



**WELLMAN-UNION CONSOLIDATED INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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Nate Wheeler, Superintendent

Kyna Wheeler, Secondary Principal

Bridget Brown, Elementary Principal.

**PROPOSED LOCAL INNOVATION PLAN**

The 84<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature passed House Bill 1842, which allows public school districts to declare exemptions from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code by becoming a designated District of Innovation.

**Wellman-Union CISD Local Innovation Committee**

Nate Wheeler, Superintendent  
Kyna Wheeler, Secondary Principal  
Bridget Brown, Elementary Principal  
Megan Becker, Counselor  
Timothy Tatsch, CTE

Kody Robinson, Secondary Teacher  
Robin Tells, Elementary Teacher  
Rosie Garza, Community Member  
Hilda Neufeld, Community Member  
JR Cudd, Business Representative

**Wellman-Union CISD Board of Trustees**

Aaron Martin, President  
Ryan Dill, Vice President  
Eddie Rodriguez, Secretary  
Barrett Brown-Member

James Harlan-Member  
Jace Moore-Member  
Gabe Neill-Member

**Term and Implementation**

The term for the Local Innovation Plan is expected to be for five years unless terminated or amended by the Board of Trustees in accordance with Texas law. In the event Wellman-Union CISD feels other exemptions would benefit the district, the committee will follow all procedures for amending the plan and presenting it for approval of the Board of Trustees. Adjustments to Board Policy and other district policies will be researched, reviewed, and adopted by the Board of Trustees as needed.

**Timeline**

**February 14, 2017**

1. Board of Trustees approve resolution to hold a public hearing to discuss the possibility of using HB 1842 to become a District of Innovation
2. Public Hearing to explain and discuss the possibility of becoming a District of

Innovation

3. Approve a motion to pursue local District of Innovation plan
4. Approve the members of the District of Innovation Committee

**March 1, 2017**

District of Innovation Planning Committee Meeting

**March 6, 2017**

Present District of Innovation Plan to the School Board

**March 7, 2017**

1. Post the District of Innovation Plan to the district website
2. Notify Texas Commissioner of Education of the board's intention to vote on adoption of the proposed plan

**April 10, 2017**

Board of Trustees approve the District of Innovation Plan

**April 11, 2017**

Begin updating policy changes with TASB

**July 12, 2021**

Board of Trustees vote to allow district to make amendments to the plan

**November 8, 2021**

Public Hearing to discuss renewal of District of Innovation

**November 8, 2021**

Board of Trustees meet to discuss renewal of District of Innovation

**November 9, 2021**

DOI Committee meets to discuss, amend, and renew the current DOI Plan

**November 11, 2021**

Proposed Renewal Plan posted on District website and district notifies Texas Commissioner of Education of proposed plan for renewal.

**December 13, 2021**

Board of Trustees approve District of Innovation Plan Renewal

**December 16, 2021**

DOI Plan is submitted to Texas Commissioner of Education for Renewal

**Amendment Timeline**

**November 10, 2025**

Board Discussion on Amendment of District of Innovation

**December 8, 2025**

Board Vote to allow the District to Make Amendments to the Plan

**February 3, 2026**

SAT Meeting to Discuss, Amend, Renew DOI

**February 19, 2026**

DOI Committee Meeting to Discuss, Amend, Renew DOI

**March 9, 2026**

Public Hearing to Discuss Final Version/Amendments of District of Innovation w/ DOI Committee

**April 13, 2026**

Board Approval of DOI Plan Amendment

**April 14, 2026**

Amendment Plan Posted on Districts Website/DOI Plan Submission to TEA Commissioner

**Resolution to Adopt a District of Innovation**

WHEREAS Education Code 12A.001 provides that a district is eligible for designation as a district of innovation if the district's most recent performance rating under Section 39.054 reflects at least acceptable performance, and that consideration of designation as a district of innovation may be initiated by a resolution adopted by the board of trustees of the district; and

WHEREAS the Wellman-Union Independent School District's most recent performance rating under Education Code 39.054 reflects at least acceptable performance.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees of Wellman-Union Consolidated Independent School District by adoption of this resolution initiates the process under Education Code Chapter 12A to become a district of innovation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that after this resolution is signed by the Board, a public hearing shall be held to consider whether the District should develop a local innovation plan for the designation of the District as a district of innovation and that after the public hearing the Board of Trustees of Wellman-Union Independent School District shall appoint a committee to develop a local innovation plan or decline to pursue designation as a district of innovation.

