



Austin Independent School District

STRATEGIC PLAN FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

FALL 2024-SPRING 2027



August 22, 2024

AISD Vision:

We are Austin's home for inclusive learning: high expectations for all children, high outcomes for every student.

We prepare every student with the knowledge and skills to thrive in college, career, and life.

OUR COMMITMENTS IN SERVICE OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

In Austin ISD, we believe that every student is a part of the general education community. We reinforce our dedication to inclusivity by offering a spectrum of services, including special education provisions, Section 504 accommodations, and supplementary aids and services, which strengthen and supplement rather than replace general education, tailored to meet the individual needs of each child. Austin ISD is committed to fostering high expectations and implementing robust systems to ensure equitable outcomes for all students with disabilities.

We commit to empowering our students by maximizing their access to the general education curriculum through a comprehensive array of services and the integration of inclusive, evidence-based practices. Every staff member is deeply invested and held accountable to ensure our children develop independence and are prepared for college, career, and life.

Recognizing the significance of fostering a collaborative community, we aim to cultivate a network of educators, parents, families, and community partners dedicated to creating an enriching learning environment for our students. We pledge to uphold practices where every member of our community is treated with respect and dignity, all voices are valued, and each contribution is honored.



Austin ISD'S Guiding Principles for Inclusion

The Guiding Principles for Inclusion are foundational to operationalizing the vision for inclusive practices in Austin ISD for students with disabilities. These principles were drafted and developed as part of collaborative efforts in an inclusion work group, which included Austin ISD parents/community members, Austin ISD team members in special education, and teachers. The guiding principles for inclusion were drafted and shared in the summer of 2022, and they have been included in training and development for teachers, campus administrators, and district leadership in 2022-2023 and 2023-2024. We commit to these principles as the foundation to support our students in data-driven decision making and planning for student success.

Inclusive Mindset

We expect all staff to have an inclusive mindset and to implement inclusive practices across settings and among the student body. All students should feel a sense of belonging as a result of staff who embrace students with all needs and abilities, are trained on general disability awareness and acceptance, effectively use behavior and instructional interventions, and have learned inclusive language and practices. The inclusive mindset must be part of equity conversations rather than a separate (segregated) topic and will be infused into Social Emotional Learning/CP&I.

Sense of Belonging

We believe that disability does not drive placement, and, to the greatest extent possible, students should attend their neighborhood schools and be provided inclusive opportunities to the maximum extent appropriate. We also believe that parents have a voice and should be seen and respected when support and service decisions are being made for their child.

Outcomes for Students

We believe that when educators have high expectations for students with disabilities coupled with tools to implement specially designed instruction and effective instructional practices and interventions, achievement and growth will occur.

Individualized

The selection and implementation of effective and inclusive instructional models must be built on a common understanding, belief, intention, and awareness of the individual academic, social, and emotional needs of each student.



Ongoing and Job-Embedded Training

All instructional staff and administrative professionals of Austin ISD (District office and campus staff), will receive required training and professional development on inclusive models, proven practices (planning, instructional delivery, and evaluation of systems), evidence-based strategies and other learning opportunities in support of students with disabilities.

Culturally Relevant and Responsive Practices

In order to foster a sense of belonging, inclusive models must intentionally incorporate culturally-relevant and responsive practices both in and out of the classroom so that each student and family is seen and valued. This includes but is not limited to: practices that are actively anti-racist and anti-sexist, support exposure to and celebration of disability culture, and reinforce an asset-based lens for the contributions of our students and families who are emerging bilingual.

Research-Based Instructional Practices

Instructional staff should be well-versed and capable in providing research-based, high-leverage instructional strategies related to inclusion, while administrative professionals (central office and campus staff) are expected to follow up with implementation observations and fidelity checks via informal and formal observations.

Equitable Access

Students receiving special education supports and services are general education students first. Therefore, they will have access to field trips, electives, and extracurricular activities of their same-age peers to the maximum extent possible. Students will have access to TEKS-based curriculum materials regardless of their individualized service delivery and related supports, and their teachers will be equipped with and expected to utilize TEKS-based curriculum materials along with a multi-tiered system of supports.



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1. Executive Summary

Overview

Austin ISD educates more than 73,000 students, of which more than 12,000 are eligible for special education services. The district includes 116 diverse schools in one of the fastest growing metroplexes in the country. All students are general education students first, and the provision of special education and related services, or Section 504 accommodations and supplementary aids and services, are provided in addition to general education—not in place of it.

The AISD special education strategic plan strongly emphasizes fostering a clear and inclusive vision and promoting shared ownership among all stakeholders involved in supporting students with disabilities. Such shared ownership is required to attain both legally compliant and quality practices supporting students. By establishing a vision that is transparent and inclusive, the strategic plan ensures that everyone is aligned towards the common goal of achieving positive outcomes for all students, regardless of their abilities.

Collaboration with a diverse range of stakeholders, including parents, advocates, and community members, is crucial in enhancing the capacity of special education services to support students with disabilities effectively. This plan aims to broadly outline a network of support that is robust and responsive to the needs of students and their families. Family engagement and partnerships are embedded throughout the strategies within the plan in acknowledgment of the vital component that parents play in advocating for their children and ensuring that their needs are met within the education system.

The strategic plan's commitment to addressing the required corrective actions outlined in the Agreed Order between TEA and AISD demonstrates a proactive approach to compliance and overall continuous improvement. AISD places a strong emphasis on building sustainable systems that can be carried out over the long term.

