



Special Education and Health Services – School Consolidation: Next Steps & Community Updates

Updated: 10/31/2025

Executive Summary

This document outlines the strategic plan to manage the transition of special education students, staff, and services following the district's consolidation and boundary reassignments, effective for the 2026-2027 school year. Our core commitment is to ensure the continuity, equity, and quality of services outlined in every student's Individualized Education Program (IEP). Special education is defined as a set of services and supports, not a specific location. The plan prioritizes proactive communication with families, thoughtful staff assignments, and dedicated transition support for students.

The goals of the transition plan to support staff, students, and families are to:

- **Maintain Service Continuity:** Guarantee that all services, accommodations, and supports stipulated in student IEPs are delivered without interruption, regardless of campus reassignment or centralized placement changes.
- **Ensure Equitable Staffing:** Review and adjust special education teacher and teacher assistant allocations to equitably meet the needs of all students attending the receiving campuses. No reductions to special education positions are planned.
- **Facilitate Successful Student and Staff Transitions:** Implement structured transition activities (campus visits, established routines) to minimize disruption for students being reassigned. Develop transition planning guidance for consolidated and receiving schools to support staff, families, and students.
- **Provide Proactive and Transparent Communication:** Give timely, specific, and direct communication to families of students receiving special education services, particularly those whose placements or services are impacted by centralization.

The expected outcomes of the plan are to:

- **Seamless Continuity of Services:** All students receiving special education will experience uninterrupted delivery of IEP services, accommodations, and supports throughout the consolidation and boundary reassignment process, ensuring consistent access to high-quality instruction and specialized interventions.
- **Equitable Staffing and Resource Distribution:** Special education staff - including teachers, teacher assistants, speech therapists, and related service providers - will be allocated equitably across all receiving campuses to meet student needs effectively, with no reduction in special education positions.
- **Smooth Transitions and Strengthened Family Communication:** Students, staff, and

families will be supported with clear guidance, and proactive, transparent communication - minimizing disruption and fostering confidence in the continuity and quality of services.

Project Team Roles and Responsibilities

This team will oversee our department's consolidation-related activities. For questions or direct follow-up, please refer to the contacts below.

Name	Role/Title	Key Responsibilities
Cherry Lee	Interim Assistant Superintendent of Special Education and Health Services	Oversee the development and publication of guidance for families and staff and provide final approval of staffing allocations to ensure the continuity of special education services
Kellie Marino	Administrative Supervisor of Special Education	Lead departmental steering committee of internal special education department staff to review staffing and resources to ensure a capacity building model for all receiving campuses
Jennifer Baker	Senior Executive Director of Compliance and Operations	Manage data for accurate student reassignments due to consolidations, boundary shifts, and centralized placements
Christa Etheridge	Interim Executive Director of Campus Supports	Develop staffing models for special education teachers and teaching assistants across all campuses to reflect consolidation and boundary changes; create explicit guidance and expectations for campus staff regarding transition protocol and accurate documentation following reassignments; establish a monitoring protocol for ARD meetings held for students whose centralized placement will be reassigned; create clear guidance for ARD committees and staff members to support transition planning for students moving campuses
Bailey Gates	Director of Instructional Delivery	Manage professional development and resource allocation across campuses
Alana Bejarano	Executive Director of Health Services	Manage staffing of nurses and health room assistants to ensure the continuity of health services and management of immunization protocol

District-Wide Opportunities for Long-Term Gains

The consolidation process presents both challenges and meaningful opportunities to strengthen how Austin ISD supports students, families, and educators. By streamlining programs and aligning resources, the District will enhance the quality, consistency, and equity of special education services across all campuses.

1. Enhanced Continuity and Quality of Services

- **IEP as the Anchor:** The consolidation ensures that every student continues to receive the full range of services, accommodations, and supports outlined in their Individualized Education Program (IEP), regardless of any campus reassignment or centralized placement.
- **Improved Coordination:** With fewer campuses, students will have increased access to well-resourced campuses. Staff may develop more meaningful professional learning communities, leading to higher-quality, more consistent service delivery.
- **Proactive Transitions:** Dedicated transition time in August 2026 allows educators to establish familiar routines and prepare classrooms before the school year begins—minimizing disruptions for students.

