



Colorado Independent School District

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TEA District #168901

Colorado Independent School District District of Innovation Plan 2022-2023 through 2026-2027

*HB 1842, of the 84th Legislative Session,
allows Texas districts to qualify as a District of Innovation.
Districts of Innovation are able to gain local control of certain operations
that are currently under the control of the Texas Education Agency that may inhibit the goals of the
district as outlined in a locally adopted Innovation Plan.*

INTRODUCTION

The 84th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2015, passed HB 1842, allowing eligible Texas school districts to be designated Districts of Innovation. In accordance with 19 TAC §102.1303, Colorado ISD is eligible to be designated a District of Innovation as the District's most recent accountability and performance rating under TEC §39.054 is a "B" therefore representing acceptable performance.

Districts of Innovation are able to gain local control and obtain exemption from certain operations of the Texas Education Code (TEC). Colorado ISD believes that this Local Innovation Plan will allow our local Board of Trustees and district staff to make decisions based on the unique needs of our students and community.

After following each step required to become a district of Innovation, the original Colorado ISD District of Innovation Plan was adopted by the Colorado ISD Board of Trustees on February 13, 2016 and the Commissioner was subsequently advised.

RENEWAL

The Colorado ISD District Improvement Committee met on March 31, 2022, and unanimously approved the pursuit of maintaining the District of Innovation Status. This recommendation was presented to the Colorado ISD Board of Trustees on April 11th, 2022 at the regular scheduled School Board Meeting, and again was unanimously approved by the Board. The Board on that date also appointed a Local Innovation Committee comprised of teachers, principals, administrators, parents, students, community members and business leaders to develop a Comprehensive Local Innovation Plan for designation as a District of Innovation (TEC§12A.005).

The Colorado ISD District Innovation Committee met April 18, 2022 and approved the Colorado ISD District of Innovation Plan which was then posted for public comment to the Colorado ISD Website. On April 19, 2022, the Commissioner was notified of the District's intent to adopt a DOI Plan and was provided a listing of Education Code provisions to be exempt. On May 23, 2022, the District Improvement Committee/District Innovation Committee held a Public Meeting to consider the final District of Innovation Comprehensive Local Plan. On July 12, 2022, the Colorado ISD District of Innovation Plan will be reported to the Texas Education Agency (TEA).

TERM

In accordance with TEC §12A.006, this District of Innovation Plan shall remain in effect for a period of five years (2022-23 through 2026-27 school years) unless terminated by the commissioner pursuant to TEC §12.A.008. Following adoption by the Board of Trustees, the Colorado ISD District of Innovation Plan will be reported to the Texas Education Agency (TEA).

LOCAL INNOVATION PLAN COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Dr. Larry Polk	Superintendent
Denise Farmer	Assistant Superintendent
Rebecca Russell	Principal, Colorado High School
Lorianne Toombs	Principal, Colorado Middle School
Melinda Alexander	Principal, Colorado Elementary School
Elliot Williams	Teacher, Colorado High School
LeeAnn Roach	Teacher, Colorado Middle School
Zula Cornutt	Teacher, Colorado Elementary School
Ben Carreon	Parent, Colorado High School
Brandi Yancey	Parent, Colorado Middle School
Teresa Hill	Parent, Colorado Elementary School
Judy Merrell	Community Member
Cliff Shiller	Business Leader
Shelia Plagens	Business Leader
Pam Alvarez	Business Leader
Karson Martin	CHS Student
Katie Munoz	CHS Student

