ANTHONY INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

2025-2030

DISTRICT OF INNOVATION PLAN

Anthony ISD District of Innovation Plan Renewal
Board of Trustees' Approval on November 20, 2024

Anthony ISD District of Innovation Plan Amendment
Board of Trustees' Approval on October 21, 2026

INTRODUCTION

House Bill 1842 passed during the 84th Legislative Session, permits Texas public school districts to become a District of Innovation, and to obtain exemptions from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. Action to renew the designation as a District of Innovation effective July 1, 2025, and to continue for 5 school years is proposed, to increase local control over school district operations. The process supported innovation and local initiatives to improve educational outcomes for the benefits of students and the community.

THE ANTHONY ISD DISTRICT OF INNOVATION COMMITTEE

Dr. Oscar A Troncoso, Superintendent
Emily Levario, Executive Director of Finance
Fernando Garnica, Executive Director of HR/Federal Programs/School Counseling
Sandy Honts, Director of Special Education
Sandra Espinoza, High School Principal
Veronica Ordonez, Middle School Principal
Jorge Reyes, Elementary School Principal
Michelle Elias, Assistant Principal Elementary School
Alicia O'Quinn, High School Counselor
Melissa Alvarez, Middle School Counselor
Julia Crowley, Elementary School Counselor
Rebecca Acuna, Teacher & Community Member
Abraham Martinez, Teacher
Jessica Flores, Teacher
Magdalena Hernandez, Teacher

TERM

The term of the Plan is for five years, with the renewal of the District of Innovation beginning with the 2025-26 school year, after the Texas Commissioner of Education is notified that the Innovation Plan has been approved by the Board of Trustees and ending with the conclusion of the 2029-2030 school year, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees, of the Commissioner, in accordance with the law.

ANTHONY INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT VISION STATEMENT

AISD commits to prepare all students with academic and interpersonal skills to graduate, face all challenges and be a contributing member of their community

INNOVATION PLAN BASED ON NEEDS

A District of Innovation Plan will allow Anthony ISD to have the flexibility to implement practices innovative to our students and in alignment with our community values and beliefs. It will allow Anthony ISD to exercise local control over certain decisions about education and governance that are more appropriate for the individual needs of the district and its stakeholders. Becoming a District of Innovation will allow Anthony ISD to customize appropriate plans district-wide, school-wide, or even grade level wide. Our work will allow Anthony ISD to accommodate our unique needs and address systemic components such as how we are organized, how we evaluate our staff, how we spend our time with students and staff, how we recruit and retain the best staff, and how we grow as a learning organization. To think differently, we must respond differently. Leveraging the freedom and flexibility afforded as a District of Innovation will ensure that we are empowered to do so.

PROPOSED AREAS OF INNOVATION FOR ANTHONY ISD

REQUIREMENTS OF THE EDUCATION CODE THAT INHIBIT ANTHONY ISD OPERATIONS…THE GOALS OF THE PLAN FROM WHICH THE DISTRICT WILL BE EXEMPT UPON ADOPTION OF THE PLAN:

Site-Based Decision-Making Process

Requirement:

The Texas Education Code (TEC) requires District Level and Campus Level Planning Decision-Making as described in TEC Sections 11.251, 11.252, and 11.253. Under these statues, each school district must have separate district and campus committees with membership and responsibilities being nearly identical. The statute requires a committee of stakeholders to engage in a very prescriptive process of developing, evaluating, and revising campus and district improvement plans annually, in accordance with district policy and as established under TEC Sections 11.252 and 11.253.

Rationale:

Currently, the demographics of our schools and communities may limit the number of teachers and community members who are able to serve in this capacity. The nature of the requirements indicated in the standards often results in the district and campus improvement plans cumbersome compliance documents rather than workable guides for actionable goals.

