

Italy Independent School District District of Innovation Plan



August 2022 - July 2027

Italy ISD Board Approved Renewal TBD

History of the Process

In the summer of 2015, the 84th Texas Legislature passed HB1842, allowing public school districts to become Districts of Innovation in order to gain exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code that apply to Texas public schools.

A district is eligible for designation as an innovation district if the district's most recent performance rating under the Texas Education Code (TEC), §39.054, is at least acceptable performance, as indicated in the applicable year's academic accountability manual adopted under §97.1001 of this title (relating to Accountability Rating System). Italy ISD qualifies for this designation.

The original District of Innovation Plan was approved for August 2017 through July 2022.

A district innovation plan may be amended, rescinded, or renewed if the action is approved by a majority vote of the district-level committee established under the Texas Education Code (TEC), §11.251, or a comparable committee if the district is exempt from that section, and a two-thirds majority vote of the board of trustees. Italy ISD decided to undergo the process to renew their District of Innovation Plan. For a renewal, all sections of the plan and exemptions must be reviewed and the district must follow all components outlined in §102.1307 of this title (relating to Adoption of Local Innovation Plan).

The Italy ISD Board of Trustees approved the revised and renewed District of Innovation Plan on June 14, 2022 and it will run from August 2022 through July 2027.

District Site-Based Decision-Making Committee that served as District of Innovation Committee

Parents, Business and Community

Nichole Galvan; Parent
Debbie Garvin; Business Member
Sandra Graves; Community Member
Michelle Owen; Parent
Sarah Zambrano; Parent

Stafford Elementary Staff

J. Lance Bray; Principal
Rochelle Hellner; Teacher
Angela Janek; Teacher
Elizabeth Jones; Teacher/Librarian
Amanda Robinson; Teacher
Danielle Stewart; Teacher

Italy Junior High-HS Staff

Sharon Graves; Principal
Lacy Brown; Teacher
Maria Burkhlater-Hamby; Teacher
Lee Guidryl; Teacher
Anita Lamar; Paraprofessional
Jamie Moore; Teacher
Stacy Perales; Teacher

District Staff

Rachel Kistner; Superintendent
Dr. Sabrina Mathis; Director of Teaching & Learning
Elizabeth McDaniel; Director of Special Services

District of Innovation Renewal Process Timeline

December 2, 2021	District Site-Based Decision Making (DSBDM) Committee meeting to overview the previous plan and describe the process
January 27, 2022	DSBDM Committee begins review and recommendation process
March 7, 2022	DSBDM Committee finalizes recommendations for the new DOI plan
March 28, 2022	Italy ISD Board of Trustees Meeting to approve notifying the Commissioner of Education of our intention to renew our DOI plan
March 29, 2022	If approved by the Board, notification sent to the Commissioner of Intent to Renew our DOI plan. Draft DOI plan posted on the district website
April 25, 2022	DSBDM Committee meeting, Public Meeting and DSBDM approval of final DOI plan
April 26, 2022	Final approved DOI plan posted (minimum 30 calendar days).
June 14, 2022	Italy ISD Board of Trustees votes to approve and adopt the renewal DOI plan

Term of the Plan

The term of the Italy ISD District of Innovation Plan will be the five-year span from the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year through the end of the 2026-2027 school year, unless the Board of Trustees desire to terminate or amend the plan.

This Plan Reflects

This plan reflects the work of the District Site-Based Decision-Making Committee that served as District of Innovation Committee and the district leadership. Refer to Italy ISD Board Policy AF(Legal).

The following statutes were found by the DSBDM committee to be of benefit to the students and staff of Italy ISD by enhancing the local decision-making process and maintaining a focus on the students, staff, families and community.