In addition, the insights provided by the Special Education Audit conducted by Stetson and Associates offer a comprehensive analysis of key areas such as parent/family engagement, inclusive practices, student outcomes, accountability, and compliance. By leveraging these findings, AISD can better understand the current landscape and identify areas for growth and enhancement within and across the special education programs and services offered to students.



Plan Overview

The Special Education Strategic Plan outlines five areas with identified strategies and actions to address the needs of students. As additional actions are determined and steps refined, the plan will be updated accordingly as part of a continuous monitoring and improvement cycle. The plan provided emphasizes goals and high level strategies. The District and Special Education Department will work to further operationalize detailed steps to support and fulfill the defined strategies, goals, and outcomes noted in this plan. Each goal and collection of strategies provided in the plan will be supplemented with specific detailed initiative and implementation timelines, action steps, responsible parties, and resource allocations that will be defined, monitored, and maintained.

The goals and strategies listed in this plan are based on key findings from a program evaluation of the Austin ISD Special Education Department that was completed in the Spring of 2022, the Special Education Audit completed in the Spring of 2024, and the TEA Order issued in the Fall of 2023. Each goal is supported by a collection of strategies and actions to help the District improve its practices and achieve high-quality student outcomes. The goals are not written in priority order, as all components are integral to designing and implementing quality services and supports for students with disabilities. This Strategic Plan is fluid and is designed to be a 3 year plan, with cyclical monitoring and updates in future years.

Root Causes/Issues for Non-Compliance Identified

A third-party audit was required by the Texas Education Agency and completed in the spring of 2024 by Stetson and Associates. The audit identified 7 systems issues related to the status of Austin's compliance with legally required procedures for students with disabilities. Systems issues were noted as areas that impact multiple school systems locally and nationally in addressing the needs of students with disabilities and that likewise were prevalent as challenges for Austin ISD. These are:

1. Significant Special Education Personnel Shortages
2. Inadequate Data Systems
3. Need for Role Clarity regarding compliance
4. Need for a Revised Organizational Structure for Shared Ownership
5. A Program/Label vs. Individual Student Orientation
6. Professional Development Gap in Content & Adult Learning Processes
7. Varied Degrees of Respectful Relationships with Parents

In addition, the audit provided multiple recommendations in eight larger key areas that are combined and addressed in the plan.



Organization of the Plan

The plan is organized into five areas with particular attention and focus on Meeting Evaluation and Timeline Requirements for Child Find and Eligibility Determinations as noted in the TEA Order. The plan also illustrates that improved compliance and evaluation completion must further be nested within larger system improvements, including a clear and operationalized inclusive vision for students with disabilities with quality standards, departmental roles, and actions, as well as an emphasis on high-quality instruction and system improvements within a multi-tiered system of support for learners.

A high-level framework for the plan's five goals and larger strategies is provided, followed by comprehensive and more detailed actions.

The plan is a living document and may be revised and/or have internal timelines for specific action steps modified; however, progress on the high-level strategies will be reported quarterly to indicate progress toward goal achievement in alignment with the broader timelines provided.

Plan Priorities and Monitoring

The Plan centers on five goals:

- *Communicate a Clear and Inclusive Vision through Shared Ownership*
- *Implement High-Quality Instruction within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)*
- *Ensure Fulfillment of Evaluation Requirements*
- *Establish High-Quality Standards for the Development and Implementation of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)*
- *Improve Student Outcomes and Accountability*

Each of the areas/goals noted has corresponding action steps with a series of deliverables and tasks. Additional details to operationalize the goals and strategies in the plan with identified action steps, persons responsible/task leaders, and more specific timelines will be created and monitored to ensure progress and completion.

Plan timelines, progress, and responsive adjustments will be shared with Executive Leadership, including the Superintendent and Board of Trustees to review progress and inform appropriate revisions to actions.

Continual investments in robust staffing strategies and models as well as enriched and improved professional learning approaches are essential to the success of the plan and ultimately the systemic transformation of services for students.



2. High-Level Goals and Strategies

The following graphics illustrate the data sources that informed the plan’s development as well as the 5 larger goals that will be accompanied by supporting strategies in each section.



**Austin ISD
Special
Education**

The goals and strategies listed in this plan are based on key findings from the Program Evaluation of Austin ISD Special Education Services, the TEA Order and the recent Stetson Audit.

2022

2023

2024

Austin ISD Program Evaluation Categories (Stetson)

- Leadership
- Instruction
- Staffing
- Capacity Building
- Parent Engagement

TEA Order

- Satisfy Open Corrective Action Plans
- Implement Practices to Address Systemic Special Education Compliance (including Multi-Tiered Systems of Support)
- Improve Data Management and Reporting Systems
- Establish a Parent Outreach Campaign

Austin ISD Audit Categories (Stetson)

- Multi-Tiered Systems of Support
- Child Find
- Referral and Evaluation Systems
- ARD Committee Meeting Process
- Monitoring for Compliance
- Accountability Systems
- Parent Communication and Engagement

[2024 Special Education Goals Overview \(PDF\)](#)



2024

Austin ISD Strategic Plan for Special Education Services

Each goal is supported by a collection of strategies and actions that will help the District improve its practices and achieve high-quality outcomes for students. This Strategic Plan is fluid and is designed to be a 3-year plan, cyclical monitoring and updates in future years.