DISTRICT OF INNOVATION TIMELINE 2021

- Thursday, March 31, 2022 – 4:00 p.m., Zoom Meeting
 - Initial meeting with District Improvement Committee (TEC§11.521) to discuss if the District should seek renewal of the “District of Innovation” status and develop/review a local innovation plan for the designation of the District as a “District of Innovation” for the school years 2022-2023 through 2026-2027 or decline to pursue this option.
 - Unanimous vote of the district-level committee members to pursue renewal of the District of Innovation status for Colorado ISD. (*TEC 12A.001 (c)(1)*)
- Monday, April 11, 2021 - 5:30 p.m., Board Book & Agenda
 - Board is notified of the District Improvement Committee request to seek designation as a district of innovation (*TEC 12A.002*)
 - Board votes to pursue renewal of District of Innovation Plan
 - Board approval of members of the District of Innovation Committee (*TEC 12A.002(b)(2), 12A.003*) and appoints them to review the current District of Innovation Plan and make adjustments as necessary.
- Monday, April 18, 2022 - 5:30 p.m. - CISD Board Room and via Zoom
 - First meeting of the District Innovation Committee
 - Innovation Committee reviews and approves the plan by a majority vote
- Tuesday, April 19, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.
 - District of Innovation Plan posted on the district website for 30 days (*TEC 12A.005(a)(1)*)
 - Plan sent to commissioner (*TEC 12A.005(a)(2)*)
- Monday, May 23, 2022 – 5:30 p.m. - CISD Board Room
 - District Advisory Committee/District Education Improvement Committee (DEIC) holds a Public Meeting to consider the final District of Innovation Comprehensive Local Plan (*TEC 12A.005(a)(3)*) and list of Education Code provisions to be exempt (*TEC 12A.003*).
 - Colorado ISD Board of Trustees Approves the District of Innovation Plan 2022-2023 through 2026-2027 by a vote of two thirds of the membership of the board. (*TEC 12A.005(a)(1)*)
- Tuesday, July 11, 2022 - 10:00 a.m.
 - District notifies commissioner of approval of the plan along with a list of approved TEC exemptions by completing TEA’s form (*19 TAC 102.1307(d)*)
 - District posts and maintains plan online in prominent location (*TEC 12A.0071(a)*)
 - District sends plan to the Texas Education Agency (*TEC 12A.0071(b)*)

COLORADO ISD COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

The Colorado ISD’s Comprehensive Local Innovation Plan includes a comprehensive educational program that is guided by and aligned with the Board’s Vision, Mission, and priorities for the District. The District needs the flexibility to exert local control both at the District and campus levels and the Plan will allow the District’s practices and operations to better align with the District’s priorities. Therefore, the Comprehensive Local Innovation Plan is as follows:

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Goal 1: The Colorado Independent School District will make governance decisions based on the unique needs of the district’s students and community.

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1.1 CLASS SIZE AND STUDENT-TEACHER RATIOS

*(TEC 25.111) (TEC 25.112) (TEC 25.113)(TEC 25.114)
(EEB LEGAL)*

Manner in which statute inhibits goals of the plan

TEC §25.111 requires that districts employ a sufficient number of teachers certified to maintain an average ratio of not less than one teacher for each 20 students in average daily attendance except as provided by §25.112.

TEC §25.112 requires districts to maintain a class size of 22 students or less for Kindergarten – 4th Grade classes.

TEC §25.113 requires districts to notify parents of waivers or exceptions to class size limits.

TEC §25.114 requires districts to establish a student to teacher ratio of no greater than 45 to 1 in physical education class, and the district shall specifically identify the manner in which the safety of the students will be maintained

Districts are required by state law to maintain a 22:1 student to teacher ratio for Kindergarten – 4th Grade classes and a 45 to 1 ratio in Physical Education classes. When any class exceeds this limit, the district must complete and file a waiver with the Texas Education Agency. These waivers have never been rejected by TEA. Therefore, it represents a bureaucratic step unnecessary for the education of our students. Additionally, a letter must be sent home to the parents of each student in the class informing them that a waiver has been filed. In many cases, the class has returned to a smaller student to teacher ratio before the waiver is even approved, negating the need for this correspondence.

Additionally, hiring staff mid-year is not best practice. The statute does not take into consideration the impact of students being transferred to new classrooms in the middle of the school year.

Innovation Strategies

It is the philosophy of Colorado ISD that lower class sizes have a positive impact on Kindergarten -4th grade students and the district does not seek to unilaterally create higher class sizes. Colorado ISD has created a staffing model for grades K-4 and Physical Education classes that is less than TEA's ratio requirement. However, we believe that appropriate class sizes should be monitored and maintained at the local level without the necessity of waivers from the Texas Education Agency.