Texas Education Code Chapter 11 - School Districts

- Campus Planning and Site-Based Decision Making TEC §11.253

Texas Education Code Chapter 21 - Educators

- Teacher Certification Exemptions TEC §21.003(a), §21.057(a-e)
- Probationary Contracts TEC §21.101, TEC §21.102
- Teacher Appraisal Process TEC §21.203, §21.352, §21.354, §21.3541
- Teacher Contract Days TEC §21.401

Texas Education Code Chapter 25 - Admission, Transfer and Attendance

- Inter-district Transfers TEC §25.036
- First Day of Instruction TEC §25.0811
- Minutes of Instruction TEC §25.081
- School Day Interruptions TEC §25.083
- 90% Attendance Law TEC §25.092
- Class Size and Notice of Class Size TEC §25.112, TEC §25.113

Texas Education Code Chapter 28 - Courses of Study

- School Health Advisory Council TEC §28.004

Texas Education Code Chapter 37 - Discipline, Law and Order

- Campus Behavior Coordinator TEC §37.0012
- Unauthorized Persons: Refusal of Entry, Ejection, Identification
TEC §37.105

Texas Education Code Chapter 45 - School District Funds

- Bank Depository Contract TEC §45.205

Texas Education Code Chapter 11 - School Districts

Campus Planning and Site-Based Decision Making

TEC §11.253

Italy ISD Board Policy BQA(Legal), BQA(Local), BQB (Legal), BQB (Local)

Current: Requires the District to establish campus-level planning and decision-making committees as provided in Sections 11.251(b)-(e).

Proposed: Italy ISD is a small town with a school enrollment of +/-640 students (PreK - 12). Resources for persons serving as members of the District Site-Based Decision Making Committee and the Campus Site-Based Decision Making Committees are limited without asking the same people to serve on several. The campuses are located less than one mile apart and communication between the superintendent and the principal of each campus occurs on a daily basis. The proposal would allow the Campus Level Planning Committees to become synonymous with the District Level Planning Committee to be known as the District Site-Based Decision Making (DSBDM) Committee with the same duties as required by law of the District Planning Committee.

Italy ISD would be able to develop a more cohesive plan that establishes continuity of programs and performance through grades Pre K-12. This committee will:

- develop one District Improvement Plan instead of separate campus plans
- serve as the District of Innovation committee
- serve as the Career and Technology Advisory committee

Membership of the committee would consist of parent(s), community patron(s), business person(s), non-teaching professionals, and an equitable number of teachers from each campus.

Texas Education Code Chapter 21 - Educators

Teacher Certification

TEC §21.003(a) & TEC §21.057(a-e) Italy ISD Board Policy DBA(Legal), DBA(Local)

Current: Mandates that districts that wish to hire an uncertified staff member must submit a request to TEA and wait on approval or denial.

Proposed: In order to best serve Italy ISD students, decisions on certification will be handled locally.

With the current teacher shortage, these exemptions from teacher certification requirements will enable greater flexibility in staffing and will enrich applicant pools in specific areas of need.

- The campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach one subject out of their certified field. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials the certified teacher possess which qualify this individual to teach this subject. The decision to allow a certified teacher to teach one subject out of their certified field will be reviewed and approved on an annual basis. Teachers must continue to be SBEC certified for special education and bilingual positions.
- An individual with experience in a CTE field could be eligible to teach a vocational skill or course through a local teaching certificate. The principal will submit the request to the superintendent with all the individual's credentials. The superintendent will then approve the request if they feel the individual could be an asset to students. The superintendent will then report to the Board of Trustees prior to the individual beginning any employment. Local teaching certificates will be for one year. The decision to extend the local teaching certificate will be reviewed and approved on an annual basis. The employee will be at-will. Finally, this is a local certification only and does not transfer to another school district.

Probationary Contracts

TEC §21.101 & TEC §21.102 Italy ISD Board Policy DCA(Legal), DCA(Local)

Current: TEC 21.102 requires the probationary period not exceed one year for a person employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment with the district.

TEC 21.101: defines "teacher" as a "principal, supervisor, classroom teacher, school counselor, or other full time professional employee" required to hold certification under Subchapter B, "or a nurse".

Proposed: Currently legal policy allows experienced teachers new to the district to have a probationary period that may not exceed one year if the person has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the previous eight years. This time period is not sufficient to evaluate a teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. "Experienced teacher" will encompass the positions of principal, classroom teacher, school counselor, and school nurse.