- 1 Communicate a Clear and Inclusive Vision through Shared Ownership
- 2 Implement High-Quality Instruction within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)
- 3 Ensure Fulfillment of Evaluation Requirements
- 4 Establish High-Quality Standards for the Development and Implementation of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)
- 5 Improve Student Outcomes and Accountability

* Note that Parent and Community Engagement Strategies are included for all five goals

Cyclical Monitoring Of Progress Toward Goal Attainment

Progress updates on the plan will be completed at least once per semester (typically at the end). Further progress on scorecard goal monitoring and reporting will align with the Board Monitoring Calendar, typically at the beginning, middle, and end of year.

Any items required to be reported to or submitted to the Agency as part of the TEA Agreed Order will coincide with the expected timelines noted within.

Data Sources for Strategy Recommendation Or Requirement

1. The Stetson Program Evaluation (2022)
2. Austin ISD's Strategic Initiative/Original Plan (2023-2004)
3. The TEA Agreed Order (2023) (note that specifics and final required actions and/or timelines are not negotiable for these)
4. The Stetson Audit (2024)
5. Additional Parent/Community or Organizational/Departmental Feedback
6. Austin ISD's Retooled Scorecard (2024, and in development for revision)



3. Goal and Strategy Details

The goals and strategies provided here are at a higher level. Each goal will have internal working and detailed initiative plans developed to operationalize actions, define responsible parties, and establish resource allocations toward goal attainment. These detailed initiative/action plans will be monitored and refined locally.

Below, the framework for communication and planning process previously adopted during phase 2 of AISD's long-range planning, is referenced and adjusted to clarify expectations around the action steps, planning, and reporting processes for the Strategic Plan for Special Education.

Action Plans

Action plans provide a roadmap that translates goals into tangible, attainable steps. They specify specific tasks, accountability, deadlines/milestones, determination of players, and roles and responsibilities. For AISD, each immediate goal (for 24-25) will develop an action plan, incorporate equity tools, data, and outreach, where appropriate, and consider district plans for greater alignment and systemic implementation.

Transparency and Reporting

To ensure transparency and a shared understanding of implementing the Strategic Plan for Special Education, static and interactive reporting will be incorporated. A website will be maintained and reporting will occur through the AISD Board of Trustees, Special Education Family Advisory Committee and other school and community groups as appropriate, depending on the goal and strategy. Recurring reporting will be in alignment with AISD scorecard reporting, at least once per semester and typically beginning, middle, and end of year. Reports on these milestones will be shared publicly.

Baseline Report

A baseline report is a snapshot of initial conditions. It provides accountability and data, to capture the starting point against which progress and success can be measured. Baseline reports are derived from findings in the Stetson Audit, the AISD Scorecard Progress Measure data, as well as areas of improvement and/or non-compliance identified in the TEA Order based on Results Driven Accountability or related areas of accountability reporting. Baseline data will inform strategic plan goals and more specifically, recommended metrics in detailed plans.



GOAL 1: Communicate a Clear and Inclusive Vision through Shared Ownership		
Strategies	Evidence of Completion	School Year Timeline/ Year to Start
A. OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNICATING AND ENGAGING IN INCLUSIVE PRACTICES		
<p>1. Promote Austin ISD's commitment to serving students with disabilities through inclusive practices.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Develop a district communication plan for a cadence of Messages in Parent Newsletters and <i>Appitol News</i> to Staff. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Develop a cadence for a Superintendent Message each semester emphasizing AISD's inclusive vision and the guiding principles for inclusion expected on our campuses. b. Recommend the Board emphasize inclusive practices in their values' statements, vision, and related documents. c. Include inclusive vision statements and guiding principles for inclusion in onboarding packets for new instructional and campus-based hires as part of an expectation for working in Austin ISD. d. Build on training on "Designing ARD meetings that Build Family Engagement" to develop family engagement and communication standards and expectations for district and campus leaders to promote more aligned, inclusive and respectful engagement with parents and caregivers. 	<p>Communication plan and messages</p> <p>District documents/site</p> <p>Website, Leadership Weekly messages, resource documents</p>	<p>2024-25 ▾</p>
	<p>Onboarding packets updated</p>	<p>2025-26 ▾</p>
	<p>Designing ARD Meetings that Build Family Engagement Toolkit; Engagement and Communication framework</p>	<p>2024-25 ▾</p>
	<p>2. Celebrate all abilities and promote disability acceptance and acknowledgment in equity work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Center and include disability awareness and acceptance in the district calendar of events (e.g., inclusive schools week). b. Define a set of specific district-wide activities or events to reinforce inclusive perspectives and expectations for students with disabilities from an asset-based lens. c. Review, and where appropriate, redesign Social Emotional Learning/Cultural Proficiency and 	<p>District calendar, Program outline, Press releases</p> <p>Review materials; revised documents or language</p> <p>Communication plan, social media</p>



GOAL 1: Communicate a Clear and Inclusive Vision through Shared Ownership		
Strategies	Evidence of Completion	School Year Timeline/ Year to Start
<p>Inclusion professional development materials to include disability and impact. Process review during 24-25 with revisions for 25-26.</p> <p>d. Develop a cadence of communication to highlight successes from individual campuses regarding parent interactions, satisfaction, and effective strategies.</p>	<p>posts, campus and district websites, newsletter</p>	
<p>3. Establish a cadence of Special Education Family Advisory Council (SEFAC) meetings and provide a summary of actions/events.</p> <p>a. Establish an inclusion work group as a SEFAC subcommittee, to provide recommendations on district-specific frameworks and inclusive practices and an approach for expanding this work district-wide.</p> <p>b. Utilize recommendations from SEFAC to inform professional development, family engagement opportunities, and inclusive practices.</p> <p>c. Provide progress updates on strategic plan goals at SEFAC meetings and on the external website.</p>	<p>SEFAC Agendas and Minutes</p> <p>Sub-committee outline of processes and expansion of workgroup</p>	<p>2024-25 ▾</p>
<p>4. Build community engagement and transparency through annual learning opportunities for families.</p> <p>a. Create a schedule and identify topics for parent learning, outreach, and engagement sessions that include information on Child Find, Referral, and MTSS processes.</p> <p>i. Disseminate a calendar of proposed sessions and a communication plan by semester for the Communications team, Department, and campuses,</p> <p>ii. Share information on social media, district calendar, external website, and parent/community newsletters monthly.</p> <p>iii. Partner with AISD's parent support specialists (PSS) to:</p> <p>1. disseminate learning opportunities for families,</p>	<p>Empower Hour Calendar, Topics, Website Information</p>	<p>2024-25 ▾</p>