Adopted this 14<sup>th</sup> day of February 2017, by the Board of Trustees.

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Presiding Officer

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Secretary

## Texas Education Code Proposed Exemptions

In conjunction with the Local Innovation Committee, district leadership staff reviewed the subchapters of the Texas Education Code to determine which permissible exemptions currently inhibit the district from maximizing the educational opportunities of the Wellman-Union CISD students.

### **1. First Day of Instruction (TEC 25.0811) (EB LEGAL)**

A school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday in August.

Benefit of Exemption for WUCISD:

- Allows for better balance of semesters/grading periods and create more instructional time prior to assessments
- The flexibility to start mid-week could ease the transition for students and teachers

Local Guidelines:

- Annually review the calendar to determine what is best for students and the community and set school start and end dates accordingly.

### **2. Last Day of Instruction (TEC 25.0812) (EB LEGAL)**

Benefit of Exemption for WUCISD:

- Allows for better balance of semesters/grading periods and create more instructional time prior to assessments
- The flexibility to finish mid-week could ease the transition for students and teachers

Local Guidelines:

- Annually review the calendar to determine what is best for students and the community and set school start and end dates accordingly.

### **3. Teacher Certification (TEC 21.003)**

States that a person may not be employed as a teacher by a district unless that person holds an appropriate certification or permit issued by the appropriate state agency.

Benefit of Exemption for WUCISD:

- Wellman Union CISD maintains its commitment to hire certified professionals and will continue to seek employees with appropriate certifications. However, the flexibility in allowing Wellman Union CISD to make local decisions about teacher certification would provide a better opportunity to address staffing needs and expand instructional opportunities.
- The statutory certification requirements inhibit the district's ability to hire professionals with industry experience to teach Career and Technical Education (CTE) and non-core electives.
- Requirement inhibits the district's ability to hire professionals working to obtain certification.
- **Note: This does not include an exemption from the requirements under TEC §**

**21.0032, which limits a District's ability to exempt from certain certification requirements for foundational subject teachers under TEC § 21.003.**

- Under this section, a District may not employ a foundational subject teacher based on the following guidelines:
  - 26-27 SY: Not allowed for K-5 Reading and Math
  - 27-28 SY: Not allowed for Foundational Subject Teachers (ELAR, Math, Science, SS)
- Local guidelines will allow the district to:
  - Allow experienced teachers to teach an elective in an area where they are qualified
  - Allow Teachers to teach in an area where they are qualified and working to obtain certification as allowed.
  - Expand CTE and dual-credit opportunities
  - Recruit teachers from certain trades and/or vocations with industry knowledge and real-world experience
  - Provide flexibility in scheduling and class options for students

Local Guidelines:

- Principals will submit candidates and credentials to the Superintendent. The Superintendent will determine whether it is in the best interest of the district to certify the individual and present to the Board for final approval.
- The Superintendent will have the authority to permit a certified teacher to teach a course outside his or her certified field.
- The district may assign a person who meets local requirements to teach a career and technical education (CTE) course or non-core elective courses.
- State certification will not be required for teachers of career and technical education (CTE) courses or non-core elective courses.
- In accordance with the State Board of Education, candidates will be required to pass a criminal background check prior to receiving district certification.
- District certificates will be good for one year.
- District certificate employees will be employed on an at-will basis.
  - Special Education and bilingual/ESL teachers must continue to be SBEC certified.

**4. Teacher Contract Days (TEC 21.401) Minimum Service Required**

Defines a teacher contract as a 10-month contract equivalent to 187 days.

Benefit of Exemption for WUCISD:

- Reduce teacher contract days from 187 to fewer days with no effect on teacher salaries.
- Allow better alignment with teacher days to the 75,600 minutes required of students.
- Increase the daily rate the district pays teachers.
- Enhance teacher recruitment
- Improve teacher morale

Local Guidelines:

- The Superintendent will present a recommendation of the number of teacher contract

days to the WUCISD School Board for final approval.

**5. Transfer of Student (TEC 25.036) (Amended July 2021)**

States that any child, other than a high school graduate, who is younger than 21 years of age and eligible for enrollment of 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 jointly approve and timely agree in writing to the transfer.