At the time of contract recommendation consideration, experienced teachers with the district, who have been employed in public education for at least five of the eight previous years and have completed their first probationary year with the district, may receive a probationary contract for the second year in order to continue to evaluate the staff member's effectiveness.

Appropriate administrative documentation will be used when considering an additional probationary contract. Providing an additional year of probationary status for experienced teachers allows campus and district administration to: (1) better evaluate effectiveness; (2) ensure fit for the district and campus culture; and (3) provide opportunity for the teacher growth. All other teachers hired in the district may remain on probationary status for three years and may be issued a fourth year of probation if deemed necessary by the campus principal.

Teacher/Principal Appraisal Process

TEC §21.203, TEC §21.352, TEC §21.354 & TEC §21.3541

Italy ISD Board Policy DNA(Legal), DNA(Local), DNB(Legal), DNB(Local)

Current: The State of Texas is using the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS) and

the Texas Principal Evaluation and Support System (T-PESS).

Proposed: Italy ISD is currently implementing the T-TESS and T-PESS evaluation instruments produced by TEA. To best serve the needs of Italy ISD staff, district and campus administration will have the option to develop alternate appraisals for specific groups of teachers or administrators where the adopted teacher/principal evaluations may not be the most appropriate. The DSBDM committee would have final approval. The newly developed instrument would not include a student growth measure, but will include indicators based on campus and district goals.

Formal evaluations will consist of an observation 35 – 45 minutes in length during instructional class periods. All teachers will be formally evaluated at a minimum of once every year.

Administrators will have the authority to formally evaluate a teacher more often if the teacher is performing below expectations. All teachers will have an annual summative appraisal and shall set goals. A conference will be scheduled to discuss the summative appraisal. The teacher may opt out of the summative conference.

Principals and administrators will continue to be evaluated annually.

Teacher Contract Days

TEC §21.401 Italy ISD Board Policy DK(Legal), DK(Local)

Current: Defines a teacher contract as a ten month contract equivalent to 187 days.

Proposed: Italy ISD would decrease contract days by 5 days, based on the needs of Italy ISD in each of the calendar years under the District of Innovation Plan. The reduction in teacher contract days would:

- create an increase in the daily rate to negate the effect on the teacher salaries
- enhance recruitment of essential quality teachers
- create better alignment with student instructional day requirement of 75,600 minutes
- improve teacher morale
- promote retention of teachers in Italy ISD
- Align our salaries more competitively with neighboring districts
- provide teachers more opportunities during the summer months to seek beneficial staff development relative to their field.

Texas Education Code Chapter 25 - Admission, Transfer and Attendance

Inter-district Transfers

TEC §25.036 Italy ISD Board Policy FDA (Local)

Current: A transfer is interpreted to be for a period of one school year.

Proposed: Italy 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 records, work habits, and attendance records are 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. While Italy ISD is very generous in accepting inter-district transfers, the District is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one-year commitment in accepting transfer applicants. Nonresident students who have been accepted as an inter-district transfer may have such transfer status revoked by the Superintendent at any time during the year if:

- the student's behavior warrants suspension (in or out of school)
- the student is assigned placement in a disciplinary alternative program or expulsion.
- the student's attendance does not meet the state's 90% attendance standard
- a student's work habits decline and is evident in their academic success.

First Day of Instruction

TEC §25.0811 Italy ISD Board Policy EB(Legal), EB(Local)

Current: A school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August, unless a year round school program is offered.

Proposed: The DSBDM Committee will have the flexibility to recommend the start school prior to the fourth Monday in August. Starting earlier will better balance the two semesters with a natural Winter Break, set exams prior to Winter Break, and create more instructional time before STAAR/EOC testing. The balanced semesters will align with college semesters. The DSBDM committee will receive parent, staff, student and community input, then decide, subject to School Board approval, the school start date on an annual basis.

Minutes of Instruction

TEC §25.081 Italy ISD Board Policy EB(Legal), EB(Local)

Current: Each school district must operate so that the district provides for at least 75,600 minutes of instruction, including intermissions and recesses, for students.