GOAL 1: Communicate a Clear and Inclusive Vision through Shared Ownership		
Strategies	Evidence of Completion	School Year Timeline/ Year to Start
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2. increase outreach to families of students with disabilities at individual campuses outside of central office sponsored sessions, 3. provide transition planning training that strengthens outreach and capacity building. 		
B. TOOLS AND RESOURCES FOR INCLUSIVE PRACTICES AND CONTINUUM OF SUPPORTS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop and implement quality standards for inclusive practice across AISD campuses. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Review Stetson & Associates' Quality Standards for Inclusive Schools guidance documents as a framework for inclusive standards across the district. b. Gather feedback from SEFAC & district leaders and update the Quality Standards. c. Publish Quality Standards. 	Guiding documents Training materials RDA data	2025-26 ▾
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Provide tools and resources for both general education and special education teachers and service providers that support inclusive practices. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Incorporate elements of Universal Design for Learning and differentiated instruction in AISD curriculum documents. Baseline in 24-25 and continuing. b. Ensure that the district's inclusive practices, instructional planning, and guidance align with TEA Guidance on Inclusion and Specially Designed Instruction. c. Embed resources for and quality examples of accommodations and modifications within the district curriculum that supports scaffolding and differentiated instruction. 	AISD Curriculum Documents Resources on internal Website	2024-25 ▾ 2025-26 ▾

GOAL 1: Communicate a Clear and Inclusive Vision through Shared Ownership		
Strategies	Evidence of Completion	School Year Timeline/ Year to Start
C. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR SHARED OWNERSHIP		
1. Provide professional development opportunities around inclusive practices that includes scheduling of services, quality service implementation, and the continuum of services for students with disabilities.	Professional Learning	2024-25 ▾
2. Develop and implement a professional development plan for executive directors in the Office of Teaching, Learning, and Leading (OTLL), instructional coaches, and special education department and multilingual education district teams to ensure greater alignment, accountability, and consistency regarding special education practices.	Professional development plan Agendas	2024-25 ▾

GOAL 2: Implement High-Quality Instruction within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)		
Strategies	Evidence of Completion	School Year Timeline/ Year to Start
A. ALIGNED CLARITY OF AISD’s MTSS PROCESSES		
1. Develop an AISD MTSS program consisting of a district MTSS manual that includes the processes for system-wide progress monitoring, including a training plan for all general and special education teachers and campus leadership teams. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The MTSS manual will define Austin ISD’s expectations for the delivery of high-quality instruction, including the features of effective instruction across settings. The MTSS manual will outline the curriculum, instructional tools, and resources across tiers of instruction. 	MTSS Manual approved by Agency Distribution timeline	2024-25 ▾

GOAL 2: Implement High-Quality Instruction within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)		
Strategies	Evidence of Completion	School Year Timeline/ Year to Start
2. Develop and lead a trainer of trainer (TOT) standardized training for principals based on approved MTSS process and manual to provide to their staff.	PL Training Calendar and Content	2024-25 ▾
3. Provide an annual overview on the MTSS process as described in the manual for other district central office staff, including special education evaluators and other related service and support staff, curriculum staff, executive directors, and other identified central office leadership.	Calendar; Agenda	2024-25 ▾ Spring
4. Provide parents with annual training on the overall MTSS process, including how students proceed through the tiers, opportunities to support their child, and progress monitoring for student success.	Empower Hour calendar; Training materials	2024-25 ▾
5. Train campus leadership teams and teachers on MTSS requirements outlined in the manual and related expectations outlined in the TEA Order including completing progress monitoring reports, campus/classroom walk-through protocols, and coaching protocols.	Calendar; Agenda	2024-25 ▾
B. IMPLEMENTATION OF A ROBUST DISTRICT-WIDE MTSS PROGRAM		
1. Oversee implementation of the district-wide MTSS program. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Create a cyclical review for annual monitoring, revision, and updates of MTSS materials and related system tools for improvement. b. Develop and schedule a cadence of meetings across MTSS and special education leadership teams to monitor the MTSS process, including review of the referral process for a special education evaluation. c. Establish MTSS problem-solving teams on each campus as defined by TIER in the Developing and Using an MTSS Problem-Solving Team module. 	Cyclical review of materials Quarterly Meeting Calendar and Agenda Listing of MTSS campus contact	2024-25 ▾

