



District of Innovation

Local Innovation Plan

Local Innovation Plan Posted Online: January 27, 2023

Approved by DOI Advisory Committee: February 28, 2023

Approved by Roma ISD Board of Trustees: February 28, 2023

Final Version Posted Online: March 1, 2023

Implementation Period: February 28, 2023 – February 28, 2028

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Introduction

Overview

House Bill 1842, passed during the 84th Texas Legislative Session, provides public school districts the opportunity to seek designation as a District of Innovation (TEC §12A.001) to obtain exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. The term of this designation is for five years provided the district continues to meet performance requirements in both academics and finance.

District of Innovation (DOI) Advisory Committee

Roma ISD District of Innovation (DOI) Advisory Committee Members is comprised of District stakeholders, including teachers, campus and district administrators, parents, and community members to develop the Local Innovation Plan to designate Roma ISD as a District of Innovation.

District Level Administrators	
Executive Director of Curriculum	Diana Salinas
Bilingual/ESL & MS Curriculum Director	Marissa Belmontes
Human Resources Director	Edgar Garza
Assessment Director	Rodrigo Bazan
Food Service Director	Juan J. Treviño
Business & Finance Director	Pedro Alaniz
Maintenance & Operations Director	Edgar Rodriguez
Public Relations Coordinator	Helen Escobar
Athletic Director	Max Habecker
Special Education Assistant Director	Ildefonso Saldivar
Transportation Director	Jose G. Cantu
Fine Arts Director	Jaime Escobar, Jr.
Instructional Coach	Patricia Gonzalez
Instructional Coach	Elias Perez
Parent/Community Members	
R.T. Barrera Elementary	Erika Benitez
Delia G. Garcia Elementary	Raquel Solis
Roel & Celia R. Saenz Elementary	Nancy Cantu
F.J. Scott Elementary	Sandra Guerrero
Community Member	Angie Canales
Roma High School	
Principal	Jorge Guzman
Associate Principal	Cynthia Casas
Counselor	Marisa Garcia
Teacher	Ricardo Ramos
Teacher	Annabel Garcia
Teacher	Jose G. Garza
Teacher	Gerardo Molina

Instructional & Guidance Center

Principal	Maria T. Ramirez
Teacher	Arnold Saenz

Roma Middle School

Principal	Danelo Gonzalez
Associate Principal	Daniel Renteria
Teacher	Jose Luis Barrera
Teacher	Morahima Cepeda

Ramiro Barrera Middle School

Principal	Annette Garza
Associate Principal	Clotilde Benitez
Teacher	Thelma Hinojosa
Teacher	Anna Hinojosa

F. J. Scott Elementary

Principal	Diana M. Perez
Associate Principal	Marta Gonzalez
Teacher	Kristina Moya
Teacher	Lorraine Garza

R. T. Barrera Elementary

Principal	Marisa Garcia
Associate Principal	Belinda Moreno
Teacher	Linda Diaz
Teacher	Brenda Ramirez

Emma Vera Elementary

Principal	Yvonne Guerrero
Associate Principal	Aleida Alanis
Teacher	Veronica Escamilla
Teacher	Elizabeth Gonzalez

Roel & Celia R. Saenz Elementary

Principal	Odette Garcia
Associate Principal	Maria Elena Treviño
Teacher	Liliana Rodriguez
Teacher	Alma Rios

Veterans Memorial Elementary

Principal	Oswaldo Garcia
Associate Principal	Norma Gonzalez
Teacher	Yadira Belmontes
Teacher	Kayla Ramos

Delia G. Garcia Elementary

Principal	Citlali Gonzalez
Associate Principal	Carmelita Cantu
Teacher	Sarai Cavazos
Teacher	Aleida Rodriguez

Process & Timeline

The following dates outline the steps that have been taken during the development of the Roma ISD Local Innovation Plan:

December 21, 2022

- District of Innovation information presented to the Roma ISD Board of Trustees
- Roma ISD Board of Trustees considered and approved the Resolution to Initiate the Process of Designation as a District of Innovation
- Public Meeting held to consider whether Roma ISD should develop a Local Innovation Plan
- Roma ISD Board of Trustees appointed the committee members to draft a Local Innovation Plan or decline pursuit of Designation as a District of Innovation

January 11, 2023

- Roma ISD DOI Advisory Committee met to begin the discussion and development of the Local Innovation Plan

Roma ISD District of Innovation Committee and District Advisory Committee Meetings to develop the plan held on:

- December 9, 2022 (for initial school board information presentation)
- December 12, 2022 (for initial school board information presentation)
- January 23, 2023
- January 24, 2023
- January 30, 2023

Roma ISD District of Innovation Committee held meetings at every campus to give out information and gather feedback to all teachers and campus administrators on the development of the Local Innovation Plan.

