



**2024-2026 Interactive Online Learning Grant, Cycle 1**  
**Informal Discretionary Competition (IDC) Due 11:59 p.m. CT, April 4th, 2024**

NOGA ID

Authorizing legislation **General Appropriations Act, Article III, Rider 90, 88th Texas Legislature**

This IDC application must be submitted via email to **competitivegrants@tea.texas.gov**.

The IDC application may be signed with a digital ID or it may be signed by hand. Both forms of signature are acceptable.

TEA must receive the application by **11:59 p.m. CT, April 4th, 2024**.

Application stamp-in date and time

Grant period from **May 17th, 2024 to April 30th, 2026**

Pre-award costs are not permitted for this grant program.

**Required Attachments**

- 1. Excel workbook with the grant's budget schedules (linked along with this form on the TEA Grants Opportunities page)

**Amendment Number**

Amendment number (For amendments only; enter N/A when completing this form to apply for grant funds):

**Applicant Information**

Organization  CDN  Campus  ESC  UEI

Address  City  ZIP  Vendor ID

Primary Contact  Email  Phone

Secondary Contact  Email  Phone

**Certification and Incorporation**

I understand that this application constitutes an offer and, if accepted by TEA or renegotiated to acceptance, will form a binding agreement. I hereby certify that the information contained in this application is, to the best of my knowledge, correct and that the organization named above has authorized me as its representative to obligate this organization in a legally binding contractual agreement. I certify that any ensuing program and activity will be conducted in accordance and compliance with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations.

I further certify my acceptance of the requirements conveyed in the following portions of the IDC application, as applicable, and that these documents are incorporated by reference as part of the IDC application and Notice of Grant Award (NOGA):

- IDC application, guidelines, and instructions
- Debarment and Suspension Certification
- General and application-specific Provisions and Assurances
- Lobbying Certification

Authorized Official Name  Title

Email  Phone

Signature  Date

**Shared Services Arrangements** Shared services arrangements (SSAs) are not permitted for this grant program.**Statutory/Program Assurances**

The following assurances apply to this program. In order to meet the requirements of the program, the applicant must comply with these assurances.

Check each of the following boxes to indicate your compliance.

- 1. The applicant provides assurance that program funds will supplement (increase the level of service), and not supplant (replace) state mandates, State Board of Education rules, and activities previously conducted with state or local funds. The applicant provides assurance that state or local funds may not be decreased or diverted for other purposes merely because of the availability of these funds. The applicant provides assurance that program services and activities to be funded from this IDC will be supplementary to existing services and activities and will not be used for any services or activities required by state law, State Board of Education rules, or local policy.
- 2. The applicant provides assurance that the application does not contain any information that would be protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) from general release to the public.
- 3. The applicant provides assurance to adhere to all the Statutory and TEA Program requirements as noted in the 2024-2026 Interactive Online Learning Grant, Cycle 1 Program Guidelines.
- 4. The applicant provides assurance to adhere to all the Performance Measures, as noted in the 2024-2026 Interactive Online Learning Grant, Cycle 1 Program Guidelines, and shall provide to TEA, upon request, any performance data necessary to assess the success of the program.
- 5. The applicant assures that any Electronic Information Resources (EIR) produced as part of this agreement will comply with the State of Texas Accessibility requirements as specified in 1 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Chapter 206, 1 TAC Chapter 213, Federal Section 508 standards, and the WCAG 2.0 AA Accessibility Guidelines.
- 6. The applicant provides assurances to select or develop an effective interactive online learning model(s) that meets the statutory requirements listed in General Appropriations Act, House Bill 1, Article III, Rider 90, 88th Legislative Session Regular Session, 2023.
- 7. The applicant provides assurances that program funds will be used to implement with fidelity an effective interactive online learning model(s) in middle school and/or high school for cross-curricular instruction in English language arts and U.S. history and/or Texas History. The effective interactive online learning model(s) must: align with Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for middle school and/or high school U.S. history, Texas history, and English language arts, as applicable; include tools to monitor the progress of each individual student; include quarterly benchmark assessments that are automatically scored; include both audio narration and video components; and be offered for use in both English and Spanish.
- 8. The applicant provides assurances that the implemented interactive online learning model(s) must include cross-curricular instruction in social studies and English language arts aligned to the TEKS.
- 9. The applicant provides assurances that the interactive online learning model(s) has been reviewed and determined to comply with the requirements of the Texas Education Code (TEC) §28.002(h) and §28.0022.
- 10. The applicant provides assurances that the teachers implementing the interactive online learning model(s) will receive adequate professional development to ensure successful implementation of the program.
- 11. The applicant provides assurances to support student learning in the interactive online learning model(s).
- 12. The applicant provides assurances to provide the necessary support to help students accelerate in the learning model(s) if they fall behind or are failing in the cross-curricular learning model(s).
- 13. The applicant provides assurances to make a sustainability plan to ensure that the interactive online learning model(s) can continue to be offered after the grant ends.
- 14. The applicant provides assurances to provide a status report by August 1, 2025, and a final report by February 1, 2026.

