



## **Comprehensive Local Innovation Plan 2021-2022 through 2025-2026**

*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.*

# Introduction

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Our Strategic Plan and District Improvement Plan require Sherman ISD to evolve and think differently about critical systemic components like how we are organized, how we deliver instruction, how we recruit and retain top talent, how we engage and support our families, what experiences we provide, and how we grow continually as a learning organization.

Thinking differently, allows us to respond quickly to emerging district needs. This designation allows districts additional flexibility, but also requires additional action. Districts seeking a District of Innovation designation must adopt an innovative plan in order to be exempted from state status and gain:

- 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
- empowerment to innovate and think differently.

An innovation plan, however, cannot seek exemption from state or federal requirements applicable to certain areas of Chapter 11, state requirements for curriculum and graduation, and academic and financial accountability.

The District of Innovation Committee focused on the District Improvement Plan and the SISD Strategic Plan Goals as outlined below:

**Goal 1:** A nurturing environment will be established in Sherman ISD.

**Goal 2:** Research-based instructional practices will be used in all Sherman ISD classrooms to improve student learning and student opportunities.

**Goal 3:** Technology will be integrated into the instruction of classrooms at all campuses.

**Goal 4:** Sherman ISD will provide a proactive approach to build and expand co-curricular and extra-curricular activities for students.

**Goal 5:** Sherman ISD will provide relevant and meaningful exposure to vocational work experiences.

**Goal 6:** School facilities will be evaluated and a plan for new construction, renovations and updates will be developed.

**Goal 7:** Parents and community members representative of Sherman ISD demographics will be involved in district and campus initiatives and the educational experience of students.

## District of Innovation Team 2022 Renewal

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Diana Salas	Community Rep	Julie Robinson	Boot Camp Teacher
Amanda Phillips	Community Rep	Sandra Melton	Teacher
Sandra Truly	Teacher	Alexandra Files	Teacher
Susan Webster	Teacher	Kaye Allen	Special Ed Director
Josette McCurrin	Teacher	Kelly Flowers	Elementary Director
Sam Deaton	Teacher	Blake Hays	Secondary Director
Angela Green	Teacher	Gabriela Morales	C & I Department
Diana Gillum	Teacher	Rosa Serrano	Student Engagement/Support Department
Diane Walsh	Teacher	Dr. Tyson Bennett	Assistant Superintendent
Julie Brown	Teacher	Susan Whitenack	Assistant Superintendent
Sandra Melton	Teacher	Dr. Tamy Smalskas	Assistant Superintendent
Karie Oberholz	Teacher	Jill O'Neal	Executive Director of HR
Kylee Graham	Teacher	Julie Mitchell	Director of Partners in Education
Marrienne Graham	Teacher	Kimberly Simpson	Director of Communications
Tenise Blackshear	Teacher	Mignon Plyler	Director of Technology
Mallorie Daugherty	Teacher	Jenifer Politi	Principal
Kadey King	Teacher	Santos Flores	Principal
Sandy Daniels	Teacher	Eartha Linson	Principal
Ronda Gantt	Teacher	Amy Pesina	Principal
Tatiana Davis	Teacher	Katie Morris	Coordinator of Post-Secondary/CTE
Elena McCollum	Teacher	Janet Quintana	Student
Chris Irwin	Teacher	Alvin Hoque	Student

## District of Innovation Timeline

DATES	WHAT	OBJECTIVE
April 21	Initial meeting	What is DOI?
		FAQ Guidelines
		Review Current DOI plan
		District Improvement Plan- what we know? what we want to achieve?
		What if...Areas of exemption- what can we be exempt from?
		Discuss some of these areas
		Group given sample districts- link to TEA/TASB website with details
		Homework page- research, review, plan, ideas, take survey
April 28	Meeting #2	Provide examples of innovative ideas from other districts
		Discuss current DOI exemptions – answer questions
		Discuss renewing-adjusting-removing-adding
		Share internal survey data
		Open discussion about new proposals
October 27	Meeting #3	Complete final draft for school board.
		Begin seeking input from teachers, parents, students, community members
		Draft of exemptions with list for the innovative plan
May 20	Virtual Discussion	Proposed revisions posted to committee
		Answer any questions
		Finalize draft for review & feedback
		Prepare for board meeting
		Seek feedback from parents, teachers, students & community members
May- June	Public feedback	Public review- open feedback from the community
June	School Board Meeting	Present to School Board for initial review

# Innovations Recommended

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

### **Current Provision:**

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 – 4<sup>th</sup> Grade classes.