The leadership in Anthony ISD, both at campus and at the district level, has a history of collaboratively involving multiple stakeholders in the processes of annually assessing campus and district needs when establishing and monitoring short- and long-term goals. Our leadership

will continue to provide sufficient and appropriate percentage of teacher and paraprofessional members on each of the required site-based committees but will not be required to limit the percentages to the targets listed in the education code. Anthony ISD will continue to move forward with our collaborative improvement plans reflecting action-oriented tasks and measurable goals. Further, the committees will no longer restrict and overburden the content of the required written plans to encompass the previously included items relative only to compliance rather than relevant actions aimed at progress toward established goals. Those items listed in TEC 11.251 detailing the selection of representatives for the Campus and District Advisory Teams will continue to be implemented, though manifested in a single District Level Committee that includes equitable representation across all three schools and the district level. Those items listed in TEC Sections 11.252 and 11.253 of a compliance nature will no longer be implemented and be replaced by relevant strategic plan components, including action steps, resources, and metrics that are aligned with District and Campus goals and objectives. Portions of the improvement plans required by ESSA obligations will not be affected by this exemption.

Exemptions:

- TEC Sec. 11.251 Planning and Decision-Making Process
- TEC Sec. 11.252 District-Level Planning and Decision-Making
- TEC Sec. 11.253 Campus Planning and Site-Based Decision Making

CHAPTER 21

Teacher Certification Requirements

Requirement:

Texas Education Code (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 as provided by Subchapter B", which includes any State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC)-issued certificate (intern, probationary, standard, or enhanced standard) or emergency permit for the subject area and grade level. TEC 21.0031 Failure to Obtain Certification/Contract Void; voids an employee's contract if the employee does not hold a valid certificate or permit issued by the State Board for Educator Certification or fails to fulfill the requirements to renew the certification. Texas Education Code 21.057 requires that a school district that assigns an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher to the same classroom for more than 30 consecutives instructional days during the same school year shall provide written notice of the assignment to a parent or guardian of each student in that classroom.

HB 2's new TEC, §21.0032, now limits districts' ability to include exemptions from some certification requirements under TEC, §21.003, in their DOI plan. These limitations phase in over the next three academic years.

Restrictions on DOI Plans Regarding Certification:

Academic Year	DOI Restrictions
2025-2026	District maintains currently approved DOI plan which may include exemptions from 21.003
2026-2027	District can no longer include K-5 reading and mathematics teachers in DOI plan exemptions from 21.003
2027-2028	District can no longer include all foundational subject teachers (i.e., reading/English language arts, math, science, and social studies) in any grade level in DOI plan exemptions from 21.003

Rationale:

The current certification requirements inhibit the District's ability to hire including but not limited to professionals with industry experience to teach Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Teachers who do not possess a Texas Teacher Certificate in Core Foundational Subjects. To expand opportunities for students to take such courses and obtain professional certifications, the District seeks to establish its own local qualification requirements for such courses in lieu of the requirements set forth in law. Anthony ISD would like the flexibility to hire non-certified CTE teachers who are qualified professionals, with industry-based experience/education as well as non-certified teachers in core foundational subjects who have a bachelor's degree and demonstrate subject matter expertise. This would include college coursework or a combination of work experience, training and/or education in the subject matter to be taught. Potential applicants will be required to meet qualifications set forth by the District. The Superintendent will approve candidates prior to employment. This flexibility would allow Anthony ISD to offer CTE coursework for students that would not otherwise be offered.

Locally established teacher certification requirements allow the District to:

- Recruit industry certified and/or trade professionals with real world knowledge to teach specialized certification courses
- Increase the number of CTE course offerings resulting in more opportunities for students
- Offer dual credit opportunities in CTE courses
- Provide realistic requirements for professionals transitioning from industry to teaching
- Ability to employ part-time professionals to teach specialty courses
- Ability to employ professionals in hard to fill teaching vacancies where certified teachers are not available

Local Guidelines

● The District will establish Local Criteria, such as years of experience, qualifications, and industry certifications, as part of our local teaching certificate criteria

● Principals, along with the Human Resources Director, will submit candidates to the Superintendent with credentials. The Superintendent will determine whether it is in the best interest of the district to certify the individual locally. The Board will be notified prior to the locally certified individual beginning employment

Exemptions:

- TEC Sec. 21.003 Certification required
- TEC Sec. 21.0031 Failure to Obtain Certification

Probationary Status:

Requirement:

Texas Education Code (TEC) 21.102 states that experienced teachers new to the district 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. TEC 21.102 limits the time for a probationary contract to one year.

