



Austin ISD Board Monitoring Report

CPM 1.2 Special Education Evaluations

Board Meeting Date: January 16, 2025

Reporting Period: August–December, 2024

Constraint 1

The superintendent shall not allow campus practices that exclude, disproportionately impact, or fail to support historically underserved student groups.

CPM 1.2 (Pending Evaluations)

The number of **pending evaluations** will be less than the set goals for summer, fall, and spring at 0 evaluations exceeding the required evaluation timelines by December 2025.

District Initiatives Priority Alignment

District Initiative	GPM Alignment
AISD Stronger Together	
Early Learning	
Middle Years	
Post Secondary Success	
Special Education	



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Timely special education evaluations are essential to ensuring that students with disabilities receive the appropriate resources, support, and interventions that align with their individual needs, promoting academic and behavioral success. In addition, all school districts are expected to fulfill evaluation timelines identified in state and federal laws for special education evaluations.

Special education evaluations are crucial as they provide a comprehensive understanding of a student's abilities and identify specific learning needs. An evaluation is also essential for determining whether a student qualifies for special education services and what types of support will be most effective. In the Fall of 2023, Austin ISD partnered with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) under the TEA Agreed Order, which included additional expectations for any past due or upcoming requests to ensure that state and federal evaluation timelines are met. Austin ISD has invested significantly in compensation and benefits to increase the number of evaluators in our district. Managing the evaluation process in Austin ISD is dynamic, as new requests come in daily with specific areas for completion and timelines. Currently, our progress on evaluations is being addressed by a combination of Austin ISD permanent team members and supplemented by support provided by contract evaluators.

Key Data Findings

Austin ISD continues to be on track with zero out-of-timeline initial evaluations since August 2024 (fall). However, the district is seeing a slight increase in maintenance each month for out-of-timeline reevaluations, coupled with an increased inflow of reevaluation requests. All students already receiving services must have, at minimum, a reevaluation/review every three years. Some reviews may only require informal data to determine continued eligibility, while others necessitate formal testing. In these cases, the evaluation must be requested and completed before the student's three-year triennial date.

While notable progress is being made on evaluation timelines, additional contract resources have been required to supplement the progress and capacity of existing staff to assist with meeting the demand for requested evaluations in a timely manner. While initial evaluations are prioritized for students who do not yet have services, reevaluations remain a priority focus and an outlier for Austin ISD to address.

Next Steps

Ongoing attention to additional staffing considerations, professional development, resources, and collaboration with families will continue to be essential for improving compliance and the quality of evaluations. Continual analysis of inflows (requests) and outputs (completed evaluations) completed by district leadership will be required to determine how to narrow the dependence on outside contractors with adjusted ratios for in-house staff.



DATA ANALYSIS

CPM 1.2 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.

Timely Completion of Pending initial evaluations and reevaluations	22-23	23-24	24-25	25-26
Target for pending evaluations	3,968	3,403	1,077	0
Total pending evaluations	3,536	1,879	1,939*	NA
Evaluations exceeding required evaluation timeline at the end of the school year	1,588	163	51*	NA

* as of 12/20/24

Key Takeaways

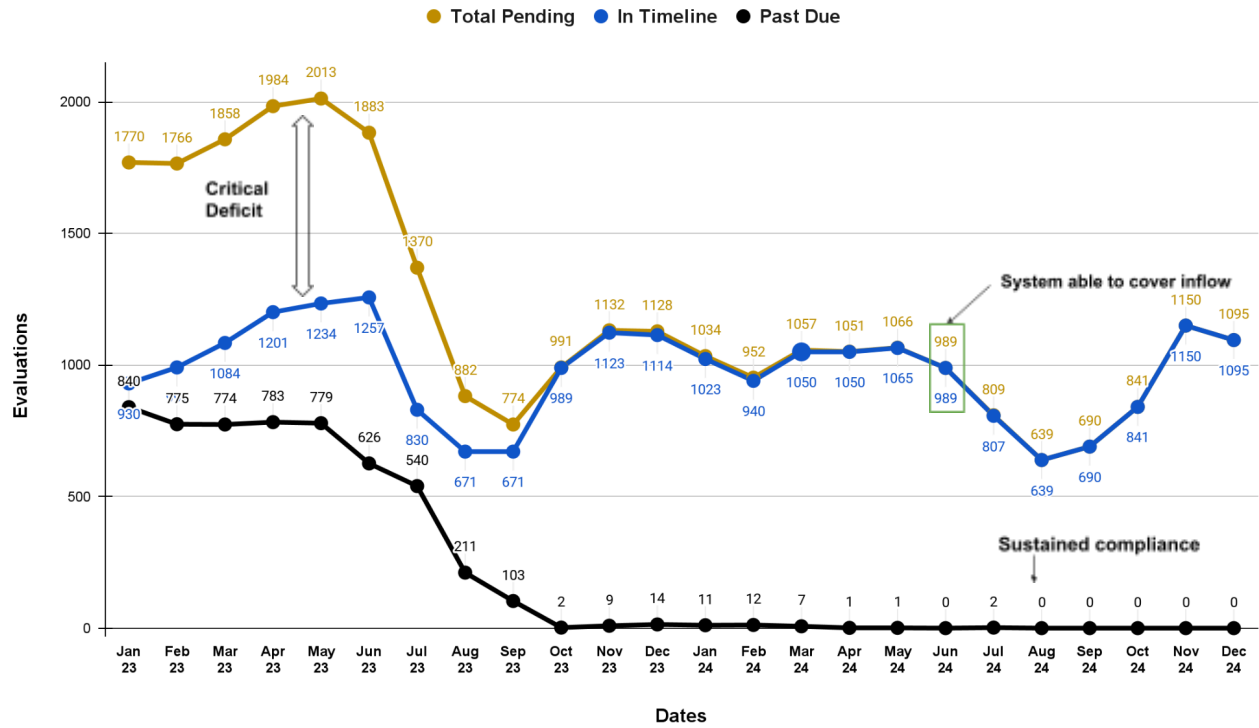
- *As of December 20, 2024, Austin ISD is on track with 0 out of timeline initial evaluations since August.*
- *As of December 20, 2024, Austin ISD has 51 reevaluations out of timeline (OOT).*
- *At this time, we are on track with our CPM for 24-25. We will always have a set of pending evaluations; however, the constraint emphasizes that there are no out-of-timeline evaluations by the end of December 2025, even if a set of pending evaluations remains.*