Benefit of Exemption for WUCISD:

- Allows the district the flexibility to revoke transfer students who, on rare occasions violate the transfer policy.
- Allows the district the flexibility to revoke transfer students, whose parents do not support the district.
- Allows the district to better utilize school recourses for the benefit of the district.
- Potentially provide space for students on a waiting list to enroll in the district.

Local Guidelines:

- The district will require nonresident students to file a transfer application each school year.
- In approving transfer requests, the availability of space and instructional staff, availability of programs and services, the student's disciplinary history, records, work habits, and attendance records will be evaluated. The parent's willingness to cooperate with Wellman-Union CISD teachers, coaches, and administration in a positive manner will also be a determining factor.
- Transfer students are required to follow the attendance requirements, rules, and regulations of the district.
- Transfer students may be revoked by the superintendent at any time during the school year if the student is assigned disciplinary consequences such as suspension (in school or out of school), placement in DAEP, or expulsion. In addition, students not meeting the State's 90% attendance standard may also be subject to immediate revocation of the student's transfer status. Furthermore, the student's transfer may be revoked by the superintendent if the parents or legal guardians fail to support the District in a positive manner.

**6. Class Size Waiver Exemption (Kindergarten-4<sup>th</sup> Grade) (TEC 25.111, 25.112, 25.113)**

State law requires districts to maintain an average student-teacher ratio at most of 20:1 for average daily attendance. Kindergarten-4<sup>th</sup> grade classes are to be kept at a 22:1 student; teacher ratio according to state law. If the number exceeds the 22:1 ratio the parents are to be notified and a waiver must be filed with TEA.

Benefit of Exemption for WUCISD:

- This gives WUCISD the flexibility without having to file a waiver with the Texas Education Agency in the event we exceed the 22:1 ratio.

Local Guidelines:

- Wellman-Union CISD will attempt to keep all K-4<sup>th</sup> core classrooms to a 22:1 ratio. However, in the event the class size exceeds the ratio, the superintendent will report to the Board of Trustees. A waiver will not be filed with TEA. WUCISD will strive to communicate with our parents to keep them informed if the number exceeds the ratio of 22:1.
- The district will strive to employ a sufficient number of teachers certified under Subchapter B, Chapter 21, to maintain an average ratio of not less than one teacher for each 20 students in average daily attendance; however, the plan will allow the district to exceed this requirement based on campus or district needs.

**7. Site-Based Decision Making (TEC 11.251, 11.252, and 11.253) (BQ Legal/Local, BQA Legal/Local)**

Benefit of Exemption for WUCISD:

- This will consolidate the number of meetings and the number of committees required by law and will better serve this community.
- This consolidation will yield greater opportunity for one council to address a multiple of needs as opposed to having one meeting after another throughout the year

Local Guidelines:

- Wellman-Union CISD seeks exemption from the site-based decision-making process and the convening of the school health advisory committee and the many accompanying requirements falling under the governance of those two bodies. The statutory requirements as set forth in the Texas Education Code in Chapter 11 are burdensome, time consuming, and ultimately cause a misdirection of resources from the primary focus of schools: the education of students. Stakeholders will continue to be involved in the process, but one that meets the needs of the district, school, and community as opposed to the broad brush of statutory requirements leveled down from a one size fits all approach as detailed in the code. In place of the SBDM and the SHAC, a Superintendent's Advisory Team (SAT) will be established, meet, review, analyze, and respond to both qualitative and quantitative data regarding the district's success and most importantly, student's success. This council will convene at least two times per year and generate the general direction of district resources and efforts.

**8. Absences for College, University, or Military Visits (TEC 25.087) (FEA LEGAL)**

Texas law states that students are excused for a maximum of two days for college or university visits in their junior year and again in their senior year. High school students are not allowed to receive an excused absence if they take more than two visits during their junior and senior year.

Benefit of Exemption for WUCISD:

- The district shall excuse a student for up to two days during their junior year and up to four days during their senior year to visit an accredited institution of higher

education and/or military enlistment activity

**9. Minimum Attendance for Class Credit (90% Attendance Rule) (TEC 25.092)**

TEC 25.092 declares 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.