Rationale:

Under current guidelines, probationary periods for newly hired teachers and counselors who have been in public education for at least five of the previous eight years cannot exceed one year. This limited time period is insufficient in some cases to fully determine the staff members' effectiveness. Relief from Texas Education Code 21.102 will permit the district the option to issue a probationary contract for a period of up to two years for experienced teachers and counselors newly hired

Finally, the Strategic Priority to promote a positive learning culture for all campus stakeholders including above mentioned development of a comprehensive District staff development plan that focuses on individual growth of teachers in all areas is impeded by the laws governing Teacher Contracts. These goals are impeded by the laws governing Teacher probationary contracts set forth in the Texas Education Code 21.102 in the extent that these laws require that a 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 five of the eight years preceding employment by the District. This

means that teachers with over five years of experience must be given term contracts in their second year in the District. The plan would be to provide probationary contracts for any teacher new to District for up to three years.

Exemption:

- TEC Sec. 21.102 Probationary Contract

Planning and Preparation Time

Requirement:

TEC Section 21.404 states that 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. The planning and preparation period under this section may not be less than 45 minutes within the instructional day. During the planning and preparation period, a classroom teacher may not be required to participate in any other activity.

Rationale:

All teachers need ongoing professional growth opportunities annually. An important component of their professional growth and development involves the need to work together in reviewing curriculum, planning instructional delivery, analyzing assessment data, and developing strategies for intervention and acceleration. Learning together with colleagues is an invaluable part of an individual teacher's professional growth and development regardless of years of teaching experience. The current restriction of planning and preparation to time during the instructional day forces the District to hire substitute teachers during the school day – a practice that is cost-prohibitive.

Flexibility in the time of professional learning for teachers would allow Anthony ISD to redirect those funds directly back to students. We base our decisions on what is best for our students. This exemption would not reduce the amount of planning and preparation time for teachers, but it would flex when the planning and preparation time occurs.

This would allow Anthony ISD to build daily schedules that allow professional development time during the instructional day. This flexibility provides the opportunity for job-embedded development such as peer observation, mentor/mentee observations, vertical team planning, videotaping of instructional delivery and grade level/department lesson planning. At the same time, our students need the maximum amount of learning time the District can design during the instructional day. The flexibility to structure professional development time before, during, or after the instructional day for students would allow Anthony ISD to provide collaborative planning during the instructional day while leveraging maximum learning time for students.

Exemption:

- TEC Sec. 21.404 Planning and Preparation Time

First and Last Day of Instruction

Requirement:

Texas Education Code 25.0811 states that students may not begin school before the fourth Monday of August. For many years this was the rule; however, districts had the option of applying for a waiver to begin school earlier. The waiver process was eliminated several years ago, mandating that all schools begin school no earlier than the fourth Monday of August, with no exceptions. Texas Education Code 25.0812 states that a school district may not schedule the last day of school for students for a school year before May 15. This requirement inhibits the District's flexibility to develop a calendar that best meets students', staff, and community needs. Research has found that a catalyst to accelerating student learning and improving teacher practice is allowing for structured time for educators to prepare, lesson plan, and receive professional development.

Rationale:

Current statute prevents the District from designing calendars that best meet the needs of students. Having the flexibility to set the start date allows the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of the students and our community. This empowers us to personalize and customize learning for all District learners, including teachers and staff through professional learning, and allows us to balance the amount of instructional time per semester, which will improve our ability to end the fall semester prior to winter break, and also end the school year earlier, creating a more favorable schedule for summer enrichment programs.