2. Strengthened Equity and Efficiency in Staffing

- **Equitable Assignments:** Special education teacher, teacher assistants, and support staff allocations will be based on student needs at receiving campuses, ensuring appropriate support ratios and balanced workloads.
- **Job Stability:** No reductions in special education positions are planned; instead, the focus is on thoughtful reassignment and sustainable staffing across schools.
- **Improved Bilingual Services Availability:** Special education services, accommodations, and supports will be provided at wall-to-wall Dual Language (DL) programs. ECSE and Lifeskills will be offered at the proposed Wall-to-Wall DL campuses who are attending their assigned regional Wall-to-Wall DL campus.

3. Improved Family Communication and Support Systems

- **Transparent Communication Timeline:** Families will receive timely updates with detailed information on campus re-assignments, changes to centralized placements, and transportation routes.
- **Early Engagement:** Families will have opportunities to visit new campuses prior to the school year, fostering familiarity and comfort with the new environment.

4. Optimized Use of District Resources

- **Strategic Alignment:** Streamlining programs and facilities will allow the district to allocate staff, and materials more efficiently—ensuring that resources directly support

instructional and student needs. Special education providers who currently travel between campuses will potentially have fewer campuses to travel between, increasing service delivery and collaboration time with the campus staff. Cost savings will be used to increase professional learning opportunities and the purchase of resources for campus staff.

- **Reinvestment in Student Services:** Operational savings from more efficient program structures can be reinvested in expanding supports, enhancing instructional materials, and improving professional development opportunities for staff.

Department Project Timeline

Below are the key dates and milestones for our department's work.

Focus Area	Action Steps	Deliverable/Metric	Date/Milestone
Gather Feedback from Community and Staff Input	-Review feedback from Consolidation Comment Cards -Gain feedback from SEFAC on family, student, teacher, and community needs during consolidations and boundary changes for students receiving Special Education services.	-Feedback integrated into FAQ Document	Ongoing through 2025-2026
Develop Transition Planning and FAQ Documents	-Based on feedback and review of draft plan, develop transition planning document and FAQ.	-Transition Planning and FAQ Documents	10/31/2025
Validate Special Education Program & Enrollment Data	-Clean the data spreadsheet; integrate student level data regarding special education services with current and reassignment campus assignments; confirm accuracy.	-Frontline SIS Report - Special Education Students Current Year	10/31/2025
Finalize the GIS Setup and Data Integration	-Finalize the setup of the Location Analytics tool (GIS), geocode all student addresses and integrate the special education data layers. Conduct a working session to train the core team on filtering, visualization, and basic analysis within the software.	-Integrated Current Special Education Instructional Setting Data into Frontline Location Analytics with Scenario Boundary Map	10/31/2025
Develop Scenario Projections	-Create the initial projections based on current enrollment + the maximum capacity usage potential number of students receiving special education services at the receiving campus post-consolidation.	-Campus specific projections of total Special Education population with specific student data	11/28/2025
Conduct Needs Analysis & Pocket Visualization of Students Receiving Special Education	-Break down the numbers for each campus by total students receiving special education and then by Instructional Setting and Services. -Visualize the concentration of specialized services geographically.	-Campus specific breakdown of students receiving special education by Instructional Setting	11/28/2025