- January 16, 2023 - January 26, 2023

January 27, 2023

- Local Innovation Plan Draft posted online at district website

January 30, 2023

- Board of Trustees sends notification to Commissioner of Intent to vote on Local Innovation Plan

February 28, 2023

- The District Advisory Committee will hold a Public Meeting to consider the final version of the Local Innovation Plan
- The District Advisory Committee will vote on approval or decline of the Local Innovation Plan
- Board of Trustees, if approved by DAC, will vote on Local Innovation Plan

March 1, 2023

- Board of Trustees will notify the Commissioner of the Board of Trustee's decision

March 1, 2023

- District sends Local Innovation Plan to the Texas Education Agency within 15 days of adoption

March 1, 2023

- District posts and maintains Local Innovation Plan online

*Dates may be changed based on work of the DOI Committee

Term

The term of the Local Innovation Plan is for five years, beginning on date of board approval and concluding after 5 years of that date, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law.

Exemptions Requested

Quick Reference List

Roma ISD is requesting innovations (exemptions) from the Texas Education Code as follows:

- TEC §25.0811 First Day of Instruction
- TEC §25.0812 Last Day of School

- TEC §21.003 Certification Required

- TEC §37.0012 Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator

Exemption #1

First Day of Instruction

Texas Education Code Section 25.0811

Last Day of School

Texas Education Code Section 25.0812

First Day of Instruction

Texas Education Code Section 25.0811

- (a) *Except as provided by this section, a school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August. A school district may:*
- (1) *begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August if the district operates a year-round system under Section 25.084; or*
 - (2) *begin instruction for students for a school year on or after the first Monday in August at a campus or at not more than 20 percent of the campuses in the district if:*
 - (A) *the district has a student enrollment of 190,000 or more;*
 - (B) *the district at the beginning of the school year provides, financed with local funds, days of instruction for students at the campus or at each of the multiple campuses, in addition to the minimum number of days of instruction required under Section 25.081;*
 - (C) *the campus or each of the multiple campuses are undergoing comprehensive reform, as determined by the board of trustees of the district; and*
 - (D) *a majority of the students at the campus or at each of the multiple campuses are educationally disadvantaged.*
- (b) *Notwithstanding Subsection (a), a school district that does not offer each grade level from kindergarten through grade 12 and whose prospective or former students generally attend school in another state for the grade levels the district does not offer may start school on any date permitted under Subsection (a) or the law of the other state.*

Last Day of School

Texas Education Code Section 25.0812

- (a) *Except as provided by Subsection (b), a school district may not schedule the last day of school for students for a school year before May 15.*
- (b) *Notwithstanding Subsection (a), a school district that does not offer each grade level from kindergarten through grade 12 and whose prospective or former students generally attend school in another state for the grade levels the district does not offer may schedule the last day of school on any date permitted under Subsection (a) or the law of the other state.*

Current Challenges

- Competition from charter schools and other public neighboring school districts already utilizing this exemption for innovative scheduling

- Mental and physical fatigue and stress due to long blocks of time without breaks
- Increased student and staff absenteeism due to burnout and fatigue
- Unequal instructional time in the fall and spring semesters
- Unable to begin the year before the 4th Monday in August (especially when it falls late in the calendar year)
- District and college calendars are not aligned for dual credit and/or dual enrollment courses

Rationale

- Adjusting the first and last day of instruction will allow flexibility in scheduling holidays, as well as scheduling periodic breaks for staff and students to re-energize and refocus.
- Strategically planned breaks will reduce stress, anxiety, fatigue, and absenteeism.
- Having the flexibility to adjust the first and last day of instruction will allow the district to better balance instructional days during the first and second semester.

