Proposed Denton ISD District of Innovation Renewal

The Denton ISD District Educational Improvement Council (DEIC) approved the proposed renewal of the District's local innovation plan on September 28, 2026.

The final proposed plan is posted for public review for at least 30 days before consideration by the Denton ISD Board of Trustees. The Board is scheduled to consider the proposed renewal on November 10, 2026.

Under Texas Education Code Chapter 12A, Denton ISD identifies the following statutory requirements that inhibit the goals of the District of Innovation Plan. Denton ISD claims each exemption only to the extent permitted by current law. If a cited provision becomes nonexemptible, the controlling law applies regardless of the language in this plan. These exemptions provide authority and flexibility but do not require the District to exercise an exemption in any particular circumstance.

First Day of Instruction

Texas Education Code

Sec. 25.0811 First Day of Instruction

"A school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August."

Board Policy

EB Legal

EB Local

Rationale

Denton ISD believes the local community should determine the school calendar that best serves its students and families. Exemption from Section 25.0811 allows the District to establish the first day of instruction annually with stakeholder input and to align the calendar with instructional, operational, and community needs. Regardless of whether any adjustments or changes are made to the current start date law, Denton ISD believes this issue to be a local decision as opposed to a state mandate.

Certification

Texas Education Code Provisions Included in the Exemption

Sec. 21.003 Certification Required

"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."

Sec. 21.044 Educator Preparation

Sec. 21.053 Presentation and Recording of Certificates

Sec. 21.055 School District Teaching Permit

Board Policy

- DBA Legal
- DBA Local
- DK Legal
- DK Local
- DK Exhibit

Rationale

Denton ISD believes district leadership should decide what is best for its students in determining the candidate best suited to teach certain courses, including American Sign Language, career and technical education (CTE), science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), and dual credit coursework, to the extent permitted by law. By claiming available exemptions from state certification requirements, the District may recruit qualified individuals from trades, industries, and professions who possess relevant industry knowledge and real-world experience and may consider experience, industry credentials, education, and subject-matter expertise.

District leadership, including principals, CTE administrators, and Human Resources personnel, will determine whether an individual is qualified and whether the assignment is in the best interests of students. The District will establish local criteria for the qualifications, training, approval, and oversight of individuals employed or assigned under this flexibility rather than seek approval from the Commissioner of Education when such approval is not required by law.

The District will comply with certification and parental-notification requirements that may not be exempted, including Texas Education Code §§21.0032 and 21.057. Denton ISD believes decisions concerning the use of legally available certification flexibility are appropriately made at the local level.

Site Based Decision Making

Texas Education Code

- Sec. 11.251 Planning and Decision Making Process
- Sec. 11.252 District Level Planning and Decision Making
- Sec. 11.253 Campus Planning and Site Based Decision Making
- Sec. 11.255 Dropout Prevention Review

Board Policy

- BQ Legal
- BQ Local
- BQA Legal
- BQA Local
- BQB Legal
- BQB Local

Rationale

Denton ISD supports site-based decision making and meaningful participation by principals, teachers, staff, parents, community members, and business representatives. The District recognizes that individuals closest to a campus are often best positioned to identify needs, develop solutions, and support implementation.

However, the detailed requirements of Texas Education Code §§11.251–11.255 are difficult to apply effectively in a large and complex school district. District- and campus-level committees are expected to address planning, budgeting, curriculum, staffing, staff development, school organization, and numerous other subjects. Providing every committee member with the extensive training and background necessary to offer meaningful input on every required topic is neither practical nor an effective use of stakeholder and staff time.

The statutory requirements governing district and campus improvement plans also prescribe numerous strategies and subjects that must be addressed. Although these matters are important, the District has other processes, personnel, committees, and programs with the expertise necessary to address them. Locally determined planning processes allow the District and its campuses to concentrate on their highest-priority needs, establish meaningful goals, and devote resources to strategies that can be implemented and evaluated effectively.

Accordingly, Denton ISD claims exemption from the specific requirements of Texas Education Code §§11.251–11.255. The District will determine the processes and membership of its site-based decision-making committees and the contents of its district and campus improvement plans. Denton ISD believes these decisions are most appropriately made at the local level.

Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Final Grade

Texas Education Code

Sec. 25.092. Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Final Grade

"A student in any grade level from kindergarten through grade 12 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."

Board Policy

FEC (Legal)

FEC (Local)

Rationale

Denton ISD believes the 90 percent attendance requirement is an arbitrary threshold that emphasizes "seat time" over content mastery. By claiming exemption from Texas Education Code §25.092, the District may avoid penalizing students who miss class because of extracurricular or co-curricular activities, academic activities, or other extenuating circumstances. This flexibility allows the District to accommodate students with legitimate scheduling conflicts while reducing dropouts and increasing the number of students who qualify for graduation.

This exemption does not affect compulsory attendance requirements or University Interscholastic League rules. It also does not limit a teacher's authority regarding grades under Texas Education Code §§28.0214 and 28.0216.

Denton ISD believes decisions concerning minimum attendance for class credit or a final grade are most appropriately made at the local level.

Appraisal Process and Performance Criteria

Texas Education Code

- Sec. 21.351 Recommended Appraisal Process and Performance Criteria
- Sec. 21.354 Appraisal of Certain Administrators
- Sec. 21.3541 Appraisal and Professional Development System for Principals

Board Policy

- DNA Legal
- DNA Local
- DNB Legal
- DNB Local

Rationale

Denton ISD believes educator appraisal should support professional growth and reflect local priorities. Exemption from Sections 21.351, 21.354, and 21.3541 allows the District to use locally selected appraisal instruments and performance measures, which may include observations, goal setting, progress toward student learning objectives, professional responsibilities, and other appropriate evidence of performance.

Certified Employee Contract Provisions

Texas Education Code

- Sec. 21.102(b) Probationary Contract
- Sec. 21.211(b) Suspension Without Pay

Board Policy

- DCA Legal
- DCA Local

Rationale

Exemption from Section 21.102(b) gives the District the option to employ an experienced teacher under a probationary contract for an additional year when more time for coaching, support, and evaluation would benefit the employee and the District. Exemption from Section 21.211(b) allows the District, when appropriate, to suspend an employee without pay while serious alleged misconduct is addressed. The District will provide the notice, review, and grievance rights required by applicable law and District policy.

Depository Contracts

Texas Education Code

Sec. 45.205 Term of Contract

Board Policy

BDAE Legal

Rationale

Under state law, a depository contract has a two-year term and remains in effect until a successor is selected and qualified. The District and its depository bank may agree to three additional two-year extensions and may modify the contract by mutual agreement for each extension. The original contract term and any extension must coincide with the District's fiscal year.

Exemption from these requirements would allow Denton ISD to negotiate a contract term and extension schedule that best meet the District's operational and financial needs. This flexibility may also provide cost savings by reducing the administrative expense associated with repeated procurement and contract transitions and by allowing the District to preserve favorable pricing, interest rates, services, and other contract terms.

Group Health Benefits for School Employees

Texas Education Code

Sec. 22.004(i) Group Health Benefits for School Employees

Board Policy

CRD Legal

CRD Local

Rationale

Exemption from Section 22.004(i) preserves the District's ability to evaluate employee health benefit options that may provide improved coverage, cost, or plan design. The exemption does not require the District to change its current health plan. Any decision to offer different coverage would require a separate review of financial, contractual, and legal considerations and appropriate action by the Board of Trustees.

Date posted: September 29, 2026
Scheduled Board consideration: November 10, 2026