CHRISTOVAL
COUGARS

CHRISTOVAL INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT OF INNOVATION PLAN

Renewal 2026

Our Mission is to Empower Students to be Productive and Successful Citizens by Instilling Self-Sufficiency and Integrity

INTRODUCTION

The 84th Legislative Session passed House Bill 1842, allowing Texas public school districts to become Districts of Innovation and thus permitting exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. In an effort to transform systemic improvement to better serve and accommodate the diverse needs of all stakeholders, including students, staff, parents and community members, Christoval ISD seeks to become a District of Innovation. This distinction allows the District increased local control over District operations to improve the quality of services benefitting all stakeholders.

A resolution to initiate the process of Christoval ISD becoming a District of Innovation was adopted by the Board of Trustees on April 24, 2017. At such time, a District Innovation Team was established and charged with creating a cohesive local innovative plan to improve the outcomes of all stakeholders. The District Innovation Team considered multiple data points in an effort to construct a local innovation plan to bring about systemic change to Christoval ISD.

The Christoval ISD Local Innovation Plan is for five years, beginning with the 2021-2022 school year ending the 2022-2026 school year. The Local Innovation Plan may be terminated or amended by the Board of Trustees at any time in accordance with the law. The District Innovation team will monitor the effectiveness of the Local Innovation Plan and provide updates and/or necessary modifications to the Board of Trustees on a regular basis.

TIMELINE/PROCESS

Event/Activity	Organization/Group	Date Conducted
Meeting to determine input for interest in continuing pursuing designation	Staff and Community	April 21, 2017 May 10, 2017 September 7, 2021
District of Innovation Status Discussion	Board of Trustees	April 24, 2017 September 15, 2021
District of Innovation Board Resolution	Board of Trustees	April 24, 2017
Public Hearing and District Innovation Team established	Board of Trustees	April 24, 2017
Innovation Team Meeting	District Innovation Team	April 24, 2017 September 7, 2021
Innovation Team Public Meeting	District Innovation Team Community	June 12, 2017 September 7, 2021
Board of Trustees approval to adopt plan	Board of Trustees	July 19, 2017 September 15, 2021
Innovation Plan posted online	District Innovation Team	July 20, 2021 to Present

Board of Trustee approval to ratify plan	Board of Trustees	September 15,2021
DOI Committee Convened to review amendments	DOI Committee	February 20, 2026
Board of Trustee Approval to ratify the plan	Board of Trustees	3/25/2026

DISTRICT INNOVATION TEAM

District/School/Community Position	Name
Superintendent	Clint Askins
Secondary Principal	Sandy Wellmann
Intermediate Principal	Casey Otho
Elementary Principal	Carla Barron
Assistant Principal	Doug Kuhlmann
Secondary Guidance Counselor	Candace Munoz
Elementary Guidance Counselor	Stacy Mecke
Secondary Teacher	Macye Sanders
Elementary Teacher	Jill Novak
Business Owner	Chandra Aguirre
Parent	Shannon Dean

PROPOSED INNOVATIONS

TEACHER CERTIFICATION: TEC §21.003(a); TEC§ 21.057

TEC §21.003(a) states 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. 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.

Currently: 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 submit a request to the Texas Education Agency. TEA then approves or denies this request.

Proposed: Christoval ISD is located in a rural, small town setting that does not allow for optimal teacher recruitment due to the ability of teachers to work in a nearby city of 100,000 and earn a larger salary. By allowing local control over teacher certification requirements, the District will have the ability to maintain and increase student offerings by hiring individuals with expertise in content and/or technical areas who may not have a Texas teacher certification. The District will have the flexibility to hire community college instructors, university professors or industry certified and/or trade professionals to teach specialized certification courses as well as internal applicants seeking assignments outside of their traditional certification area. In addition, by allowing CISD to make local decisions about teacher certifications, this would provide a better opportunity to offer innovation in course selections for CTE courses as well as hard to fill, high-demand dual credit courses.