Focus Area	Action Steps	Deliverable/Metric	Date/Milestone
Identify Space Needs for Staff Providing Special Education Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Define Unique Spaces for Staff Providing Special Education Services -Based on the data (1.5), finalize and standardize the criteria: Determine the need for unique spaces for staff to serve students with special education. -Define minimum square footage for specialized services. -Compile a comprehensive list of spaces (e.g., number of classrooms or spaces for specialized services providers - therapy rooms, evaluation spaces, sensory spaces, etc.) required at each receiving campus based on the defined (1.6) and student projections (1.4). --Communicate the projected physical space needs (1.7) to the Planning Department 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Department guidelines for space needs --Campus specific site requirements based on scenario projections --Adjusted Permanent Site Capacity Methodology based on projections 	12/19/2025
Determine Staffing Allocations at Receiving Campuses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Based on the program placement needs determined in 1.5, calculate the initial staffing allocations (e.g., FTEs for special education teachers, TA, Related Service Providers, SLPs) needed for the various scenarios at each receiving campus. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Campus Specific Staffing Allocations based on scenario projections 	12/19/2025
Conduct Staffing Re-assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Partner with Talent Strategy on development and implementation of staff survey -Review Staff Survey alongside proposed staffing allocations -Project staff to receiving schools -Develop communication plan with staff and disseminate re-assignments -Partner with Talent Strategy to communicate campus re-assignments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Staff survey -Data review -Projections to campus -Develop communication plan 	November - February 2026
Develop Campus Staff Transition Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Develop the comprehensive, explicit guidance document for campus staff detailing procedures for transition support (e.g., visits, meet-and-greets) and accurate IEP/ARD documentation. -Implement required training and distribute guidance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Campus Staff Guidance and Expectations Document 	01/15/2026

Focus Area	Action Steps	Deliverable/Metric	Date/Milestone
Engage with Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Create and disseminate guidance for campus leaders and ARD committees for successful transition/ advancement planning for families -Communicate with families on re-assigned schools and centralized placements via email -Provide guidance for campuses to host additional meet 'n greet event for families and students with disabilities in August at the receiving campus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Guidance for campus leadership teams and case managers -Emails to families 	February - March 2026

Draft Consolidations Revisions & Updates Log

This section tracks all changes and additions made to the Draft Consolidation Plan document after its initial publication on October 3, 2025. This is to ensure transparency between what was originally communicated and what has been updated.

Date of Update	Section(s) Updated	Summary of Change	Original Information (If applicable)
10/28/2025	Special Education	Expanded FAQ section with common questions and grouped questions by category	N/A - Information added, no changes made to previously stated information
10/31/2025	Project Team Roles, Department Timeline, FAQ	Added explicit action steps for developing campus staff transition/documentation guidance and clarified ARD monitoring for centralized placements and campus transition.	N/A - Information added to strengthen compliance and implementation steps.

Resources

- [Austin ISD Special Education Services FAQ: Draft Consolidation & Boundary Changes](#)

Frequently Asked Questions

Austin ISD is committed to ensuring that every student continues to receive high-quality special education services during and after any school consolidations or boundary changes. Special education is a set of services and supports, not a specific place or location.

The following FAQ provides answers to questions from families, staff, and community members, reflecting the most current information available. **Updated on 10/31/2025**

Equity and Access for Students Receiving Special Education

Q: How will the District support students receiving special education services who are assigned to a new campus as part of the consolidation and boundary changes?

A: Special education services, including dyslexia intervention, speech, physical, and occupational therapy, personal care services, academic, behavior, social communication, and language supports will be offered across all Austin ISD campuses. We are proactively planning for smooth transitions for students whose services may move due to consolidations and boundary shifts. This includes:

- Emails to families of students receiving special education services who are affected by consolidations or boundary changes. The email will (a) identify their child's new campus and (b) provide information on the new campus.
- Opportunities for families and students to visit their new campuses in August 2026.
- Dedicated planning time for staff in August to prepare classrooms and coordinate supports.
- Efforts to establish familiar routines and structures before the start of school to help students adjust successfully.
- The District is also developing and will require training on explicit guidance and standardized procedures for all campus staff to ensure consistent documentation and a supportive transition process for every student.

Q: How will continuity of services be maintained? Will there be a reduction in special education staff positions at campuses in the 2026-2027 school year?

A: Campus staff assignments will be thoughtfully and equitably determined to ensure students continue receiving the support they need. At this time, no reduction in current Special Education Teacher or Teaching Assistant (TA) positions is anticipated. Staffing will be equitably

determined and reassigned to campuses based on projected student needs. Special education teachers, TAs, and related service providers (e.g., speech, occupational/physical therapists, etc.) will be allocated accordingly.

Q: Will my students' Extended School Year (ESY) Services change?

A: ESY programming will not be interrupted by the consolidation or boundary changes. If your student qualifies for extended school year services, these services will be provided as determined by the ARD committee and outlined in your child's IEP. ESY services will be held at designated campuses across the district, and families will be notified in advance of the assigned location.