Exemptions:

- TEC Sec. 25.0811 First Day of Instruction
- TEC Sec. 25.0812 Last Day of School

Student/Teacher Ratios and Class Size

Requirement:

Texas Education Code (TEC) Section 25.112 states that districts must maintain a student to teacher ratio of 22:1 or less for Prekindergarten through fourth grade classes, and districts must complete and file a waiver with the agency if a class exceeds this limit. TEC Section 25.111 requires districts to employ a sufficient number of certified teachers to maintain an average ratio of not less than 1 teacher for each 20 students in average daily attendance. Based

on current state law, classes in grades Prekindergarten through fourth grade may not exceed a ratio of 22 students to 1 teacher. When an individual class exceeds this ratio, the District must add a new teacher, reassign teachers from other schools with lower student enrollment, or submit a waiver request to the Texas Education Agency. These waivers requests are traditionally approved by TEA. In addition to the waiver request, it is required that a letter be sent to each parent in the class that exceeds the 22:1 ratio, informing them the waiver has been submitted, and the class exceeds the 22:1 ratio. TEC Section 25.113 states a campus or district that is granted an exception under Section 25.112 (d) from class size limits shall provide written notice of the exception to the parent of or person standing in parental relation to each student affected by the exception. Note: This restriction strictly applies to core academic classrooms. It does not apply to Physical Education or fine arts classes.

Rationale:

There are fluctuations in attendance each year. Because of this, it is sometimes necessary to apply for class size waivers. We believe that class size plays a positive role in the classroom, but this must be balanced with the timing of adding the best qualified teaching candidates.

Anthony ISD will work to maintain the 22:1 student to teacher ratio in Prekindergarten through 4th grades and continue to follow the process of thoughtful planning, assignment of teachers to the schools based on student enrollment, reviewing staffing ratios, and making decisions in the best interests of students while taking into consideration the financial capacity of the District. In the event that class sizes exceed the 22:1 ratio, in kindergarten – 4th grade, a TEA waiver will not be necessary, but the Superintendent will instead submit a request to the Board of Trustees for approval. Additionally, parents would be informed of all efforts relative to class size if the request becomes necessary. This exemption provides local control over class size ratios, without the unnecessary step of seeking a waiver from the Texas Education Agency.

Exemption:

- TEC Sec. 25.112 Class Size
- TEC Sec. 25.113 Notice of Class Size

Inter-District Transfers

Requirement:

Texas Education Code (TEC) 25.036 allows a District to choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the District. A transfer is interpreted to be for a period of one school year.

Rationale:

In approving transfer requests, the availability of space and instructional staff, programs and services, and the student's disciplinary history records, attendance records and work habits are also evaluated. TEC 25.036 represents a one-year commitment by the District. Anthony ISD is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one-year commitment to accepting transfer applicants.

Exemption:

- TEC Sec. 25.036 Transfer of Student

Depository Contracts

Requirement:

The depository for the District shall serve for a term of two years until its successor is selected and has qualified. A district and its depository bank may agree to extend the contract for two additional two-year terms. TEC §45.205 will allow the District to extend a depository contract for three additional two-year terms. The contract term and any extension must coincide with the district's fiscal year. An extension is not subject to the requirements of TEC 45.206, 45.205 and 45.204.

Rationale:

The District is seeking an exemption from TEC 45.205 and 45.206 to allow the District's banking contract to be extended beyond the allowable contract term, if the District determines that 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. The District will only go out for bid if it is determined that contract pricing is not competitive and there is an operational or financial reason to send the District's banking services out for bid. The District will continue with two-year contracts for our banking depository.

Exemption:

- TEC Sec. 45.205 Term of Contract
- TEC Sec. 45.206 Bid or Request for Proposal Notices; Bid and Proposal Forms

Grievance Procedure and Process

Requirement:

Texas Education Code Section 26.011, through Chapter 26A mandates all school districts to adopt a grievance policy with several prescriptive requirements. Chapter 26A imposes a rigid, multi-level, state-mandated grievance framework that strips school districts of local flexibility. This includes significantly extended timelines for filing (up to 60 or 90 days), specific electronic web-posting mandates, and compressed timelines for holding administrative conferences at each level.