GOAL 2: Implement High-Quality Instruction within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)		
Strategies	Evidence of Completion	School Year Timeline/ Year to Start
2. Develop and publish tools and protocols for district leaders to use when calibrating and conducting inter-rater reliability during campus and classroom walkthroughs with campus leaders.	Walk through rubrics and protocols	2024-25 ▾
C. MONITORING FOR FIDELITY OF IMPLEMENTATION		
1. Gather and report on student universal screening data reports for all elementary campuses in reading and math indicating the percentage of students identified for Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions.	State reporting	2024-25 ▾
2. Initiate calibration visits on progress monitoring and campus/classroom walkthroughs using the conference tools and protocols developed to establish inter-rater reliability measures as identified in the TEA Order.	Calendar of calibration visits	2024-25 ▾
3. Conduct classroom walkthroughs for all identified campus teachers (by a campus or district leadership team member) and one or more school-wide walkthroughs by district leadership as identified in the TEA Order.	Calendar of walkthroughs	2024-25 ▾
4. Define requirements based on calibration and validation efforts that will identify the teachers and campus leaders who need to attend coaching sessions and professional development sessions as identified in the TEA Order.	Copy of requirements	2024-25 ▾
5. Publish opportunities for coaching and professional development sessions available for teachers and campus leaders related to walk-through performance as identified in the TEA Order in the Spring of 2024-25 and notify identified staff of participation requirements.	PL Calendar; Emails; Training materials; Walkthrough forms	2024-25 ▾ Spring
6. Conduct at least two follow-up reviews on any campus/classroom or with any campus leader who has been assigned additional coaching or professional development based on prior performance on the	Calendar of reviews	2024-25 ▾ Spring



GOAL 2: Implement High-Quality Instruction within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)		
Strategies	Evidence of Completion	School Year Timeline/ Year to Start
progress monitoring or walk-through protocols.		
7. Produce and submit a report to TEA and the Austin ISD Board of Trustees detailing the outcomes of the campus/classroom walk-throughs and progress monitoring efforts as specified in the TEA Order.	Report	2024-25 ▾ End of Spring
8. Establish a reporting cadence for executive directors (in the Office of Teaching Learning and Leading -OTLL) to monitor MTSS usage, documentation, and implementation using the MTSS reporting system.	Report or Dashboard; Checkpoints for Support Implementation	2024-25 ▾
D. SUPPORT AND CAPACITY BUILDING		
1. Build capacity for the delivery of high-quality instruction, including features of effective instruction and progress monitoring, by requiring coaching and professional development sessions for teachers and campus leaders related to walk-through performance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identify and notify teachers and campus leaders who are required to attend b. Publish opportunities for coaching and professional development sessions available for teachers and campus leaders. 	Menu of professional development for identified staff members and coaching session logs	2024-25 ▾ Spring
2. Complete the TEA Learn TIER Series for Multi-Tiered Systems of Support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. District-level leadership in the areas of special education and of curriculum and instruction will complete the TEA Learn Tier modules (phase 1 complete). b. All returning instructional staff (general and special education) will complete the TEA Learn Tier modules. c. All newly hired instructional staff (general education and special education) hired for the 24-25 SY will complete the required TEA Learn TIER modules by May 31, 2025. d. Current campus administration will complete 	Training completion logs	2024-25 ▾

GOAL 2: Implement High-Quality Instruction within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)		
Strategies	Evidence of Completion	School Year Timeline/ Year to Start
<p>the TEA Learn Tier modules by June 30, 2024.</p> <p>e. All newly hired campus administration staff hired for the 24-25 SY will complete the required TEA Learn TIER modules by May 31, 2025.</p>		
<p>3. Integrate knowledge of research and evidence-based practices for students with disabilities into the teacher and principal evaluation and appraisal systems and provide the following supports by August of 2025, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Job-embedded coaching for teacher, instructional coaches, and campus leadership teams; b. Exemplar lessons and activities for teachers to model; c. Defined observation protocols and criteria based on district-established systems for special education and MTSS that principals can use to assess all teachers; d. Communities of practice for all teachers and instructional coaches; e. Opportunities for co-planning between general and special education teachers at the campus and district level; and f. Ongoing professional development to support continuous improvement at all levels, campus leadership, instructional coaches, general education and special education teachers. 	<p>Training materials and resources</p>	<p>2025-26 ▾</p>

GOAL 3: Ensure Fulfillment of Evaluation Requirements		
Strategies	Evidence of Completion	School Year Timeline/ Year to Start
A. ALIGNED CLARITY ON AISD'S CHILD FIND, REFERRAL, AND EVALUATION PROCESSES		
1. Analyze the data related to Child Find to determine the effectiveness of the practices in place and where the district may need to make changes and provide a regular communication cadence for department review.	SPP Data, RDA findings for SPP 11 & 12; quarterly trend reports & meeting cadence	2024-25 ▾
2. Provide annual professional development regarding Child Find, referral, evaluation, special education eligibility, services, and timelines to all general and special education teachers, campus administrators, departmental staff members.	Names, dates, and location	2024-25 ▾
3. Incorporate a Child Find component in activities established as part of the public awareness campaign within the district's eCST, MTSS, or comparable system.	Public awareness activities	2024-25 ▾
4. Update and maintain the external website for parents, families, community, and staff and district print materials for Child Find communication with the feedback from SEFAC.	Date of Update; Links to materials; feedback form responses	2024-25 ▾
5. Ensure that campus administrators have accurate information to share with parents regarding the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), state special education law related to Child Find, the provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE), and placement of students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment (LRE).	Child Find materials are posted in every school and annually on website; Student Handbook; Annual training; campus fidelity checks	2024-25 ▾