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

### **Benefit of Exemption**

The cap and transfer process will remain our primary tool to maintain a 22:1 ratio but in the limited instances where campuses would exceed this ratio, no waiver application with TEA would be required. SISD will remain within the current education code requirements regarding class size and will implement the cap and transfer process or will apply the flexibility granted by the DOI in limited circumstances depending on the needs of the students at each campus.

### **Proposed Innovative Strategies:**

- The district seeks to establish its own student/teacher ratios without requirement of a waiver submission.
- The district will begin the school year with enough teachers to establish a student to teacher ratio of 22:1 per K-4 homeroom. As new families/students move into our area, principals will evaluate factors such as enrollment totals, number of teachers, individual student needs, time of year to determine which school the student should attend.
- A TEA waiver will not be filed when a K-4th classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio. Cap and transfer could remain an option.

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.

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

### **Current Provision**

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

### **Benefit of Exemption**

SISD is seeking local control of the instructional calendar to afford the following advantages:

- Balancing the number of semester days while still finishing the first semester before the holiday break in December.
- Number of instructional days that will support Advance Placement Exams, STAAR/EOC timelines and local colleges for dual credit.

- Partial or full days available for professional learning.
- Capability to honor classroom preparation time for high quality instruction.
- Built in additional time for inclement weather days.
- Better opportunities for summer school, internships, and professional certification experiences.
- The local control and flexibility to develop innovative scheduling for a variety of programs for students.

**Proposed Innovative Strategies:**

To allow for a calendar that fits the local needs of our community, based on parent, and staff input, that considers the option of moving the mandatory start date which would better benefit our students.

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

**Current Provision**

State law currently requires that all school days must be 420 minutes long each day (including intermissions and recess) to count for ADA (average daily attendance) calculations and funding purposes, and to accumulate instructional minutes towards the 75,600 minutes required annually. Districts must submit any request for a waiver for an early-release day at least 31 days in advance of the target date for the early release. The request for a waiver must go through the online TEAL secure environment and if the waiver is approved, the early release day must be at least 4 hours.

**Benefit of Exemption**

Exemption from the 420-minute day requirement would allow Sherman 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.

**Proposed Innovative Strategies:**

Exempting completely from the 420-minute requirement would give the district a significant amount of local control to:

- Schedule non-instructional days into the calendar to allow teachers to engage in targeted, relevant professional development.
- Build in the time for teachers to collaborate in PLCs (professional learning communities) to develop lessons, review student data, and collaborate with peers to implement instructional strategies.
- Build in the time for student-parent conferences, campus meetings, and other campus needs.
- Create additional time to maximize instructional time for academic needs of students.

- Develop and design innovative transportation methods.
- Design creative student schedules where SISD can offer alternative programming with fewer minutes that focuses on quality programs and cost savings, designed to fit the needs of students without having to apply for an annual waiver.

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

##### **Current Provision:**

TEC 21.003 states that “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 issued by the appropriate state agency”.

##### **Benefit of Exemption:**

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.

Through an exemption from existing teacher certification requirements for dual credit, career & technical teachers, and “hard to fill” positions, Sherman ISD will have the flexibility to hire professionals in specialized areas if certified teachers are not available. This exemption permits these professionals to meet the State requirements and permits the District to obtain the same weighted funding as would be available should the professional hold a traditional teaching certification for the course. The District will also have the flexibility to hire credentialed community or university college instructors in specific content areas to afford more students the opportunity to take dual credit courses, and CTE courses, to award more opportunity for college and career readiness.