Rationale:

The statutory requirements of Chapter 26A create a less efficient process that is overly cumbersome for the district to investigate and resolve. The statutory requirement for extended filing timelines (up to 60 to 90 days) significantly delays the resolution of disputes. Furthermore, the state's mandatory four-level review structure creates substantial administrative burdens, forces an excessive number of hearings onto the Board of Trustees, and creates an overly legalistic environment. Chapter 26A introduces a highly practical mechanism in § 26A.001(d) allowing the Board of Trustees to delegate final grievance hearings to a committee of at least three trustees. Rather than requiring the full school district board of trustees to convene for every final-level grievance appeal, this provision streamlines the administrative process. While the District seeks total relief from Chapter 26A's operational mandates, timelines, and website posting requirements, it recognizes the administrative value of this three-trustee panel delegation model to preserve board efficiency and maintain strict local compliance.

In place of these strict statutory requirements, the District will maintain local control over its grievance process by utilizing its locally adopted Board Policies, specifically FNG (for parents/students), DGBA (for employees) and GF (for public) as they read prior to policy 126 update impacted by the 89th Texas Regular Legislative Session. The District will adopt the practice outlined in Texas Education Code 26A.001(d) into its local board policy allowing the Board of Trustees to delegate final grievance hearings to a committee of at least three trustees. This process will continue to safeguard due process and prohibit retaliation, while allowing the administration to resolve parent, student, and community complaints efficiently under a single consolidated framework.

Exemption:

- TEC Sec. 26A.001 Grievance Policy
- TEC Sec. 26A.002 Timelines for Filing and Appeal
- TEC Sec. 26A.003 Posting of Procedures and Forms
- TEC Sec. 26A.004 Testimony Before State Board of Education

Library Acquisition and Challenge Policy

Requirement:

Senate Bill 13 ("SB 13") amends Chapter 33 of the Texas Education Code by way of requiring a school board to adopt a policy for the acquisition of library materials. Texas Education Codes Sections 33.025-33.027 require school districts to implement a centralized, multi-layered regulatory framework for managing library assets. This includes the creation of a rigid local School Library Advisory Council (SLAC), a mandatory 30-day public posting period for all intended book acquisitions, and full Board of Trustees votes to approve or reject every individual piece of donated or purchased media. Furthermore, it dictates tight, unyielding timelines for processing citizen material challenges through the SLAC.

Rationale:

While the District remains unyielding in its commitment to transparency, community values, and ensuring that all library collections feature age-appropriate content, the rigid frameworks and prescriptive clerical mandates outlined in Texas Education Codes Sections 33.025-33.027 create substantial administrative obstacles.

Operating a standalone Local School Library Advisory Council (SLAC) under state-mandated composition and reporting rules causes "committee fatigue" among parent volunteers and staff, stretching local administrative resources thin. Furthermore, requiring our Board of Trustees to formally vote on every individual purchased or donated book title—while enforcing a mandatory 30-day public review freeze—presents an unsustainable operational burden. Finally, the unyielding, multi-step challenge timelines dictated by statute (such as the 5-day routing rule) fail to account for the operational realities of local school calendars, often forcing rushed evaluations rather than allowing for a thorough, careful review.

An exemption from these three interconnected statutes restores local control to the District. Primary selection and acquisition responsibilities will return to trained professional library and instructional staff, leveraging their professional expertise to meet student literacy needs efficiently.

What The Exemption Does Not Change

A DOI plan cannot bypass non-waivable state laws, federal requirements, or explicit parental rights. The exemption does not change the following aspects of SB 13:

1. **Mandatory Parental Rights & Control**
   - Catalog Access: Districts must still provide parents with full access to review the school's online library catalog and digital library apps.
   - Checkout Restrictions: Parents retain the absolute right to control, limit, or restrict which library materials their specific children are allowed to access or check out.
   - Record Transparency: The law still guarantees parents access to their child's library checkout history and material usage logs.

2**. State Content Standards and Prohibitions**

- Prohibited Material: The exemption only changes who selects the books, not what can be selected. Districts must strictly comply with the state collection development standards established by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC) and the State Board of Education (SBOE).
- Indecency Restrictions: Librarians and staff remain legally barred from acquiring or displaying any material classified under state law as harmful, sexually explicit, vulgar, indecent, or profane.

Exemption:

- TEC Sec. 33.025 Local School Library Advisory Council
- TEC Sec. 33.026 Acquisition of Library Materials
- TEC Sec. 33.027 Challenge or Appeal Regarding Library Materials