GOAL 3: Ensure Fulfillment of Evaluation Requirements		
Strategies	Evidence of Completion	School Year Timeline/ Year to Start
B. IMPLEMENTATION OF COMPLIANT REFERRAL AND EVALUATION PROCESSES		
1. Maintain an electronic tracking system to monitor timeline and completion data of referrals, consents, evaluations, and ARD meetings.	Tracking system; Evaluation Manual	2024-25 ▾
2. Establish a structured process to review available data for compliance to identify actions to continuously improve referral and compliance to state and federal timelines.	Tracking system; Evaluation Manual	2024-25 ▾
3. Consolidate all guidance into an Evaluation Manual that aligns district operating procedures that includes timelines and processes for responses to referral and evaluation requests, consent, evaluation completion, and eligibility determinations and outlines accountabilities for evaluators, campus leaders, and special education staff. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Convene a cross-departmental focus group once a year to review and revise existing referral and evaluation procedures. 	Evaluation Manual Meeting agendas	2024-25 ▾
4. Create a referral checklist for campus staff that describes the data components needed to complete a comprehensive evaluation.	Referral Checklist; Presence in Evaluation Manual and MTSS Manual	2024-25 ▾
C. QUALITY STAFFING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR EVALUATION		
1. Make recommendations based on examination of the limited staffing study included in the Stetson Audit and recommendations from professional organizations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Determine the number of evaluators the district needs based on recommendations and available resources. 	Staffing Analysis with Talent Strategy	2025-26 ▾

GOAL 3: Ensure Fulfillment of Evaluation Requirements		
Strategies	Evidence of Completion	School Year Timeline/ Year to Start
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. Consider an increase in the number of full-time district evaluators to reduce the reliance on contract and virtual evaluators, as appropriate. c. Review and revise the job descriptions and/or role expectations of School Psychologists to more closely align with the national model recommendations of collaborative and supportive relationships with school staff and families. d. Explore the feasibility of and develop a plan for the assignment of evaluators, including related services staff, to specific campuses based on projected caseload responsibilities, where possible. e. Identify appropriate tasks that full-time evaluators are engaging in that can be reassigned to contract and/or clerical personnel to maximize efficiency to the extent practicable. 	<p>Resource Mapping Documents</p> <p>Job Description Review and Revisions</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Train all evaluation staff and relevant special education district team members on the processes outlined in the Evaluation Manual. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identify practices and procedures related to evaluation assignments, timelines, documentation, and their roles and responsibilities. b. Incorporate expectations regarding monitoring of timelines during campus site visits. 	<p>Dates of Training; Attendance Sheet; Evaluation Manual</p>	<p>2024-25 ▾</p>



GOAL 4: Establish High Quality Standards for the Development and Implementation of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)		
Strategies	Evidence of Completion	School Year Timeline/ Year to Start
A. ARD COMMITTEE STRUCTURES TO PROMOTE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT		
<p>1. Establish and train all campus leadership teams and teachers (general and special education) on the process that will be implemented on every district campus for parent participation on admission, dismissal, and review (ARD) committees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Use the Parent Engagement Module required by the TEA order to train all principals and instructional staff (general and special education) and campus administrators around expectations and effective strategies for communicating and working with parents before, during, and following the ARD meeting. b. Develop a guidance and reflection document based on the content of the Module to be used by campuses to establish consistency across the district. c. Update all special education guidance documents to include the process for parent participation on ARD committees. 	<p>Training materials and resources</p>	<p>2024-25 ▾</p>
<p>2. Provide training on the utilization of the district’s digital document management system accessed by parents to retrieve special education documents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Train case managers and leadership teams on utilization of the parent portal system. b. Develop and implement a communication plan informing parents about methods for accessing special education documents and their digital access to special education documentation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Provide information about how parents can request printed documents, when needed. 	<p>Professional Learning and Follow-Up Communication Plan</p>	<p>2024-25 ▾</p>

GOAL 4: Establish High Quality Standards for the Development and Implementation of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)		
Strategies	Evidence of Completion	School Year Timeline/ Year to Start
3. Ensure to the greatest extent possible that ARD meetings and documentation are provided promptly in the family's native language and communicate with all case managers the language tools for Spanish accessible in the IEP system for fulfilling the expectation of document translation.	Guidance Documents, Check Ins at Department Chair/Principal Meetings	2024-25 ▾
4. Provide a set of common expectations for the start of each year and semester for case managers to communicate with families and provide related contact information for parent outreach and support.	Expectations and Template; Review for administrators	2024-25 ▾
5. Provide learning opportunities for families related to interpreting a student's IEP and IEP progress reports.	Parent Learning Framework	2024-25 ▾
6. Conduct an annual survey of parents with students served through special education to measure parent satisfaction with the special education processes in place.	Survey and comparison to baseline	2024-25 ▾
B. DIFFERENTIATED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR STAFF		
1. Implement comprehensive professional development for campus administrators, general and special education teachers, evaluators, SLPs, related service providers, and providers of dyslexia instruction to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. The learning will include information on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. adaptations, accommodations, and modifications b. strategies to support emergent bilingual students c. progress monitoring and reporting d. specially designed instruction e. transition planning and services f. full continuum of services 	Training materials; agendas Calendar/ Schedule of Modules	2024-25 ▾ Phased by group