Proposed: The option to exempt from this requirement would give the district a significant amount of local control over scheduling 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. Additionally, this would allow the district the flexibility to shorten a school day for relevant school-wide events and activities. Italy ISD would still meet the 75,600 instructional minute requirements. Italy 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 and published and distributed to stakeholders in advance of the school year. The required operational and/or instructional minutes/days as defined in the Student Attendance Accounting Handbook (SAAH) will be followed so that funding for the district will not be reduced proportionally.

School Day Interruptions

TEC §25.083 Italy ISD Board Policy EC(Legal), EC(Local)

Current: A board of trustees must develop a policy that must limit announcements other than emergency announcements to once during the school day. In addition, the district may not remove a student from a regularly scheduled class for remedial tutoring or test preparation if, as a result of the removal, the student would miss more than 10 percent of the school days on which the class is offered, unless the student's parent or another person standing in parental relation to the student provides to the district written consent for removal from class for such purpose.

Proposed: For greater flexibility and opportunities to make decisions on how best to structure the school days and individualized instruction, the DSBDM committee seeks to award this discretion to campus and district administration in an effort to ensure that decision points put students' and campus needs first. The committee wants campuses and the district to have opportunities to provide altered instructional days and to create flexible scheduling opportunities. Both results

allow instructional decisions to be made in response to current student performance data; therefore, reducing learning gaps.

90% Attendance Law

TEC §25.092 Italy ISD Board Policy FEC(Legal), FEC (Local)

Current: State law currently requires students to attend class 90% of the school days on a district calendar to earn credit. The law requires districts to award class credit to students based on the time a student is present in a classroom for instruction, rather than solely on mastery of content and subject proficiency.

Proposed: Italy ISD is charged with meeting the individual needs of our students. Flexibility from the requirement means the district will not have to penalize students who miss class due to enriching activities, academic activities, or other extenuating circumstances that support Italy ISD's goal to educate the whole child. Exemption from this requirement will provide educational advantages and alternatives to students of Italy ISD by promoting active learning through innovative methods, locations, and times instruction may be delivered to students, thereby accommodating students with legitimate scheduling conflicts, reducing dropouts, and increasing the number of qualifying graduates. In addition, exemption from this requirement will allow Italy ISD not to penalize students who miss class due to legitimate school activities or extenuating circumstances and will promote student engagement, as well as social and emotional development, and also encourage more students to participate in such activities. We realize that our students attain valuable and meaningful learning from extra-/co-curricular activities and experiences that currently count against the student's 90% attendance.

Note: Relief in the area of minimum attendance for class credit or final grade does not impact or alter existing compulsory attendance requirements or University Interscholastic League (UIL) rules. It does not limit a teacher's right to determine the finality of a grade in accordance with TEC §28.214 nor does it restrict or alter a teacher's right to assign grades in accordance with TEC §28.216.

Class Size and Notice of Class Size

TEC §25.112 & TEC §25.113 Italy ISD Board Policy EEB(Legal)

Current: TEC §25.112, limits the number of students in grades Kindergarten through 4th grade to 22. While the maximum number of students in K-4 classrooms may be addressed by a state waiver, the waivers must be applied for annually.

TEC §25.113 requires districts to notify each parent in the class section that exceeds the 22:1 ratio, and inform them when a waiver has been submitted.

Proposed: By seeking the exception from TEC §25.112, the district would have flexibility for all campuses and classrooms for the duration of the District of Innovation designation and would not be required to seek waivers annually.

While the District intends to remain within the guidelines of the current education code as much as possible, the District seeks flexibility to provide the best learning environment for our K-4 students, including more flexibility when teaching, creative ways of delivering instruction, different types of instructional delivery and the ability to manage increases in class sizes.

By seeking the exception from TEC §25.113, in the event a classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio in grades K-4, the class sizes will be reviewed by appropriate district and campus administration. The Board of Trustees will be informed of K-4 classes that exceed 22:1. TEA waivers for class sizes in grades K-4 exceeding 22 will not be required. Parent notification for class sizes in grades K-4 exceeding 22 will not be required except when a K-4th core classroom reaches

25:1. At that time, the campus will notify the parents of the students in the classroom and inform them of the situation.

