Integrating Special Education Teachers in the TIA Local Designation System

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Across Texas, many districts have created robust Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) Local Designation Systems that include special education teachers. The Teacher Incentive Allotment Guidebook clarifies this process and describes how districts may include all teachers in the local designation system or limit designation eligibility to specific teaching assignments and/or campuses.

Some districts choose to begin with a subset of teaching assignments or campuses and then create plans to expand their system after initial approval. As district teams build their local designation system, they can include support teachers such as interventionists, SPED inclusion, and dyslexia teachers if they are employed as a teacher (087 Role ID in PEIMS) and have a valid and reliable student growth measure.

The following guidance is designed to complement existing TIA guidance to support districts with building, expanding, and implementing a local designation system. Districts should refer to for questions directly related to Special Education requirements.

District Highlights

There are many approved TIA systems across Texas which include special education teachers in the local designation system. When asked about advice to share with new and existing systems seeking to expand to include special education teachers, districts suggested:

- Conduct focus groups and/or listening sessions in the design, and implementation of, the local designation system to ensure all stakeholders understand the scope and purpose of student growth measures and teacher appraisal
- Include teachers in general, inclusion, and special education settings as well as principals and department heads in stakeholder engagement sessions, and the local TIA Steering Committee
- Progress monitor implementation of the local designation system throughout the year and include training on appraisal and measuring student growth specific to special education settings
- Strategically schedule students that receive special education services to align class sizes with student growth measures

"Special Education teachers at our district provide essential opportunities for all our students. Listening to the feedback, experiences, and concerns of our special education teachers has been valuable when assessing the feasibility of inclusion into the local designation system." -Clint ISD

"We believe our teachers' and staff's backgrounds and perspectives allow us to build a collective vision for student success…it was imperative that we included Special Education teachers as part of our local designation system. And including Special Education teachers in the local designation system allows us to recruit and retain these sought-after professionals." -Aldine ISD

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. *How can a district incorporate teachers of students with disabilities into eligible teaching categories as part of a local designation system?*

Districts have multiple student growth measure options to include Special Education teachers. For example, students who are eligible for STAAR ALT-2 are eligible to use TEA's STAAR Progress measure to calculate growth (see STAAR ALT-2 Website). Additional options for all Special Education settings include the SLO model or Portfolio model, or the Pre-test/Post-test model.

For districts utilizing an Inclusion model, supporting students with special education services in a general education setting, they could use the same student growth measure as the other students in a general education environment with the growth tied to the Inclusion support teacher. Generally speaking, districts have wide flexibility in determining growth targets and modes of ascertaining student growth for all student populations.

2. *What guidance is available regarding teacher observations for teachers in specialized settings?*

All school districts have two choices in selecting a method to appraise teachers: (1) a teacher appraisal system recommended by the commissioner of education or (2) a local teacher appraisal system. The Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS) is the commissioner's recommended teacher appraisal system. The T-TESS website offers additional resources to support teachers and appraisers in specialized settings. A few resources districts may find helpful include a module addressing T-TESS in Specialized Settings and the T-TESS Instructional Leadership Tool developed as collaborative project of the TEA and the Inclusion in Texas Network.

3. *How do we measure student growth for teachers who have only one student* (e.g. 1:1 Special Education teacher)?

The district sets the minimum required number of students for a teacher to participate in TIA. This includes teachers with a 1:1 assignment. Some districts use a minimum of 5 students if using a value-added measure (VAM), while others set a minimum of 10 students to be counted toward a teacher's student growth measure. Another option might be for the district to include setting multiple goals for a single student across a variety of subject/content areas, to increase the data set for measuring growth.

4. *What is the guidance on setting student growth goals for teachers who only see students for short amounts of time (e.g., less than a semester)?*

There are additional options which districts can build into the local designation system to account for circumstances and educational models where students are assigned to teachers for short periods of time. Districts might consider the Texas Student Learning Objective (SLO) model which, in part, includes an option for "short-term SLOs" which measure growth over a specific duration of time, which is likely less than a full school year. Additional resources for TX SLOs available for district who complete the annual Texas SLO training.

Additional TIA guidance includes technical assistance for Setting Expected Growth Targets, particularly the Individualized Growth Targets model.

5. *What student growth measures and assessments do current TIA districts use in the local designation system?*

TIA has created a list of Commonly Used Assessments and Other Assessment Resources that could be utilized in some Special Education environments to measure student growth.

Eligible Teaching Assignment	Possible Student Growth Measure	Best Practices or Considerations
General Education Teacher or Inclusion Teacher in LRE	• Pre-Test/Post-Tests created for General Education such as STAAR, mCLASS, NWEA MAP, etc. • Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) • Portfolio	• Identify the most valid and reliable Student Growth Measure based on capacity and local context • Ensure growth targets are attainable by examining historical student data

Life-Skills Teacher	• STAAR Alt-2
	   ○ 3rd-8th Reading and Math
	   ○ English I & II, Algebra I, Biology, U.S. History
	• Student Learning Objectives (SLOs)
	• Portfolio
		• Teachers should set goals for students they support based on IEP goals
		• Short-term SLOs could be used for teachers whose caseload shifts during the course of the year

Resource Class Teacher	• Pre-Test/Post-Tests created for General Education such as STAAR, mCLASS, NWEA MAP, etc. • Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) • Portfolio	• Ensure growth targets are attainable by examining historical student data • Growth targets may need to be adjusted based on evidence collected throughout the year
Dyslexia Teacher	• mCLASS, DIBELS, or other Lexile assessment	• Identify students using a dyslexia screener

6. *Is it possible for both a general education teacher and a Special Education teacher to include student growth data for the same student(s) as part of each respective teacher's student growth measure?*

Yes. In alignment with the district's approved system, two teachers can measure student growth with similar student populations.

7. *Does statute have a minimum required number of students on a class roster for a teacher to be considered eligible to participate in the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA)?*

No. Statue does not set a minimum requirement for class rosters to participate in TIA. However, districts may set this as part of their approved local designation system.

8. *Should the district change the PEIMS code from 033 to 087 for an instructional aide / paraprofessional if they are providing classroom instruction for the majority of the day?*

Role ID is generally automated based on the position they were hired for. A Special Education teacher on a teacher contract will default to an 087 role ID regardless of the HR system used locally. Instructional aides have a different role ID, 033, and they are not eligible for TIA. To change them to a 087 role, they would need to first be hired for a teaching position. In most districts, this requires the completion of a teacher prep program and/or certification.

9. *Does the TIA data validation process, in partnership with Texas Tech University, assess the n-size of students assigned to each teacher?*

No. The data validation process is holistic. It does not review, or consider, the n-size of a specific teacher's roster when making data validation determinations for the district's local designation system.

10. *What if I have additional questions about TIA and building/implementing a local designation system?*

Review the resources on the TIA website at www.TIATexas.org. For additional inquiries, please email TIA@TEA.Texas.gov and the TIA team will respond accordingly.