GOAL 4: Establish High Quality Standards for the Development and Implementation of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)		
Strategies	Evidence of Completion	School Year Timeline/ Year to Start
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> g. Present Levels of Academic and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) statements h. Goals and Post-Secondary Goals (for 14+ students) i. Standards based IEPs 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Maintain a centralized online location for all training and professional development materials and resources to support ongoing access, reinforcing skills, just-in-time training, and onboarding. 	Designated page/link on the internal Special Education website linking to BLEND/HCP	2024-25 ▾ Spring
C. MONITORING OF IEP DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop and implement a process to monitor IEP quality. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Use a protocol for measuring the quality of IEPs, including alignment of PLAAFPs, goals, and services. b. Review a sampling of selected folders for IEP compliance. c. Provide coaching and supports for teachers who have not met IEP development standards. 	TEA External Desk Review Rubric; results of review Written procedures; Calendar of due dates for folder reviews Follow up assessments	2025-26 ▾
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Develop and implement a process to monitor fidelity of implementation (FOI) of IEPs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Use a protocol for measuring the fidelity (FOI) of implementation of IEPs, including accommodations, modifications, progress monitoring, and progress reporting. 	Implementation protocol; results of review Walkthrough documents; Calendar of due	2025-26 ▾

GOAL 4: Establish High Quality Standards for the Development and Implementation of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)		
Strategies	Evidence of Completion	School Year Timeline/ Year to Start
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. Conduct on-site walkthrough to ensure IEP implementation. c. Provide coaching and supports for teachers who do not meet FOI requirements. 	<p>dates for folder reviews</p> <p>Follow up assessments</p>	
<p>3. Conduct walkthrough reviews in specialized settings across the continuum of services for students with disabilities to ensure effective implementation of high-leverage practices such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicit instruction with modeling • Systematic instruction with scaffolding • Multiple opportunities to practice and respond • Immediate and corrective feedback • Appropriate pacing • Use of multiple grouping formats (whole group, station rotation/small group, pairs, individual) • Differentiated instruction 	<p>Completed Learning Walk Instruments</p>	<p>2025-26 ▾</p>
<p>4. Implement systems that track the provision of accommodations in a student’s IEP across instructional settings.</p>	<p>Tracking logs</p>	<p>2025-26 ▾</p>
<p>5. Conduct annual ECSE advancement review conferences to document the consideration of Least Restrictive Environment and continuum of services for the following school year.</p>	<p>Tracking logs</p>	<p>2024-25 ▾ Spring</p>

GOAL 5: Improve Student Outcomes and Accountability		
Strategies	Evidence of Completion	School Year Timeline/ Year to Start
A. FOCUSED SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURES FOR STATE AND FEDERAL COMPLIANCE		
<p>1. Monitor, track, and report accurate compliance data for special education reporting requirements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Define roles and responsibilities for ensuring compliance within each area of special education. b. Establish a routine meeting cadence for compliance. c. Convene a cross-departmental focus group to refine, review, and edit annual special education training emphasizing monitoring requirements for campus administrators, special education staff, central office leaders, and campus leaders. 	<p>Internal data review; SPP submissions; data visualization</p> <p>Meeting notes</p> <p>Refinement of Training YAGs, Materials and Resources</p>	2024-25 ▾
<p>2. Examine and refine organizational structures in special education and the Office of Teaching Learning and Leading (OTLL) for alignment and accountability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Meet at least each nine weeks with OTLL executive directors to monitor compliance and data for their assigned campuses. 	<p>Participants; agendas; compliance tracking system</p>	2024-25 ▾
<p>3. Resolve any compliance concerns with the Special Education document management vendor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Regular cadence of meetings for sped leadership to monitor compliance b. Quarterly meetings to discuss campus compliance - EDs, sped leadership 	<p>Calendar; Agendas; Notes; Development progress</p>	2024-25 ▾
<p>4. Conduct annual training for administrators related to overall compliance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Create a schedule of initial and ongoing training for utilizing the Special Education document management system and any other programs designed to support high-quality instruction. 	<p>Training materials</p>	2025-26 ▾

GOAL 5: Improve Student Outcomes and Accountability		
Strategies	Evidence of Completion	School Year Timeline/ Year to Start
B. QUALITY OUTCOMES/STANDARDS: SCORECARD OUTCOME ACHIEVEMENT		
<p>1. Align systems structures and supports to report progress to attain scorecard goals and progress measures, constraints and student outcomes, as defined, and report on these progress measures with disaggregated data for students with disabilities. The following goals are noted from the District Scorecard at the time of the Strategic Plan submission. However, these will be revised and updated based on the AISD Board's Goals and Constraints Revisions through Lone Star Governance in the Spring of 2024:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. 3rd grade students earning Meets Grade Level on the STAAR Reading Assessment in English or Spanish will increase from x% in June 2021 to 60% by June 2026. b. Identified disparities in special education disciplinary actions as recorded in PEIMS will decrease from 34% in May 2022 to 14% by May 2026. c. The total number of initial and reevaluations conducted will meet set goals for summer, fall, and spring through December 2025. d. The number of pending evaluations will be less than the set goals for summer, fall, and spring, and at 0 evaluations exceeding the required evaluation timelines by December 2025. 	<p>Cyclical monitoring documents; Scorecard documents</p> <p>Baseline data will be reviewed annually and in alignment with timeline for scorecard monitoring set by the Board</p>	<p>2024-25 ▾</p>
C. ALIGNMENT OF RESOURCES FOR STAFF RECRUITMENT, HIRING, RETENTION, AND SUPPORT		
<p>1. Complete staffing comparisons with other Central Texas districts and districts state-wide to define competitive compensation structures to address shortages, specifically around evaluation staff, speech and related service providers, and special education teachers/support staff.</p>	<p>Analyzed data</p>	<p>2024-25 ▾</p>