**Statutory Requirements**

1. Describe the process the local education agency (LEA) will use for choosing/developing an effective interactive online learning model(s) that aligns with the TEKS in middle school and high school for instruction in U.S. history and/or Texas history and English language arts, including a description of the program, grade levels at which the program will be implemented, the selection/development criteria, and how the LEA will ensure TEKS alignment.

Newsela provides access to a vast library of texts covering topics relevant to both U.S. and Texas history, as well as English language arts. These texts, which include current event articles, non-fiction texts and novel book studies, are curated from reputable sources and are available at multiple reading levels, allowing educators to meet the diverse needs of their students. Newsela also offers quizzes, writing prompts and other instructional resources through Formative, an online formative assessment tool that provides real time feedback to students, which allows further differentiation and student engagement when teachers utilize the database of questions provided by Formative Gold.

Newsela customized units are designed to support teachers in spiraling reading and writing skills by integrating these skills into social studies content and continuing to foster connections between reading, writing, and history, however, Teachers can customize Newsela assignments using articles from the Newsela ELA, Newsela Social Studies (with Texas History collection) databases with Class Instructions, Annotations, and Writing Prompts. Teachers can assign individual articles or groups of articles (Text Sets). When teachers assign articles, students see the assignments on their Newsela homepage. Even if the teacher does not customize the assignment, when students go to an assigned article they can complete the following actions: Read articles at their just right reading level, Highlight and annotate at all reading levels and share their annotations. Submit a written response to a Newsela writing prompt and receive feedback via the Everwrite, an online embedded tool in Newsela that provides personalized feedback and in-the-moment tips to guide students to improve their writing. Complete Power Words activities (when the school has Newsela ELA and the article has Power Words)

Comal ISD utilizes a resource vetting rubric when adopting any instructional materials to ensure alignment with TEKS, CISD Tiered and Aligned curriculum and research based best practices for Social Studies and ELA instruction. Potential resources are vetted by the Teaching and Learning department and Digital Learning department for content alignment and assurance that the platform meets COPA, FERPA guidelines. Newsela will be implemented in grades 6-8 to aid in the vertical alignment of Texas History, U.S. History and cross curricular integration with English Language Arts. (Comal ISD Instructional Materials Vetting Matrix and Rubric)

2. Describe the progress monitoring tool(s) included with the interactive online learning model(s) and how the LEA will use the monitoring tool(s) to ensure adequate student progress. Include how the LEA will use the progress monitoring tool(s) to support struggling learners and students who may be off track. What interventions will be implemented to help struggling learners?