- a. Hiring decisions can be based on projected 22:1 ratios.
- b. Colorado ISD will, to the extent possible, begin each school year with enough teachers to establish a homeroom student to teacher ratio of 22:1 or less per Kindergarten-4 homeroom class.
- c. In the event that two or more core classrooms in any given grade level (grades Kindergarten -4) reaches 22:1 during the first grading period of the year, the District will actively seek an additional teacher.
- d. A teacher may be hired at any time during the school year if the Superintendent determines it to be in the best interest of the students to do so.
- e. A TEA waiver request and related notifications shall not be necessary when a Kindergarten-4th classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio.
- f. Physical Education classes will have additional staff members to cover the number of students in the classes.
- g. In the event the class sizes exceed the ratio, the Superintendent will report to the Board of Trustees.

1.2 SCHOOL START DATE & LAST DAY OF SCHOOL

(TEC 25.0811)(TEC 25.0812)

(EB LEGAL)

Manner in which statute inhibits goals of the plan

TEC §25.0811 states that a school district may not begin student instruction before the 4th Monday of August. TEC §25.0812 states that a school district may not schedule the last day of school for students for a school year before May 15.

Students may not begin school before the 4th Monday of August and may not end before May 15. Districts may not receive a waiver from this restriction. For many years prior this was the rule; however, districts did have the option of applying for a waiver to start earlier. The vast majority of districts applied for the state waiver and began the 3rd Monday, some even going as early as the 2nd Monday in August. Several years ago the legislature took away all waivers and dictated that districts may not begin until the 4th Monday in August, with no exceptions. Recent legislation prevents the last day of school prior to May 15. Colorado ISD, however, will provide a calendar that addresses student instruction and focused professional development in conjunction with the new instructional minutes rather than instructional days required. Local control of the instructional calendar affords the District the flexibility to end the school year prior to May 15, should the district deem it necessary and appropriate.

Innovation Plan:

To allow for a school calendar that fits the local needs of our community, emphasizes active learning, college & career readiness, and social and emotional needs of students, Colorado ISD will:

- a. Provide flexibility to begin instruction earlier and develop a school calendar that meets the needs of the district.
 - a) This will enable Colorado ISD to improve active learning by balancing the amount of instructional time in each semester.
 - b) This will allow teachers to better pace and deliver instruction before and after the winter break.
 - c) This will allow our district to better align its starting date with our local area colleges which our students use for dual credit.
 - d) This will promote social and emotional learning and allow students transitioning from kindergarten to first grade, from elementary school to middle school and from middle school to high school to receive support to enable them to adjust to their new campus environments.
- b. Colorado ISD students will begin instruction no earlier than the 2nd Monday of August.

1.5 TEACHER CONFERENCE

(TEC 21.404), (DL LEGAL)

Manner in which statute inhibits goals of the plan

TEC §21.404 guarantees each classroom teacher a planning period. Specifically, each classroom teacher is entitled to at least 450 minutes within each two-week period for instructional preparation, including parent-teacher conferences, evaluating students' work, and planning. A planning period may not be less than 45 minutes within the instructional day. During a planning and preparation period, a classroom teacher may not be required to participate in any other activity.

Based upon Commissioner of Education interpretation, all conference period assignments must take place when the students are in instructional attendance. For example, an instructional day of 7:45 a.m.-3:15 p.m. cannot have a teacher conference/planning time of 3:15 p.m.-4:00 p.m.

Colorado ISD and its teachers place high value on teacher planning, teacher effectiveness and collaboration.

In order to maintain compliance, Colorado ISD teachers must *voluntarily* choose to utilize their conference/planning time to engage in Professional Learning Community (PLC) activities. If any members of the PLC opts to *not voluntarily* participate, the collaboration of the entire group is jeopardized and causes the entire group of teachers to sacrifice after school time for PLC collaboration. This creates a hardship for teachers that otherwise prefer utilizing their conference period to work toward campus goals.

Innovation Plan:

It is the philosophy of Colorado ISD that teachers become more effective educators when they collaborate and share ideas together on a regular and consistent basis and that a teacher is the most important school-related factor impacting student achievement gains. High quality instruction in the classrooms is expected to lead to greater student achievement gains.