Plan

Start and end date flexibility allows Roma ISD to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of the students and local community. This empowers the district to personalize student learning, increase college and career readiness, and balance the amount of instructional time per semester.

- The Roma ISD academic calendar will have the flexibility to align with local universities/colleges and state assessment timelines.
- This exemption will increase local control of the instructional calendar in order to be responsive to the needs of the Roma ISD teaching and learning community.
- To meet local and community needs, this plan will allow for balanced instructional days prior to the state assessments administered during the Fall and Spring semesters.

Exemption #2

Certification Required

Texas Education Code Section 21.003

Certification Required

Texas Education Code Section 21.003

(a) *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.*

Current Challenges

- A lack of highly qualified staff for secondary 6th - 12th grade Math, Science, Reading Language Arts, and Social Studies courses
- A lack of teachers with specialized certifications
- Lack of highly qualified teachers for Early Childhood - 5th grade
- Inability to hire subject-matter experts for specialized courses
- Lack of opportunities for authentic, field-based experiences
- Competition from charter schools already utilizing this exemption offering specialized courses

Rationale

As a district, we are committed to providing all our students with the best educational opportunities. However, the district incurs challenges in the recruitment of certified teachers in specific core (dual credit) and career technical education courses.

In response to the need for more students to experience high quality education as outlined by curriculum requirements set forth by the Texas Education Agency, Roma ISD seeks to establish flexibility in regards to educator certification requirements as set forth by law.

Plan - Local Teaching Certification

Roma ISD will continue to seek certified educators for teaching positions and maintain expectations for employee certification. When efforts have been reasonably exhausted, the district will have the flexibility to hire individuals who are knowledgeable in the area and are fully equipped to perform the duties of the position.

Roma ISD will establish its own local qualification procedures so that degreed individuals or professionals in an area may be allowed to teach using a District Local Teaching certificate.

Examples of some of the exemptions include:

- Allow a teacher who is certified to teach through 6th grade to teach courses in 7th and 8th

grade

- Allow a teacher certified to teach elementary to teach in middle school and/or high school
- Allow a teacher certified in middle school or high school mathematics to teach elementary grades such as 4th and 5th
- Allow a teacher to teach one or two classes out of field in an area or areas that the teacher has college coursework and expertise in
- Allow for greater flexibility in determining appropriate CTE experience in order to teach a CTE course

In circumstances when a certified educator is not found, the campus principal shall submit to the Superintendent and/or the Superintendent's Designee a request for a Local Teaching Certification outlining all the individual's credentials/qualifications. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials or life experience the teacher possesses that would qualify this individual to teach the proposed subject. In core subjects, Pre-K - 12th grade, individuals must have a Bachelor's Degree.

Qualifications that may be considered can include, but are not limited to:

- Professional work experience
- Formal training/education in the content area, including an Associate's Degree (CTE) or certification in their field and Bachelor's/Master's/Doctoral Degrees.
- Active/relevant professional industry certification or registration
- Combination of work experience, training, and education
- Demonstration of successful experience working with students
- Bachelor's Degree may be waived in certain CTE courses with sufficient professional work experience and certification
- Demonstration of language proficiency for LOTE (Example: foreign language/sign language)

The superintendent will make the final determination as to whether the applicant is qualified to be assigned a local teaching certificate.

In order to ensure high quality instruction, Roma ISD will develop criteria requirements for individuals seeking a local certification. The district will provide additional support for candidates hired under a Roma ISD local teacher certification.

- The campus principal will create a personal professional development plan for each locally certified teacher.
- When possible, lesson plans for the locally certified teacher will be created in partnership with certified teachers in the same or similar field.
- Locally certified teachers will receive additional professional development and support for classroom management, pedagogy and education law. Roma ISD locally certified teachers will receive a designated mentor who will provide support including, but not limited to, classroom observations and curriculum planning.

An employee working under a Roma ISD Local Teaching Certificate will not receive a Chapter 21 contract. The Board of Trustees will be notified every year of the number of teachers who have

Roma ISD Local Teaching Certificates. Teacher certification waiver, state permit applications, notifications, or other paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency, as the district will be exempt from notification regulations. Parental notifications of “inappropriately certified or uncertified teachers” under Section §21.057 would no longer be necessary. Pursuant to state law, Roma ISD will still require state certification credentials for special education and bilingual education instruction, and teachers of students promoted by a grade placement committee.