In addition, the District would be able to determine its own local qualification requirements for individuals without proper teacher certification so that they might fit the specific needs of CISD rather than the requirements set forth in law that account for uncertified hires around the entire state.

In order to best serve students, all decisions on teacher certification and assignments will be handled locally, and notification of District Teaching Permits (local certification) shall not be necessary.

The principal may submit to the superintendent and/or the designee a request for District Teaching Permit (local certification) outlining the individual's credentials/qualifications.

Qualification for local certification could include, but is not limited to: professional work experience; formal training/education in the content area; active/relevant professional industry certification/registration; a combination of work experience, training, and education; demonstration of successful experience working with students.

The superintendent or his/her designee will then approve the request if the individual possesses the knowledge, skills and experience required of the position and feel the individual could be an asset to students, by providing quality instruction.

An employee working under a District Teaching Permit who does not hold a state teaching certification will not receive a contract, but will work on an at-will basis and have a separate pay scale from state certified teachers. The District Teaching Permit will become void at the end of the school year in which it is issued.

A teacher certification waiver, state permit applications, notifications, or other paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency or other district stakeholders.

An employee working under a District Teaching Permit (local certification) will be appraised under the same teacher appraisal system as required of all certified teachers and will adhere to the same professional standards, ethics, and requirements of all certified teachers. Also, where applicable and appropriate, employees working under a District Teaching Permit will be encouraged to seek state certification in the area that they are teaching.

All state certified teachers will continue to receive a contract and will be paid according to the state and district teacher pay scale.

Special Education teachers and Bilingual teachers are required to be SBEC certified. Therefore, this proposed provision does not include teachers in those to particular fields, and Christoval ISD will maintain this SBEC requirement for Special Education and Bilingual teachers.

UNIFORM SCHOOL START DATE: TEC §25.0811; TEC §25.0812

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

Proposed: An exemption from this rule will allow CISD the flexibility to make a local decision on the start date for each school year to best meet the needs of the students and community.

In addition, this flexibility would allow the District to better align its starting date with the starting date of our area colleges, which the District uses for dual credit courses. Removing the uniform start date would allow CISD to start classes on a short week, easing the transition for students entering Kindergarten, middle school and high school. Additionally, the ability to change the start date can also help better balance the amount of days in each semester.

PROBATIONARY CONTRACTS: TEC 21.102

Currently: 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 5 of the 8 years preceding employment by the District.

Proposed: 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 5 of the 8 years preceding employment by the district will allow CISD extended time for the evaluation and training of new personnel.

Christoval ISD 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 3 school years.

LENGTH OF THE SCHOOL DAY: TEC §25.081

Currently: The state requires all school days must be 420 minutes long each day in order to count for ADA calculations and funding purposes and to accumulate instructional minutes towards the 75,600 minutes required annually.

Proposed: Exemption from the 420 minute per day requirement would allow CISD 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.

Exempting completely from the 420 minute per day rule 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 could cause the District to fall out of compliance with annual minute requirements. In addition, this would allow the flexibility to schedule non-instructional days into the schedule to allow for teachers to analyze student data, collaborate, and engage in targeted, relevant professional development.

Christoval ISD has no intentions of shortening the school day on a regular basis or without specific purpose. To the greatest extent possible, "early release" days would be planned in advance and noted in the district calendar, which is approved by the Board of Trustees. The calendar is published and distributed to stakeholders in advance of the school year and is continually published using school media.

Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator: TEC §37.0012

TEC§37.0012 requires a person be designated to serve as the Campus Behavior Coordinator (CBC) who is primarily responsible for maintaining student discipline and implementation of Chapter 37 and allows duties imposed on a campus principal or other campus administrator to be performed by the campus behavior coordinator.

Proposed: Christoval ISD has always taken a collaborative approach to student discipline in the campuses. With exemption from the requirement and duties of the Campus Behavior Coordinator, principals will be able to create the system where the duties of the CBC are shared among the administrative staff. This allows a more personal and effective approach to student discipline and better communication with parents.

Long-Range Energy Plan: TEC §44.902

TEC §44.902 requires the board of trustees of a school district to 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.