Newsela offers a variety of progress monitoring tools, particularly the Teacher Binder and through Formative, that teachers can use to ensure student progress and to support struggling learners. The Teacher Binder is a data and reporting dashboard that allows teachers to review student work and track progress on. Here, educators can monitor student performance from quiz scores and analytics. Newsela tracks students' Lexile levels over time, which helps show insight into their reading proficiency and growth. Educators can use Lexile growth data to monitor individual student progress and identify students who may need additional support in building reading skills. Newsela offers writing prompts and assignments that allow students to demonstrate their understanding of the text through written responses. Educators can assess students' writing performance using Newsela's built-in grading tools, Everwrite, or by reviewing student submissions manually. This will support students in their Extended Constructed Response and Short Constructed Response on STAAR/EOC and the Evidence Based Writing on PSAT.

Educators can create customized assignments and text sets to provide additional scaffolds for specific TEKS. Newsela allows users to assign text at five different reading levels, adjust the text size and number the paragraphs to support learners. The use of the online embedded tool, Formative teachers can monitor the progress of individual student understanding of the content and texts through online assessments designed to track and analyze student performance in real time. With Formative assessments, students will be exposed to the interactive type questions seen on STAAR/EOC and receive timely feedback to clarify misconceptions, progress monitor their learning goals, critically think about content knowledge and revise thinking and provide important information for teachers on how to adjust instruction for all learners. In addition to the use of student performance in Formative, the district creates shared unit assessments for Texas History and 8th grade Social Studies and ELA to monitor student performance on a more frequent basis. These assessments are created by the TL&L team, but are shared with teachers prior to the start of the unit. The assessments are not different from any other unit test in that they assess the TEKS the students have been working toward mastering in the unit of study. Conversations and next steps about student performance and data will occur regularly during campus Collaborative Team Cycle (CTC) meetings. Teachers can utilize Newsela small group and intervention lessons to support struggling learners and ensure students have mastered the content.

**Statutory Requirements (Cont'd)**

3. Describe the quarterly benchmarks included in the interactive online learning model(s) and how the school(s) will use this data to support student learning and to evaluate the effectiveness of the interactive online learning model(s) that was implemented.

Newsela offers quarterly benchmarks as part of its platform, providing educators with TEKS aligned assessments to measure student progress and proficiency in key areas such as reading comprehension, vocabulary development, critical thinking skills and content mastery. These assessments, designed to track and analyze student performance, expose students to interactive question types like those encountered in standardized tests. Through timely feedback, students can clarify misconceptions, monitor their learning goals, and engage in critical thinking, while educators gain valuable insights to adjust instruction accordingly and evaluate the effectiveness of Newsela implementation. Beyond creating and administering TEKS based assessments, Formative allows the district to seamlessly upload pre-existing benchmarks into the platform that align with STAAR and PSAT questioning. This functionality enables educators to track student progress consistently over time, incorporating familiar assessments while leveraging Formative's automated scoring capabilities. With instant feedback and detailed analytics provided by the platform, educators can quickly identify areas of strength and areas needing improvement.

During regular CTC meetings, teachers will review and analyze data to identify areas for targeted improvement or enrichment based on student mastery of TEKS. This data analysis will provide instructional insight for reteaching concepts, content and skills to provide targeted support to students' needs towards mastery as well as measure progress toward the District Improvement plan objective of raising literacy scores for 8th grade students by 2% and increase the percentage of students achieving meets and masters level in Grade 8 Social Studies.

4. Describe the audio and video components included in the interactive online learning model(s) and how the school(s) will use these tools to engage students in the effective interactive online learning model(s).

Newsela provides educational resources incorporating both audio narration and video components, enriching the learning journey for students. Through its user-friendly platform, Newsela seamlessly integrates multimedia elements into its carefully curated content. Educators can seamlessly leverage audio narration to provide auditory support for text-based materials, catering to diverse learning needs and enhancing accessibility for all students. Additionally, Newsela offers video components that complement textual content, providing visual reinforcement, real-world examples, and interactive learning experiences. One standout feature of Newsela is its read-aloud functionality, which supports both English and Spanish languages, allowing students to engage with content in their preferred language. By combining audio narration and video components, along with multilingual support, Newsela enables educators to create engaging and immersive lessons that captivate students' attention, foster deeper comprehension, and promote active learning within the specialized domains of social studies and Texas state history. This multifaceted approach not only enhances student engagement but also facilitates a more comprehensive and impactful educational experience tailored to specific subject areas.