Exemption #3

Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator

Texas Education Code Section 37.0012

Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator

Texas Education Code Section 37.0012

- (a) *A person at each campus must be designated to serve as the campus behavior coordinator. The person designated may be the principal of the campus or any other campus administrator selected by the principal.*
- (b) *The campus behavior coordinator is primarily responsible for maintaining student discipline and the implementation of this subchapter.*
- (c) *Except as provided by this chapter, the specific duties of the campus behavior coordinator may be established by campus or district policy. Unless otherwise provided by campus or district policy:*
- (1) *a duty imposed on a campus principal or other campus administrator under this subchapter shall be performed by the campus behavior coordinator; and*
 - (2) *a power granted to a campus principal or other campus administrator under this subchapter may be exercised by the campus behavior coordinator.*
- (d) *The campus behavior coordinator shall promptly notify a student's parent or guardian as provided by this subsection if under this subchapter the student is placed into in-school or out-of-school suspension, placed in a disciplinary alternative education program, expelled, or placed in a juvenile justice alternative education program or is taken into custody by a law enforcement officer. A campus behavior coordinator must comply with this subsection by:*
- (1) *promptly contacting the parent or guardian by telephone or in person; and*
 - (2) *making a good faith effort to provide written notice of the disciplinary action to the student, on the day the action is taken, for delivery to the student's parent or guardian.*
- (e) *If a parent or guardian entitled to notice under Subsection (d) has not been reached by telephone or in person by 5 p.m. of the first business day after the day the disciplinary action is taken, a campus behavior coordinator shall mail written notice of the action to the parent or guardian at the parent's or guardian's last known address.*
- (f) *If a campus behavior coordinator is unable or not available to promptly provide notice under Subsection (d), the principal or other designee shall provide the notice.*

Current Challenges

- It is very difficult, especially at the secondary level, to have only one Campus Behavior Coordinator assigned, when we have more than only one qualified administrator per campus that can efficiently carry out the duty of Campus Behavior Coordinator.
- Each of our campus administrators is tasked with an array of instructional and administrative duties to be the sole person assigned to Campus Behavior Coordinator.

Rationale

Flexibility with regard to the designation of campus behavior coordinators allows for greater collaboration when addressing the social and emotional needs of students. School discipline is best administered and managed within a team concept and should not be limited to one school administrator being responsible for contacting parents and maintaining documentation requirements.

Plan

By eliminating the designation of a single Campus Behavior Coordinator at each campus, Roma ISD will be able to create a system where the duties are shared among the campus administrative staff. The district may delegate the designation of the Campus Behavior Coordinator to campus administrator(s), e.g. all campus principals and associate principals, to fulfill the discipline and behavior duties. All certified campus administration will serve as joint behavior coordinators and work collaboratively with campus and district staff to promote campus goals.

In addition to exempting the district from the application of TEC §37.0012, any responsibility or duty of parental/guardian notification shall be exercised by appropriate school officials as per Roma ISD Board Policy.

This will allow Roma ISD to increase efficiency and continue with a collaborative approach with students and parents since campus administrators shall notify parents/guardians of disciplinary infractions/actions either in person, by telephone, or by providing the student with a hard copy of the disciplinary referral.

Addendum

District Vision

Roma ISD is a dynamic community committed to the achievement of student excellence.

District Mission

Roma ISD is to provide equitable learning experiences and opportunities to educate the whole child so that every student graduates with the capacity to maximize their full potential and be life-ready.

District Core Values

- High Expectations for All
- Unified in Our Pursuit of Excellence
- Building Partnerships
- Purposeful Innovation

Strategic Plan Goals

- Roma ISD will establish a system of continuous growth and building capacity for all, while providing rigorous, effective and engaging curricula, instruction and enrichment activities to prepare all students for graduation and post-secondary success.
- Roma ISD will advocate a positive culture and collaborative climate that embraces the needs of each student in a nurturing environment.
- Roma ISD will upgrade and strengthen safety and security measures across the district.
- Roma ISD will build a robust financial infrastructure that maximizes our current resources by practicing fiscal responsibility, transparency, and stewardship.