GOAL 5: Improve Student Outcomes and Accountability		
Strategies	Evidence of Completion	School Year Timeline/ Year to Start
2. Review data annually to identify and invest in compensation improvements based on vacancy needs, shortages, and hard to staff areas.	Hiring and vacancy information	2025-26 ▾
3. Develop and refine structures and invest in pipelines and pathways with incentives for areas including, but not limited to, TA to teacher pathways and diagnostician pathways.	Program information	2025-26 ▾
4. Identify sourcing structures and agencies to supplement and support addressing vacancy needs, including Visiting International Teacher programs and contracting agencies for sourcing and recruiting.	Communication with agencies and programs	2024-25 ▾
5. Maintain a robust contracting budget to offset growth needs and shortages to sustain support for student needs and services with qualified staff.	Budget	2024-25 ▾
6. Maintain a system to manage the allocation/distribution of resources (including staff) based on need to ensure compliance with IDEA.	Formalized system	2024-25 ▾



4. Plan Submission/Next Steps

A Strategic Plan for Special Education is due to the Texas Education Agency as part of the required Agreed Order on April 30, 2024. Since the plan must incorporate strategies that address the findings of the Stetson (2024) Audit of Special Education Compliance and Services that was completed and released publicly on April 1, 2024, the timeframe for community feedback and revision was limited. Also, since the audit was completed in the spring of 2024 and included recent data and summary data from almost 600 parent surveys and multiple focus groups, the recommendations and information provided align with substantial feedback from multiple stakeholders.

In addition, the recently seated Special Education Family Advisory Council (SEFAC) received the plan in draft form on April 11, 2024, with a protocol to provide additional feedback for consideration. This included the opportunity to complete a SEFAC feedback survey and to participate in a small group feedback discussion at the April 17, 2024, SEFAC Meeting.

The Strategic Plan provided to the Texas Education Agency will be supported by internal local district timelines and action steps to ensure that strategies are operationalized and progress on goals achieved.

Importantly, the Strategic Plan in its current state and next steps are built upon critical learnings from and acknowledgment of years of identified past systemic non-compliance and failures of Austin ISD to deliver of the promises of IDEA, as identified in the TEA Investigative Report, the TEA Order, and the Stetson Audit.

With that acknowledgment of past failings comes a bold commitment to the improvement of our future state and services for all students and, most notably, students receiving special education in Austin ISD.

Our next steps and milestones will require a collective investment and mutual partnership among and across all team and community members in Austin ISD that will help us truly realize a vision for us to be *"Austin's Home for Inclusive Learning with High Expectations for All Children and High Outcomes for Every Student."*



5. Acknowledgments

Thank you to the AISD Special Education Team, including SEFAC members with District Leaders, Parents, Teachers, Principals, and Community, who contributed to the development of this Strategic Plan.

The team highlights the critical importance of collective responsibility, shared ownership, and data-based decision-making in meeting the needs of our students. Their contributions will inform compliant and best-practice approaches to support the unique needs of AISD students receiving special education services. The district recognizes the hard work, leadership, and commitment towards this work fostering high-quality systems and supports aligned with the legal framework for all students with disabilities served by our district.

Dr. Dru McGovern-Robinett - Assistant Superintendent of Special Education Programs

Dr. Cherry Lee - Executive Director of Instructional Delivery and Inclusion

Dr. Jennifer Baker - Executive Director of Compliance, Operations, Reporting, and Evaluations

Susanna Cohen - Administrative Supervisor for Special Education

Special Education Family Advisory Council Members

Dr. Mary Ann Maxwell - Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Academics

Dr. Susan Diaz - Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Academics

Dr. Stephanie Hawley - Chief Officer for Organizational Transformation

Kara Schultz - Elementary Principal

Michael Herbin - Secondary Principal

Kristin Mijares-Levy - High School Special Education Teacher

Bobby Quindlen Sandoval - Middle School Special Education Teacher

Elizabeth Mirabal - Elementary Special Education Teacher (Bilingual)

Lauren Hoffer - Parent

Allyson Mangum - Parent

Randi Shade - Parent

LaTisha Anderson - Parent

Deborah Trejo - Parent

Chris Brodie - Parent

Ricardo Bentin - Parent

Miguel Morales - Parent

Peggy Kemp - Parent

Stephanie Ferragut - Parent

Renee Sanders - Parent

Adalberto Marquez - Parent

Natalie Johnson - Parent

Patricia Benigno Ruiz - Parent

Dr. Kathleen Rose - Parent



6. References

[The Stetson Program Evaluation](#) (2022)

[Austin ISD's Strategic Initiative/Original Plan](#) (2023-2004)

[The TEA Agreed Order](#) (2023)

[The Stetson Audit](#) (2024)



7. Glossary of Terms

ARD committee - Admission, Review, Dismissal (committee that determines eligibility and services for special education services; also known as the IEP team)

ECSE - Early Childhood Special Education (special education services provided to eligible children ages 3-6)

ED - Executive Director (Austin ISD district position)

FOI - Fidelity of Implementation (ensuring services are provided as outlined in the IEP, routinely and with quality)

IEP - Individualized Education Program (a student's special education plan)

MTSS - Multi-tiered System of Support (a district-wide approach to supporting students' academic, behavior, and social emotional needs)

OTTL - Office of Teaching, Learning and Leading (Austin ISD Office)

PD - Professional Development (learning provided to staff to support high quality instruction)

PLAAFP - Present Levels of Academic and Functional Performance statements (developed by the ARD committee based on strengths, needs, progress, and impact of disability on academic access)

TA - Teacher Assistant (e.g., paraprofessional)

TEA - Texas Education Agency (state education agency)