Local Guidelines:

- WUCISD believes 90% is an arbitrary percentage emphasizing “seat time” over content mastery. By claiming exemption from Sec. 25.092, the district can abstain from penalizing students who miss class time due to extra and/ocurricular activities or other extenuating circumstances, academic activities, enabling the district to accommodate students with legitimate scheduling conflicts while reducing dropouts and increasing the number of qualifying graduates. Note that relief from Sec. 25.092 does not in any way impact or alter existing compulsory attendance requirements or University Interscholastic League (UIL) rules. Furthermore, in no way does this exemption limit a teacher's right to determine the finality of a grade in accordance with Texas Education Code Sec.28.214 nor does it restrict or alter a teacher's right to assign grades in accordance with Texas Education Code Sec. 28.216. Regardless of whether any adjustments or changes are made to the minimum attendance for class credit or final grade laws, Wellman-Union opposed to a state mandate.

**10. Grievance Policy (TEC §26.011, §26A.001, §26A.002, §26A.003, §26A.004)**

**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 grievants 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.

Benefit of Exemption for WUCISD:

- WUCISD parents and administrators are familiar with the District’s current grievance process, which functions ideally. Under the current grievance process, grievances are addressed expeditiously and effectively. 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. Adopting the new grievance requirements, which include extended grievance filing and response deadlines and allowing a grievant to supplement with additional documents and claims, would result in uncertainty for both parents and administrators, and would significantly reduce the efficiency of the District's current grievance process. This exemption allows the District to maintain local control over its grievance policies, procedures, and process.

Local Guidelines:

- WUCISD has always and will continue to adhere to an established grievance policy with procedures and timelines outlined in the District's 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. WUCISD 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. WUCISD'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. WUCISD seeks to be exempt from a statewide grievance policy, established under Chapter 26A of the Texas Education Code 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.
- The exemption from Texas Education Code §26.011 is limited to the following language in Section 26.011(a) which requires the board of trustees to adopt a grievance procedure "that complies with Chapter 26A". To effectuate the exemption discussed above for Texas Education Code §§ 26A.001–26A.004, the District should also be exempt from the language in Section 26.011(a): "that complies with Chapter 26A".

**11. Retire/Rehire Minimum Salary (TEC 21.402)**

TEC 21.402 requires districts pay a retired teacher a salary based upon the TEA minimum salary pay scale. "Teacher" refers to a classroom teacher, full-time speech pathologist, full-time librarian, full-time school counselor, and full-time school nurse.

In addition to the teacher's salary, districts are required to pay a TRS surcharge. Therefore, a retire/rehire employee comes with a great financial burden. WUCISD would like the option of hiring an experienced, well-versed employee without extra strain on the budget.

Benefit of Exemption for WUCISD:

- Allows the District to combat the nationwide teacher shortage by reaching negotiated salary agreements with experienced education professionals.

Local Guidelines:

- WUCISD will have the flexibility to hire eligible retired teachers at the negotiated salary that may be below the TEA minimum pay scale. WUCISD will have the flexibility to have the employee pay or may pay the required surcharge.

## **12. Notice to Parent of Unsatisfactory Performance, Conferences (TEC 28.022)**

Section 28.022 of the Texas Education Code requires, among other things, a public school district board of trustees to adopt a policy that provides for at least two opportunities for in person conferences during each school year between the parent of a child and teachers. The policy adopted under Section 28.022 shall also require a district, at least once every twelve (12) weeks, to provide written notice of a student's performance in each class.

Benefit of Exemption to WUCISD:

- WUCISD maintains an open line of communication with its parents and emphasizes collaboration between teachers and parents in order to support positive outcomes for its students. WUCISD's current practices encourage teachers to meet with parents on a regular basis to discuss student progress.

## **13. Instructional Plan (TEC 26.0062)**

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.

Local Guidelines:

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

## RENEWAL TERM

- On November 8, 2021 the Wellman-Union CISD Board of Trustees held a public hearing approved to start the renewal process of the District of Innovation Plan. The term for this Renewal Plan will start January 1, 2022 and end in five years, January 1, 2027, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board in accordance with TEC 12A.006 and 12A.008. The DOIC will monitor the effectiveness of the Plan on an annual basis and recommend to the Board of Trustees any suggested modifications to the Plan.

## SUMMARY

The District of Innovation Plan is an important step forward to ensure Wellman-Union CISD develops and supports our students, employees, families, and community in a personalized, more effective, and strategically aligned way. Moving our system towards a more personalized environment will enable us to better prepare our students according to their individualized needs and their unique passions, gifts, and talents. Through HB 1842, WUCISD will be positioned to leverage increased flexibility to make the best decisions for our children, locally.