##### **Proposed Innovative Strategies:**

To best serve Sherman ISD students and community needs, decisions on certification will be handled locally:

- The district seeks to establish its own local qualification requirements for those “hard to fill” positions in lieu of the requirements set forth in law. The District does not wish to be exempted from any existing laws relating to teacher contracts or teacher benefits. A teacher certification waiver, state permit applications, or other paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency.
- The principal will submit the request to the superintendent or designee with all the individual’s credentials.
- Local teaching certificates will be for one year awarded for one year. During the first year of employment, individuals must begin the process of obtaining teacher certification and complete the process by the end of year two, provided the employee works more than one school year.
- The employee will be at-will. Individuals with a local teaching certificate (for CTE) will be assigned a one-on-one mentor to help guide them through developing their teaching skills.

The mentorship will be for a minimum of one year but can be extended at the discretion of the principal.

**V. 90 Percent Attendance Rule (TEC §25.092)**

**Current Provision:**

State law mandates a student may not be given credit or a final grade for a class unless the student is in attendance for at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered. In addition, if a student is in attendance greater than 75 percent and less than 90 percent, credit or a final grade may be given for the class if the student completes a plan approved by the campus administrator and meets the instructional requirements for the class.

**Benefit of Exemption**

The law currently requires the district to award class credit to students based on “seat time” rather than content mastery. Abstaining from the requirement also means the district won’t have to penalize students who miss class due to extra/co-curricular activities, academic activities, or other extenuating circumstances. The flexibility can allow for local boards to set higher expectations for attendance while promoting student engagement, as well as social and emotional development, by encouraging more students to participate in extracurricular activities. Exemption from this requirement will provide educational advantages to students by providing active learning through blended learning. SISD will have the flexibility to ensure dropout prevention measures are in place for all students’ Pre-K to grade 12 utilizing exemption to this requirement.

It must be noted, relief from Section §25.092 does not in any way impact or alter existing compulsory attendance requirements or University Interscholastic League ("UIL") rules. Opting out of Section §25.092 in no way limits or modifies a teacher's right to determine the finality of a grade in accordance with Texas Education Code Section §28.0214, nor does it restrict or alter a teacher's right to assign grades in accordance with Texas Education Code Section §28.0216.

**Proposed Innovative Strategies:**

Sherman ISD will provide methods for students to complete graduation requirements through innovative and flexible design such as seminars, blended learning or a combination of both with ability for creative student scheduling.

**VI. Limitation on suspensions (TEC §37.005(c) & FOB(Legal)**

**Current Provision:**

**§37.005(c)** states that a student who is enrolled in a grade level below grade three may not be placed in out-of-school suspension unless while on school property or while attending a school-sponsored or school-related activity on or off of school property, the student engages in:

1. Conduct that contains the elements of an offense related to weapons under Penal Code 46.02 or 46.05;
2. Conduct that contains the elements of a violent offense related under Penal Code 22.01, 22.011, 22.02, 22.021; or



3. Selling, giving, or delivering to another person or possessing, using, or being under the influence of any amount of:
  - a. Marijuana or a controlled substance, as defined by Health and Safety Code Chapter 481, or by 21 U.S.C. Section 801 et seq.;
  - b. A dangerous drug, as defined by Health and Safety Code Chapter 483; or
  - c. An alcoholic beverage.

**Exemption and Benefits:**

Sherman ISD is committed to providing a high-quality learning environment for all students. Great care is taken when determining appropriate discipline for a student, including those in grade k-2. An exemption to the current limitations allows principals to choose suspension or a DAEP placement for violations for the SISD Student Code of Conduct and would provide greater flexibility for our school leaders to discipline appropriately and to maintain a positive learning environment.

VII. **Transfer Students (TEC §25.036) (FDA LEGAL, FDA LOCAL)**

**Current Provision:**

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.

**Exemption and Benefits:**

The ability to revoke a transfer for a student at any time during the year based on behavior, attendance or academic achievement allows our district to continue accepting the greatest number of transfer students seeking a different educational setting than what is available where they reside. Students who experience challenges while on an interdistrict transfer deserve the ability to be returned to their home district to receive the greatest amount of support possible.