**Statutory Requirements (Cont'd)**

5. Describe the components of the interactive online learning model(s) that are provided in Spanish. Explain how your LEA will use the interactive online learning model(s) with English- and Spanish-speaking students.

The Newsela platform and the above-mentioned components provide a comprehensive solution to the demand for educational resources incorporating both audio narration and video components. Within these specialized offerings, thousands of pieces of Newsela content, spanning multiple genres, are dually published in English and Spanish. This enables Spanish-speaking English learners along with students in the Comal Advanced Languages Program to develop their language skills while furthering their understanding of content. (The Comal Advanced Languages Program continues second language learning in Spanish at the middle school level as students matriculate from the elementary Dual Language Program (DLP) or Spanish Immersion Program (SIP)). In addition, the Lesson Sparks provide embedded reading strategies to support Emergent Bilingual students in accessing the content within the text and building vocabulary through the Power Words feature built into articles within the platform.

Newsela's dedicated "En Español" section facilitates easy access to Spanish language content for both students and teachers. With over 25% of the content offered in Spanish, Newsela ensures broader accessibility for diverse student populations. Moreover, the translations are meticulously crafted by human translators, ensuring quality and accuracy. Each Spanish-language article or text is published at five levels, mirroring the English-language articles, accompanied by quizzes and Write Prompts in Spanish. This comprehensive approach supports language acquisition and content comprehension, catering to the needs of a diverse student body and providing assurance to educators.

**TEA Program Requirements**

1. Provide an overview of how the effective interactive online learning model(s) will be implemented with grant funds. Include the overall mission, goal(s), and desired student outcomes of the implementation. Describe how this grant will help support the LEA's overall mission.

Comal ISD is committed to embracing innovative approaches to education that enhance student engagement, foster academic growth, and support our overall mission of growing learners to provide opportunities for all students by working together to focus on student needs. With the support of grant funds, we will implement a curated customized custom collection of online lessons aligned with CISD curriculum utilizing the Newsela platform designed to address the specific goals and desired student outcomes outlined below, including increasing proficiency in cross-curricular reading, writing, and critical thinking skills.

The goals and objectives are to increase the percentage of 8th-grade students scoring meets grade level or above on STAAR Reading by 2% each year through regular literacy practices including annotation of text, building vocabulary, and providing regular feedback on student writing to increase writing scores. Embed Humanities connections into the curriculum of grades 6-8 ELA and Social Studies to build student background knowledge and literacy skills through authentic engagement in classrooms with the result of increased achievement of "Meets and above" on STAAR and EOC Assessments. Provide professional learning opportunities for ELA and Social Studies teachers throughout the school year, focusing on direct, explicit, and systematic instruction with evidence-based strategies that support literacy in ELA and Social Studies to improve student achievement.

We will invest in technology resources and platforms that facilitate interactive online learning experiences. CISD is a 1:1 accessible district and will be implementing Interactive Flat Panels in every classroom over the course of the 24-25 school year. These resources will enable students to engage with content, collaborate with peers, and receive feedback on their writing assignments in real-time.

The Assistant Superintendent of Teaching, Learning & Leadership, the Executive Director of Teaching & Learning, and the Director of Secondary Curriculum will oversee the implementation of the online learning model and monitor its effectiveness. Regular assessments, data analysis, and feedback loops will inform adjustments and ensure goal alignment.

