

Considerations for Special Populations in TIA Systems

Special Populations/Special Education

Including special populations/education teachers in a Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) Local Designation System can strengthen the district's overall talent strategy by recognizing teachers who support some of the most individualized and high-impact instruction on campus. Special education teachers play a central role in helping students access grade-level content, make progress toward individualized goals, and participate meaningfully in the least restrictive environment. When these teachers are included in a local designation system, districts are better positioned to recognize effective practice, support recruitment and retention, and communicate that student growth for students receiving special education services is an essential part of the district's instructional vision.

Districts have flexibility in how they phase in teaching assignments or campuses, but inclusion in TIA must be grounded in the requirements of the approved local designation system. To include special education teachers, the district must employ and code the individual as a teacher in PEIMS (087 Staff Classification/Role ID), include the teaching assignment in the district's approved system, and identify a valid and reliable student growth measure that is appropriate for the instructional setting and student population

The following guidance is intended to help districts move from the question of whether special education teachers can be included to the practical question of how they can be included with fidelity. Districts should consider staffing codes, eligible assignments, student rosters, instructional settings, appropriate growth measures, expected growth targets, and documentation processes before implementation. This guidance complements existing [TIA resources](#); districts should continue to refer to the [Texas Education Agency's \(TEA\) Special Education Guidance page and Special Education Rules and Regulations](#) 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. What student growth measures can my district incorporate for special education teachers?

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 [Student Learning Objectives \(SLO\) model](#) or [Portfolio model](#), or the [Pre-test/Post-test model](#).

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

2. 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
Inclusion Teacher	- 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

Behavior Support Teacher	• Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) • Portfolio • General education assessments (STAAR, MAP, mCLASS, etc.) when the teacher is the primary instructor for the assessed content area	• When using portfolios or SLOs, include evidence of both academic progress and mastery of functional or behavioral skills aligned to the IEP. • Ensure growth targets are attainable by reviewing historical progress-monitoring and IEP data. • Focus growth measures on the teacher's direct instructional responsibility rather than behavior reduction alone.
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 • RLA Assessment given in general education environment; MAP, SST/STAAR	• Identify students using a dyslexia screener • Share student growth data with teacher of record using RLA assessment like MAP Growth
Specialists who are not coded as teachers	Ineligible for TIA	Ineligible for TIA

3. 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. Statute 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.

4. 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.

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

Yes. A teacher with a small roster, including a 1:1 assignment, may be included if the assignment is part of the district's approved local designation system and has an approved student growth measure. In these settings, districts may use an individualized SLO model aligned to the student's IEP goals or other priority skill areas. This model can build on progress-monitoring data teachers are already collecting by using baseline evidence, individualized growth targets, and documented progress over time to determine whether the student met expected growth.

6. 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)?

Districts can build options into the local designation system for circumstances where students are assigned to teachers for short periods of time or where the instructional focus is highly individualized. The Texas SLO model may be appropriate because it supports goal setting, progress monitoring, and evaluation based on a clearly defined skill focus and evidence of student growth over time. When the instructional window is less than a full school year, districts may consider a [short-term SLO structure](#) that defines the instructional period, establishes the student's starting point, identifies an appropriate expected growth target, and documents progress through a body of evidence collected during that period. Districts should ensure the model is applied consistently, supported by appraiser calibration, and aligned to the student growth measure described in the approved local designation system.

For individualized SLOs, expected growth should be based on the student's baseline performance, instructional context, and the priority skill being measured rather than on a generic grade-level benchmark alone. Districts may use individualized growth targets to define what reasonable, rigorous growth looks like for each student or group of students, then use evidence collected at beginning-of-year, middle-of-year, and end-of-year checkpoints to determine whether the student met the expected growth target. The body of evidence may include student work, performance tasks, formative assessments, progress-monitoring data, portfolio artifacts, or other locally approved evidence aligned to the SLO skill statement.

7. 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.

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. Who is eligible for a designation under the Teacher Incentive Allotment?



Staff employed by the district as teachers are eligible for designation through a district's approved local designation system.

Eligibility is based on how an individual is employed and coded in PEIMS. Staff who are coded as teachers in PEIMS (087 Staff Classification) may be eligible to participate in a local designation system if included by the district.

Specialists or support staff who are not coded as teachers in PEIMS are not eligible for TIA, regardless of certification or instructional support provided.

Behavior teachers and case managers may be eligible if they are employed and coded as teachers and meet all local system requirements, including having a valid student growth measure. See for more information: [TIA Logistics Guidance for Including Support Teachers](#)

11. How do we include Special Education Teachers in a regional co-op setting where they may or may not be teaching students from the district that employs them?

TIA participating districts may designate teachers whom they employ and evaluate. Depending on the employing district and growth measures for their TIA system, a co-op teacher could potentially include student growth data from students they serve outside the district. This would require pre-planning and alignment to ensure fidelity of implementation.

Teachers who are employed and evaluated by a non-district entity are not eligible for designation by a district, even if they provide services to students in the district.

12. What is the role of assistive technology in TIA student growth measures?

Assistive technology is required as outlined in a student's IEP and does not conflict with participation in the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA). It may be used to support instruction and the collection of evidence within approved student growth measures, such as portfolios or Student Learning Objectives (SLOs). Assistive technology alone is not a designation pathway.

13. 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.