Q: If my student will be attending a new campus, how will they receive Section 504 Services?

A: Before the first day of school, the new school's 504 Coordinator will send a welcome letter to families. Teachers will be provided with immediate access to the student's 504 Plan to ensure continuity of appropriate accommodations and support from day one.

Specialized Services and Dual Language Integration

Q: Why are some special education services centralized?

A: Some specialized services like Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE), Bilingual Early Childhood Special Education, Lifeskills, and Bilingual Lifeskills may be centralized at specific elementary campuses rather than offered at every elementary campus to:

- **Improve Student Access to Highly Qualified Staff:** It can be difficult to staff highly specialized positions across at all elementary campuses. Centralizing specialized services creates experiences and opportunities for staff to regularly collaborate, share best practices, and engage in meaningful professional learning communities.
- **Maximize Specialized Resources:** This helps the district optimize the use of highly specialized materials and technology. By consolidating resources, we can ensure a consistent and high-quality inventory of learning tools that are readily accessible and dedicated to these specific services, ensuring they are always available to support student needs.

Q: If my child is receiving specialized services like Early Childhood or Lifeskills services, how will transitions be supported?

A: Families whose children are receiving specialized services (e.g., Lifeskills and ECSE) at campuses that are consolidated will be notified in the Spring if their child is projected to attend a school other than their re-assigned school. An ARD will be scheduled to support the transition by May 2026. ARD meetings will be required for students impacted by centralized placement shifts to ensure accurate documentation and timely completion.

Q: Will special education services be offered at our proposed "School-wide" Dual Language Campuses (Pickle, Wooten, Odom, and Sanchez)?

A: A full continuum of special education services, including ECSE and Lifeskills, will be offered at our “School-wide” non-zoned dual language campuses. If a student is transferring to or continuing to attend any Dual Language program, services, accommodations, and supports outlined in their IEP will be provided. The District is committed to ensuring that students who require both Special Education support and Dual Language services receive them concurrently. Parents/guardians will not be asked to choose between their child's special education support and Dual Language enrollment. Transportation, including transportation as a related service through special education, will be provided to students who are accepted through priority transfer to their regional non-zoned dual language campus.

Communication and Family Engagement

Q: How will families stay informed as decisions are made about program locations and transitions?

A: We are committed to keeping families informed. As consolidations and boundaries are finalized, the District will communicate directly with families whose students are receiving specialized services through centralized placements that are directly impacted through the consolidation process. Any family whose student is impacted by a change to a centralized placement will be offered an ARD meeting in the Spring.

Q: If my school is closing, when will I meet my child’s new case manager?

A: By August 2026, the new principal will communicate information regarding an in-person opportunity for you and your child to tour the campus and meet your child’s new case manager and special education providers.

Staffing Considerations

Q: How will staff be assigned in the new plan?

A: Staff assignments will be carefully reviewed and adjusted based on the finalized plan to ensure special education teacher and teacher assistant allocations meet the needs of the students attending the campus.

Q: How will current staff members be supported in communicating with families and students re-assigned to new schools for the 26-27 school year?

A: The District will provide campus leaders and case managers at schools whose students are being reassigned with (a) specific information on students’ projected school re-assignments, including centralized placements and (b) resources and tools to support communication, family engagement, and ARD meetings where consolidation is discussed. The Special Education team is developing guidance for case managers to support student-centered transition planning, as well.

Transportation as a Related Service

Q: When a student's special education service is not offered at their home campus, and the District centrally places the student, will the District provide transportation?

A: Yes. Students impacted by the relocation of a special education service or program, or those accepted via special transfer to a regionally assigned Dual Language campus, will be provided with district-supported transportation, including transportation as a related service outlined in an IEP.

Q: How will families receive guidance about transportation?

A: The AISD Transportation team will actively review routes and travel times to ensure accessibility and minimize impact on students once the plans are finalized. Information on specific transportation routes will be shared with families prior to the start of school.

All students will maintain access to the services and support outlined in their Individualized Education Program (IEP), regardless of any changes to the location of services. The Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) Committee will continue to make all decisions regarding each student's special education services.