**TEA Program Requirements (Cont'd)**

2. Specify three student needs that would be met by the interactive online learning grant and describe how the interactive online learning model(s) will address those needs. What activities/strategies will be implemented to ensure student success?

Student needs that are addressed by Newsela include learning that is tailored to individual student abilities and learning styles, engaging online activities, and cross curricular humanities connections through their curated custom collections. As the student completes reading annotations, quizzes and assignments online, the platform begins to deliver the material to the student's just right reading level and can be assigned in Spanish as well. The Newsela platform can offer adaptive assessments to identify each student's proficiency level in reading, writing, and content knowledge. Based on the assessment results, personalized learning paths can be generated for the student and will adjust difficulty levels based on the student's progress either providing additional support or challenges as needed.

Within Newsela, students can access Formative and Everwrite, which will allow for more opportunities to engage with the content in a meaningful way. These extensions of Newsela provide exposure to interactive type questions that students will see on STAAR and personalized and actionable feedback on student writing. These online lessons can incorporate gamification elements to make learning more engaging and competitive. Interactive multimedia content like videos, simulations, and interactive exercises can cater to different learning preferences and enhance student interests. Students are given real time feedback from teachers and can monitor their individual progress.

3. How will the LEA select and support teachers and other support staff to implement the interactive online learning grant? How will (1) the LEA ensure teacher commitment and (2) ensure they have all the necessary tools and professional development to implement the interactive online learning model(s) effectively?

Comal ISD will create an implementation committee that will become "Newsela Certified Educators" and will lead the implementation of Newsela into the classroom. This committee will consist of district and campus administrators and coordinators, campus instructional coaches and content lead teacher. The committee will be responsible for providing ongoing professional development to provide teachers with the necessary knowledge of Newsela and the features that the platform offers.

Comal ISD will provide district level training at the beginning of the year and again in the fall and spring semester of the academic year for both ELA and Social Studies teachers. Instructional leaders on campus will then continue to establish best practices for online learning and utilization of Newsela and analysis of data during the subject areas weekly collaborative team cycle meetings. By using student data within Newsela ensures that interventions are informed by evidence and aligned with instructional goals.

District content coordinators and digital literacy coordinators will offer additional support by participating in classroom observations, conducted in the form of learning walks with campus leadership teams throughout the year to provide targeted coaching and feedback to ELA and Social Studies teachers. Content Coordinators and Campus Instructional Coaches play pivotal roles in the process, offering guidance and support tailored to subject-specific needs.

Additionally, Newsela analytical data and implementation will be disseminated during monthly District Instructional Leadership Team meetings with campus and district administration to ensure alignment across the district with a common goal.

**TEA Program Requirements (Cont'd)**

4. Describe how the proposed budget will meet the needs and goals of the program, including staffing, professional development, and resources needed to support the implementation of the effective interactive online learning model(s).

The proposed budget aligns closely with the needs and goals of the program, ensuring comprehensive support for the effective implementation of interactive online learning models. Key components include funding for supplemental pay for substitutes to facilitate professional development sessions, conducted in collaboration between the district's Teaching and Learning team and the Newsela Professional Learning team. These sessions will be informed by data analysis and progress towards district goals for grant implementation and student performance.

Professional development sessions will focus on equipping educators with best practices for creating formative assessments to monitor student acquisition of content knowledge and literacy skills. This training will empower teachers to effectively support students who may be falling behind while also providing enrichment opportunities for those performing above grade level through differentiated lessons.

Additionally, the budget allocates resources for utilizing data from the Teacher Binder to differentiate lessons and provide tailored feedback to students. This personalized approach aims to improve student writing, clarify misconceptions, and enhance cross-curricular literacy practices.

Overall, the proposed budget ensures that staffing, professional development, and resources are strategically allocated to meet the needs of the program, fostering the successful implementation of interactive online learning models and ultimately driving improved student outcomes.

5. Describe how the LEA will ensure successful cross-curricular implementation of the program in the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 school years.