Texas Education Code Chapter 28 - Courses of Study

School Health Advisory Council (SHAC)

TEC §28.004 Italy ISD Board Policy BDF (Legal)

Current: Requirement for SHAC to hold a minimum of four meetings per year.

Proposed: Italy ISD will be exempt from the requirement to hold a minimum of four meetings per year.

The Italy ISD SHAC committee shall meet at least once per year. The district's size and the membership of the SHAC committee ensures that committee members are aware of the needs of the district's students and are often able to review, advise, and revise plans in fewer than four meetings. The IISD Board of Trustees and the members of the SHAC committee should determine how often the committee should meet.

Texas Education Code Chapter 37 - Discipline, Law and Order

Campus Behavior Coordinator

TEC §37.0012 Italy ISD Board Policy FO (Legal) & FO (Local)

Current: Senate Bill 107 requires the designation of a campus behavior coordinator on each campus.

This designee is responsible for maintaining student discipline and the implementation of Chapter 27, Subchapter A.

Proposed: The proposal is for the district to abstain from the state requirement that each school have a designated campus behavior coordinator. The district's approach to discipline is more collaborative, with multiple people providing emotional and social support to students, rather than just one person. Exemption from this requirement will allow the option of increasing collaboration in regard to student discipline, as outlined in the District's Student Code of Conduct. The district will designate all campus principals and assistant principals (when and if hired for a campus) to fulfill discipline and behavior duties.

Unauthorized Persons: Refusal of Entry, Ejection, Identification

TEC §37.105 Board Policy GKA (Legal) & GKA (Local)

Current: This code includes a process for ejecting or denying entry to a visitor who presents a substantial risk of harm or behaves in a manner inappropriate for the school setting. A district must maintain a record of each verbal warning issued under Section 37.105(a)(2)(A), including the name of the person to whom the warning was issued and the date of issuance. At the time a person is refused entry to or ejected from a school district's property under Section 37.105, the district must provide the person a written information explaining how to appeal. Each school board must adopt a policy that uses the district's existing grievance process to permit a person ejected or denied entry to address the Board of Trustees in person within 90 days of the commencement of the appeal, unless the appeal is granted sooner.

Proposed: To better ensure the safety and security of students and staff in Italy ISD, we propose that the District is not required to maintain a record of each verbal warning of potential removal from district property/facilities. The District currently attempts to provide written notice to persons who are subject to potential refusal for entry or for removal from district property/facilities. Should an exemption from TEC §37.105 be granted, the District shall continue to provide written notice to persons who are subject to potential refusal for entry or for removal from district

property/facilities in situations where the administrator on site feels it is reasonable and safe to do so.

Campus and District administrators, as well as school resource officers and city police officers if applicable, may refuse to allow a person to enter or may eject a person from district property in accordance with law. Any appeal/grievance notice of such action must be filed with the Superintendent, in writing, and submitted to the Administration Office for review.

Texas Education Code Chapter 45 - School District Funds

Bank Depository Contract

TEC §45.205 Italy ISD Board Policy BDAE (Legal) & BDAE (Local)

Current:

(a) Except as provided by Subsection (b), the depository bank when selected shall serve for a term of two years and until its successor is selected and has qualified.

(b) A school district and the district's depository bank may agree to extend a depository contract for three additional two-year terms. The contract may be modified for each two-year extension if both parties mutually agree to the terms. An extension under this subsection is not subject to the requirements of Section 45.206.

(c) The contract term and any extension must coincide with the school district's fiscal year.

Proposed: Italy ISD will be able to extend the district's existing bank contract beyond the total 8-year 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 to bid. This exemption would lessen the administrative burden related to preparing and reviewing a Request for Proposal (RFP) when there are no other banking institutions within district boundaries available to bid on the district's business.

Exemptions from Future TEC Mandates

To best serve our local Italy ISD community, staff, and students, Italy ISD includes a provision in our local District of Innovation Plan for the District to maintain control over any future, eligible Texas Education Code mandates, which may be exempted by a majority vote of the Italy ISD Board of Trustees.