Proposed: This exemption will allow Christoval ISD to avoid unnecessary redundancies and an unfunded mandate. There is no research-based evidence supporting the arbitrary number of five percent and Christoval ISD already is taking measures as the operating budget allows to manage energy consumption. CISD actively and constantly seeks ways to decrease electric consumption. Therefore, the requirements to develop plans and other bureaucratic steps to meet this arbitrary goal are unnecessary.

Bank Depository Contract: TEC §45.205, TEC §45.206

Current Statute: Currently, each district must renew its depository contract every two years. The two-year contract term begins and ends in odd-numbered years. In accordance with the Texas Education Code the school district must use a uniform bid or proposal blank in the form prescribed by the State Board of Education.

Proposed: This exception is to allow the district to allow the district's banking contract to be extended beyond the 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 for bid. This exemption lessens the administrative burden related to preparing and reviewing a Request for Proposal (RFP) when there is a limited number of banking institutions available to bid on the district's business.

Inter-district Transfer Students: TEC §25.036

Under TEC §25.036, a district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district. Under TEC §25.036, a transfer is interpreted to be for a period of one school year. Christoval 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, classroom needs and dynamics, availability of programs and services, the student's disciplinary history records, work habits, academic performance, 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 District is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one-year commitment in accepting transfer applications. On rare occasions, student behavior warrants suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion. In addition, student attendance may fall below the TEA truancy standard.

Proposed: Christoval ISD seeks exemption from the requirement that a transfer must be a commitment for one year, and allow the district to rescind a transfer upon review of the entire circumstances.

School Health Advisory Council TEC §28.004

TEC §28.004 requires all districts to hold a minimum of four meetings per year.

Proposed: The Christoval ISD School Health Advisory (SHAC) Committee would be allowed to meet twice a year (once a semester). Once a semester in a small district still allows for the committee members to be aware of the issues and needs of the District while still allowing them to attend meetings of other organizations and groups (PTO, Cougar Club, Site-based, etc.) The Christoval ISD Board of Trustees and members of the SHAC Committee should determine how often the committee should meet.

Early Retirement/Early-Notification Incentives:

TEC §22.007 states that a district may not offer or provide a financial or other incentive to an employee of the district to encourage the employee to retire from the Teacher Retirement System of Texas.

Proposed: Christoval ISD diligently tries to be a good steward of taxpayer's money. For many school boards, early retirement incentives are considered a good business practice. CISD views this as an opportunity to cut district payrolls and replace teachers who are sincerely considering retirement with teachers on a lower pay scale. CISD can construct a teaching staff while providing benefits to a prospective retiree. By providing early retirement incentives CISD can reduce the workforce without layoffs or reduction of programs. Early-notification incentives that provide a small bonus for teachers who let districts know early in the year that they plan on retiring or leaving can also be a means of identifying a future workforce with more financial accuracy. Early-notification incentives would allow CISD the opportunity to begin searching for teacher replacements sooner. Some teachers do not decide to retire until the last possible day allowed, thus leaving the district the task of trying to find a proper replacement. Early retirement and early notification incentives can be considered a win-win for the district and its employees.

Christoval ISD proposes the following:

- CISD will have the opportunity to offer early retirement and/or early-notification of retirement incentives on an as needed basis determined by the Superintendent.
- The Board of Trustees, with recommendations of the Superintendent, will make a determination of what practices will be put in place for the offering of early retirement and/or early-notification of retirement incentives.
- CISD will not coerce any employee to participate in early retirement and/or early notification of retirement incentives.

Planning and Preparation Time TEC § 21.404

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 and preparation period under this section 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.

Proposed: This Plan will exempt the District from the requirement to provide the planning and preparation time mandated by section 21.404 of the Texas Education Code. This will give the District the flexibility as to when and how it provides planning and preparation time to its teachers. It is necessary for teachers to use planning time to discuss student needs across content areas, student interventions, and instructional strategies needed for student academic growth. A collaborative time is needed to review data from universal screener with a collaborative team with like planning times. This will allow the data to be used in the most advantageous way to promote student growth. Flexibility in planning and preparation time helps in creating schedules where teachers can reach more students and have more planning time on teacher teams. All teachers will have planning and preparation time each week, but this Plan will provide the District with additional flexibility in this area. These planning events will be on an as needed basis, but the District will strive to require no more than one such planning event per week.