In the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 school years, Comal ISD is committed to fostering successful cross-curricular implementation of the program by aligning curriculum components, and integrating innovative instructional resources like Formative and Everwrite. Central to this collaborative effort between the district and the Newsela instructional support team is a curated Humanities custom collection. This collection, tailored to address the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for both English Language Arts (ELA) and Social Studies, includes best practices for humanities integration while ensuring rigor and alignment with district and student needs.

The partnership with Newsela into the district curriculum signifies a joint effort to align instructional resources with TEKS and sound instructional practices. The embedded online tools and lessons not only complement the district's curriculum but also provides engaging lessons that incorporate best practices in online lessons, inquiry learning, and research-based strategies to promote literacy in both ELA and Social Studies. By aligning these resources with the district's curriculum framework, the district ensures coherence and consistency in instructional delivery across content areas, thereby facilitating seamless cross-curricular implementation of the program.

The district's commitment to ensuring successful cross-curricular implementation of the program in the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 school years is evident by its collaborative partnerships, rigorous curriculum framework, and integration of innovative instructional resources. Through strategic alignment of curriculum components and the incorporation of the Newsela Humanities custom collection, Formative and Everwrite embedded online tools the district provides educators with the necessary tools to support the delivery of high-quality instruction that meets the diverse needs of students while fostering interdisciplinary connections and promoting academic success.

**TEA Program Requirements (Cont'd)**

6. How does the LEA plan to sustain the interactive online learning model(s) after the end of the grant period?

As the grant period approaches its conclusion, the district stands ready to ensure the continuation of the interactive online learning model beyond its initial funding, guided by the District Strategic Plan that emphasizes a commitment to student progress, literacy skill development, and ongoing professional learning opportunities for educators. At the core of our sustainability plan is the district's collaborative vision, which articulates key priorities aimed at enhancing student learning outcomes and seamlessly integrating technology resources into classroom instruction.

The district's dedication to monitoring student progress and growth in key literacy skills, with a focus on providing targeted support to foster continuous improvement by embedding reading and writing across all curriculum areas and expanding cross-curricular integration opportunities and resources at grades 6-8, the district seeks to establish a cohesive learning environment that reinforces essential literacy competencies across ELA and Social Studies. Additionally, the integration of PSAT/SAT connections into secondary core-content curriculum underscores the district's commitment to preparing students for college and career success, aligning instructional practices with standardized assessment expectations. In addition, the district is committed to providing ongoing professional learning opportunities to educators in effectively implementing the interactive online learning model. By equipping teachers with the necessary knowledge, skills, and resources, the district aims to empower them to deliver meaningful and engaging learning experiences that promote student success.

To evaluate the effectiveness of these commitments, the district has established goals, including increasing literacy scores by 2% in the meets category on the STAAR assessment and enhancing the percentage of students scoring At/Above Criterion on SAT School Day by 2% annually. These measurable outcomes serve as benchmarks for progress and accountability, guiding efforts to continuously enhance and refine instructional practices.

The district's plan to sustain the interactive online learning model is grounded in a collaborative vision that prioritizes student learning, literacy skill development, and ongoing professional learning opportunities for educators. By aligning instructional practices with measurable outcomes and leveraging technology to enhance the learning experience, the district remains steadfast in its commitment to fostering student success.



**Appendix I: Amendment Description and Purpose** (leave this section blank when completing the initial application for funding)

An amendment must be submitted when the program plan or budget is altered for the reasons described in the "When to Amend the Application" document posted on the [Administering a Grant](#) page. The following are required to be submitted for an amendment: (1) Page 1 of the application with updated contact information and current authorized official's signature and date, (2) Appendix I with changes identified and described, (3) all updated sections of the application or budget affected by the changes identified below, and, if applicable, (4) Amended Budget Request. Amendment Instructions with more details can be found on the last tab of the budget template.

*You may duplicate this page*

**Amended Section**

**Reason for Amendment**