- a. In years that the district calendar is a traditional 5 day calendar, Colorado ISD may utilize up to two planning periods per week for the purpose of group planning and collaboration (PLC).
 - a) This would:
 - i. reduce the amount of extended day planning for teachers,
 - ii. help develop less effective teachers into more effective teachers,
 - iii. ensure continuity of curriculum application in the classroom, and
 - iv. allow for mentoring of new teachers.
 - v. address varying degrees of teacher effectiveness
 - vi. providing time for collaboration and sharing of ideas among colleagues to the success of the students.
 - b. Teachers may be assigned a conference period that is at the beginning or end of their scheduled workday, regardless of the students' instructional day schedule.
 - c. District will continue the TEA allowable practice of being allowed to ask teachers to engage in group-planning during conference periods when a teacher has more than the statutory minimum conference time. For example, when a teacher receives a 50 minute conference period, the administration may require participation in one group planning period every two

weeks.

Goal 2: The Colorado Independent School District will make teacher certification decisions based on district qualifications that meet the unique needs of the district’s students and community.

2.1 TEACHER CERTIFICATION: General Education

(TEC 21.003) (TEC 21.057)

(DK LEGAL) (DK LOCAL) (DK EXHIBIT) (DBA LEGAL) (DBA LOCAL)

Manner in which statute inhibits goals of the plan

TEC §21.003(a) states that a person may not be employed as a teacher by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued by the appropriate state agency. In the event a district cannot locate a certified teacher for a position or a teacher is teaching a subject outside of their certification, the district must request emergency certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or State Board of Educator Certification. This system is burdensome and does not take into account the unique financial and/or instructional needs of the district.

TEC§21.057 requires that a school district provide parental notification if the district assigns an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher to the same classroom for more than 30 consecutive instructional days during the same school year.

Rural, high poverty districts have the hardest time filling positions with quality instructors, especially in subjects where state-wide shortages exist. In the event a district cannot locate a certified teacher for a position or a teacher is teaching a subject outside of their certification, the district must request emergency/local certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or State Board of Educator Certification. TEA then approves or denies this request. This system is burdensome and does not take into account the unique financial and/or instructional needs of the district. Furthermore, there have been instances when persons meeting the criteria outlined in TEC§21.057 have been denied local certification because they were actively, yet unnecessarily, pursuing an alternative certification.

Innovation Plan:

Colorado ISD will continue its quest for highly effective educators.

- a. In order to best serve Colorado ISD students, all decisions on teacher certification and assignments will be handled locally.
- b. Notification of Local Certification shall not be necessary.
- c. The campus principal may submit to the Superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach one subject in a related field for which he/she is not certified or allow a certified teacher to teach in a subject(s) out of their certified field.
 - a) The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials the certified teacher possesses that would qualify this individual to teach the subject/field of study.
 - b) Emergency or financial situations creating the need for this assignment should also be

noted.

- d. Colorado ISD will allow Local Certification based on skills and experiences outside the traditional teacher certification pathway.
 - a) An individual with certain qualifications who is *not* certified as a teacher can be eligible to teach in hard to fill positions including, but not limited to, TEA approved shortage areas such as mathematics, science, Languages Other than English (LOTE), Career & Technical Education (CTE), etc.
 - b) A person seeking Local Certification should have the abilities and related knowledge/experience to fulfill the requirements of the position.
 - c) The principal may submit to the superintendent and/or the superintendent's designee, a request for Local Certification outlining all the individual's credentials/qualifications.
 - d) Qualifications that may be considered include but are not limited to:
 - i. Professional work experience
 - ii. Formal training and education
 - iii. Active professional relevant industry certification or registration
 - iv. Combination of work experience, training, and education
 - v. Demonstration of successful experience working with students.
 - e) The superintendent or his/her designee will then approve the request if they believe the individual possesses the knowledge, skills and experience required of the position and feel the individual could be an asset to students.
 - f) An employee working under a Local Certification will not receive a contract but will work on an at-will basis and have a separate pay scale from state certified teachers.
 - g) Determinations shall be made on a case-by-case basis.
 - h) A teacher certification waiver, state permit applications, notifications, or other paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency or other district stakeholders.
 - i) An employee working under a Local Certification will adhere to the same professional standards, ethics, and requirements of all certified teachers.
 - j) An employee working under a Local Certification will be appraised under the same teacher appraisal system as required of all certified teachers.