Attendance TEC 25.092

The state of Texas 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% of the days the class is offered.
In addition, if a student is in attendance greater than 75% and less than 90% they may be given credit or a final grade for the class if the student completes a plan approved by the campus administrator and meets the instructional requirements for the class.

Proposed: The 90% rule is an arbitrary percentage, which means school districts award credit based on attendance rather than mastery of content. This exemption will allow the students to not be penalized for missing class due to extra/co-curricular activities, academic activities, or other extenuating circumstances. It will allow the district to award credit to students when they show an understanding of the concepts regardless of their attendance rate. CISD will have the flexibility to set attendance requirements that reflect a student's specific situation and expectations. This exemption does not impact

or alter existing compulsory attendance requirements or UIL rules. All students will still be held accountable for all compulsory attendance requirements. Further, 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 28.214, nor does it restrict or alter a teacher's right to assign grades in accordance with Texas Education Code Section 28.0216.

Grievance Policy

(TEC § 26.011; TEC Chapter 26A)

The Texas Education Code and the Texas Constitution requires school boards to establish procedures for parents to file complaints if they believe their student's rights have been denied.

Current Law

Current law in TEC Chapter 26A requires each school district to adopt a standardized complaint policy with several burdensome requirements, including extended timelines for filing and compressed timelines for holding conferences at each level. The law requires a policy allowing 60 calendar days for a parent to file a grievance from the date on which the parent or person knew or had reason to know of the facts giving rise to the grievance, unless the parent engaged in informal attempts to resolve the grievance, in which case the parent could have up to 90 calendar days to file a grievance. The law further requires that such complaints be heard within ten calendar days of the complaint being filed. Moreover, in contradiction of existing law in the Texas Government Code, the recently adopted provisions in the Education Code would allow the person bringing the complaint to decide if it is heard in open or closed, rather than the person against whom the complaint is brought. Finally, parents and other grievant would be allowed to add issues and claims at any point during the grievance process, making it difficult to resolve concerns at the lowest possible level.

Proposed Exemption

Christoval ISD has always and will continue to adhere to an established grievance policy with procedures and timelines outlined in local Board policy. Such policies ensure thorough documentation of each step in the grievance process and provide adequate time for complaints to be filed and for complaints to be heard. All records related to grievances-including submitted forms, communications, investigations, findings, resolutions, and any corrective actions-are systematically maintained at the district level to ensure transparency, accountability, and compliance with legal and policy standards. The District is committed to monitoring the legality and appropriateness of every decision and action taken. The District is further committed to hearing, reviewing, and attempting to resolve all parent complaints as quickly and efficiently as possible, as well as to taking corrective action, where appropriate. It is imperative that grievances and complaints are filed in a timely manner to ensure the best prompt response.

Christoval ISD's long-standing grievance policy will ensure that all such complaints are carefully reviewed and that district responses are in alignment with state and federal regulations, as well as all other local board policies. Christoval ISD seeks to be exempt from a statewide grievance policy and will continue to follow established grievance procedures as outlined in district policy. This will allow the District to hear and consider parent and employee complaints in an orderly and responsive manner and to resolve those concerns as quickly as possible.

Instructional Plan

(TEC § 26.0062)

Christoval ISD is committed to supporting all efforts of each campus to involve parents and community members as active participants in the education of Christoval ISD students. The District strives to support the actions of our teachers and other instructional staff as they develop curriculum and effective instructional strategies.

Current Law

Under current law, each school district must post on the district's website at the beginning of each semester an instructional plan or course syllabus for each class

offered in the district for that semester. The policy would require each teacher to provide to district administration and to the parent of each student enrolled in the class such an instructional plan or syllabus before the beginning of each semester for each class for which the teacher provides instruction.

