit and graduate in a timely manner or those students seeking to accelerate their high school program to graduate early. HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA AND CERTIFICATE. (b-2) In adopting rules under Subsection (b-1), the State Board of Education shall provide for a student to comply with the curriculum requirements for an advanced English course under Subsection (b-1)(1) taken after successful completion of English I, English II, and English III. Proposed Consistent with the CISD Strategic Plan, students will be able to enroll in courses that meet their needs, selected graduation plans and endorsements. Students and their parents will annually review their course selections and determine which courses and which course sequences best meet the needs of each student. Annual guidance will be provided to students and their parents regarding course selections and timing of courses based on graduation plans and endorsements, without the limitations of unnecessary prerequisite course requirements.

Rationale: This is an unnecessary and problematic requirement that adversely impacts students seeking to recover credit and graduate in a timely manner or those students seeking to accelerate their high school program to graduate early. Students will be able to enroll in courses that meet their needs, selected graduation plans and endorsements. Students and their parents will annually review their course selections and determine which courses and which course sequences best meet the needs of each student. Annual guidance will be provided to students and their parents regarding course selections and timing of courses based on graduation plans and endorsements, without the limitations of unnecessary prerequisite course requirements.

IV. Timeline

December 12, 2016	Superintendent's Cabinet considers District of Innovation options
January 9, 2017	Board adopts a Resolution to pursue becoming a District of Innovation
February 17, 2017	School Board appoints District of Innovation committee
February 28, 2017	District of Innovation Committee holds first meeting
March 7, 2017	District of Innovation Committee holds second meeting
March 10, 2017	Innovation Plan is posted to the district's website
April 17, 2017	District holds public hearing on the Innovation Plan