District Improvement Plan Goals

- Roma ISD will provide learning environments and structures designed to promote a physical, emotional, and cultural focus on safety and wellness for all students and staff.
- Roma ISD will provide rigorous, effective, and engaging curricula, instruction, and enrichment activities to prepare all students for graduation and post-secondary success.
- Roma ISD will equip and empower campus leadership, faculty, and staff to consistently incorporate research-based best practices in curricula, resulting in future-ready students.
- Roma ISD will engage all stakeholders in developing positive, collaborative relationships and community partnerships.
- Roma ISD will effectively and efficiently manage district resources and operations to maximize opportunities for all students and staff.

Letter to Commissioner - Intent to Vote

January 27, 2023

Commissioner Mike Morath
Texas Education Agency Commissioner's Office
1701 N. Congress Avenue
Austin, TX 78701

Dear Commissioner Morath,

The Roma Independent School District is in the process of developing and adopting a Local Innovation Plan to become a District of Innovation.

On December 21, 2022, the RISD Board of Trustees approved a Resolution to Initiate the Process of Designation as a District of Innovation, as defined by the 84th Legislative Session in House Bill 1842.

Roma ISD also held a public hearing on December 21, 2022 to consider whether the District should develop a Local Innovation Plan for the designation as a District of Innovation. Following the public hearing, the RISD Board of Trustees approved the appointment of a District of Innovation (DOI) Advisory Committee for the development of the Local Innovation Plan.

The DOI Committee and District Advisory Committee have developed a Local Innovation Plan that will be posted online for the public for 30 days beginning January 27, 2023.

A public meeting is tentatively scheduled for February 28, 2023, where the DOI Advisory Committee will consider community feedback and have the option to approve the Local Innovation Plan.

On behalf of the Roma ISD Board of Trustees, I would like to notify you of the intention of the Board to vote on the adoption of the Local Innovation Plan if it is approved by the DOI Advisory Committee on February 28, 2023.

Sincerely,

Ricardo A. Perez
President, Board of Trustees
Roma Independent School District

Roma Independent School District

Mr. Carlos M. Gonzalez, Jr.
Superintendent of Schools

P. O. Box 187
Roma, Texas 78584
cgonzalez@romaisd.com
Phone: 956.849.1377
Fax: 956.849.4874



School Board of Trustees

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Mr. Jaime Escobar, Vice President
Mrs. Yadira A. Barrera, Secretary
Mrs. Mary Lou Cruz, Member
Mr. Iv Garza, Jr., Member
Mrs. Karina Mascorro, Member
Mr. Raúl P. Moreno, Jr., Member

March 1, 2023

Commissioner Mike Morath
Texas Education Agency Commissioner's Office
1701 N. Congress Avenue
Austin, TX 78701

Dear Commissioner Morath,

On February 28, 2023, the Roma ISD Board of Trustees approved the Local Innovation Plan designating Roma ISD as a District of Innovation from February 28, 2023 through February 28, 2028.

The Local Innovation Plan includes the following exemptions:

- TEC §25.0811 First Day of Instruction
- TEC §25.0812 Last Day of School
- TEC §21.003 Certification Required and
- TEC §37.0012 Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator

The Plan has been posted for longer than 30 days on the district website. It can be found by visiting: www.romaisd.com > District > About Us > District of Innovation.

Direct link to the District of Innovation webpage is: <https://www.romaisd.com/Page/6483>

Enclosed is a list of approved exemptions as required by TAC Chapter 102, Subchapter 11.

Sincerely,

Ricardo A. Perez
President, Board of Trustees
Roma Independent School District

Roma Independent School District

Board of Trustees

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Campuses

Roma High School
Instructional & Guidance Center
Roma Middle School
Ramiro Barrera Middle School
F.J. Scott Elementary
R.T. Barrera Elementary
Emma Vera Elementary
Roel & Celia R. Saenz Elementary
Veterans Memorial Elementary
Delia G. Garcia Elementary

It is the policy of Roma I.S.D. not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, or handicap in its programs, services, or activities as required by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

Roma Independent School District is an equal opportunity employer. We consider applicants for all positions without regard to race, color, national origin, age, religion, sex, marital or veteran status. The presence of a medical condition, disability or any other legally protected status.



Committed to
Student Excellence!