Proposed Exemption
Because teachers use data-driven instruction aligned with student mastery of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), instructional plans are regularly adjusted to support student learning. Teacher autonomy to modify instruction based on real-time data and effective strategies does not align with publishing a fixed, comprehensive semester-long plan. Christoval ISD will not adopt a policy or create a requirement for its teachers to post at the beginning of each semester an instructional plan or course syllabus for each class offered in the District. However, Christoval ISD will ensure that course overviews are available at the request of parents or guardians.

Local School Library Advisory Council
(TEC § 33.025)

Christoval ISD encourages and supports all campus efforts to involve District parents and community members as active participants in the education of Christoval students.

Current Law

Current law requires the school district to establish a **School Library Advisory Council** at any campus where either 10% of parents or 50 parents (whichever is fewer) submit a written request for such a council. The council would then be tasked with reviewing library materials, providing input on the selection and removal of resources, making recommendations to ensure materials are age-appropriate and aligned with community values, reviewing all books and other material objected to by any District parent, and advising on such objections.

Proposed Exemption

While these councils are not required to be formed until such a petition is received, once the petition is received, the Board will be statutorily required to create these councils. At that time, the council(s) will not be optional for the District. Christoval ISD seeks to be exempt from Texas Education Code §33.025, which mandates the creation of a School Library Advisory Council upon petition by 10% of parents or 50 parents. The District believes this requirement is redundant and unnecessary, as Christoval ISD already has strong, board-approved procedures in place for selecting, reviewing, and reconsidering library materials - led by certified librarians and educators and aligned with state-mandated requirements and guidance from the Texas Education Agency. Creating such advisory councils risks undermining the professional judgment of educators and librarians, introduces the judgment of non-certified individuals, introduces potential for politicization of instructional resources, and could very easily lead to inconsistency across campuses. Furthermore, the statute presents an administrative burden, requiring staff time and resources that would be better directed toward student learning and support. Christoval ISD's existing processes already allow for meaningful parental review and involvement, including access to their child's library checkout records, formal challenge procedures, and transparency in material selection. In addition, concerned individuals may also speak with teachers, administration, and/or the school board through District complaint processes and/or during the open forum of any regularly scheduled board meeting. The District remains committed to ensuring age-appropriate and educationally sound resources while maintaining an efficient and effective oversight structure that includes educator expertise and parent input, without the disruption and/or duplication caused by the statutory requirements in §33.025.

Acquisition of Library Materials
(TEC § 33.026)

Current Law
Current law outlines specific procedures school districts must follow before acquiring library materials. The law requires that materials be reviewed and approved in advance by a certified school librarian and be verified for compliance with age-appropriateness, educational suitability, and community standards. Additionally, it mandates a multi-step vetting process, documentation of acquisition decisions, and the public posting of selected materials for 30 days before they are made available to students. Finally, current law requires the Board of Trustees to approve every library book or other resource material acquired by or donated to the District.

Proposed Exemption

Christoval ISD will be exempt from this statutory provision because the District already has **robust, board-approved policies in place that govern** the acquisition of library materials in a manner that ensures transparency, appropriateness, and educational value. These policies and procedures are implemented by certified librarians and are fully compliant with the standards required by Texas law and guidance from the Texas Education Agency. The statutory process under §33.026 introduces **redundant and restrictive requirements** that may delay access to timely instructional and enrichment resources. It also places bureaucratic barriers in front of trained library professionals who are certified to select age-appropriate, curriculum-aligned materials, that are consistent with standards set by Texas law. Furthermore, the mandated documentation process creates an **administrative burden** that consumes time and resources better allocated to instructional support. While Christoval ISD fully supports transparency and parental engagement in the school library process, the rigid requirements of TEC §33.026 are **unnecessary and duplicative** of local safeguards already in place. This exemption allows Christoval ISD to preserve instructional flexibility, uphold librarian professionalism, and provide students with timely access to enriching and appropriate materials-without compromising accountability or community trust.