The Root Cause

- Austin ISD continues to work on out-of-timeline re-evaluations while addressing the substantial increase in the number of initial and reevaluation requests.
- While monitoring and addressing any delayed Review of Existing Evaluation Data (REEDS), the District has identified that some students have exceeded their three-year review window prior to considering if additional/updated testing is needed. In these cases, the District is already out of timeline prior to a REED meeting being held/completed.
- Currently, in-district staff capacity is insufficient to address the growing demand for evaluation requests. Austin ISD continues to use all employed evaluators in a direct assessment role while significantly supplementing with contracted personnel. Strategies for addressing these root causes are outlined below.

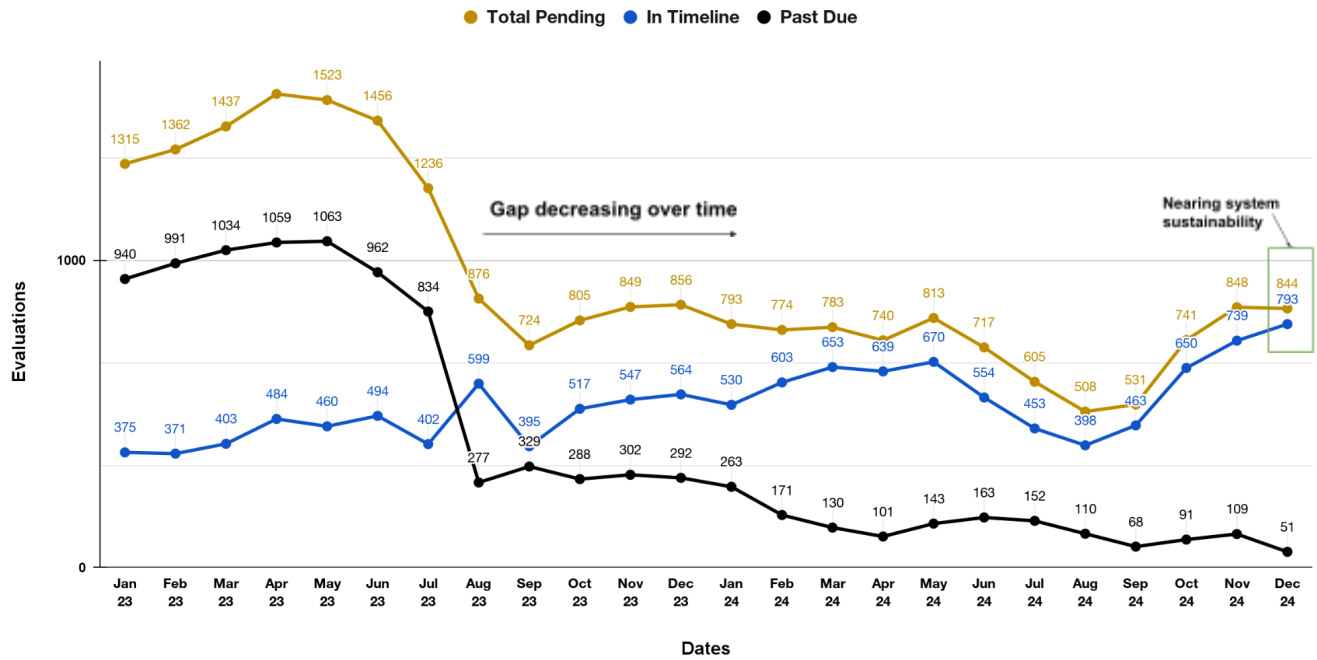


Graph 1: Total Pending Initial Evaluations by Month January 2023 to December 20, 2024

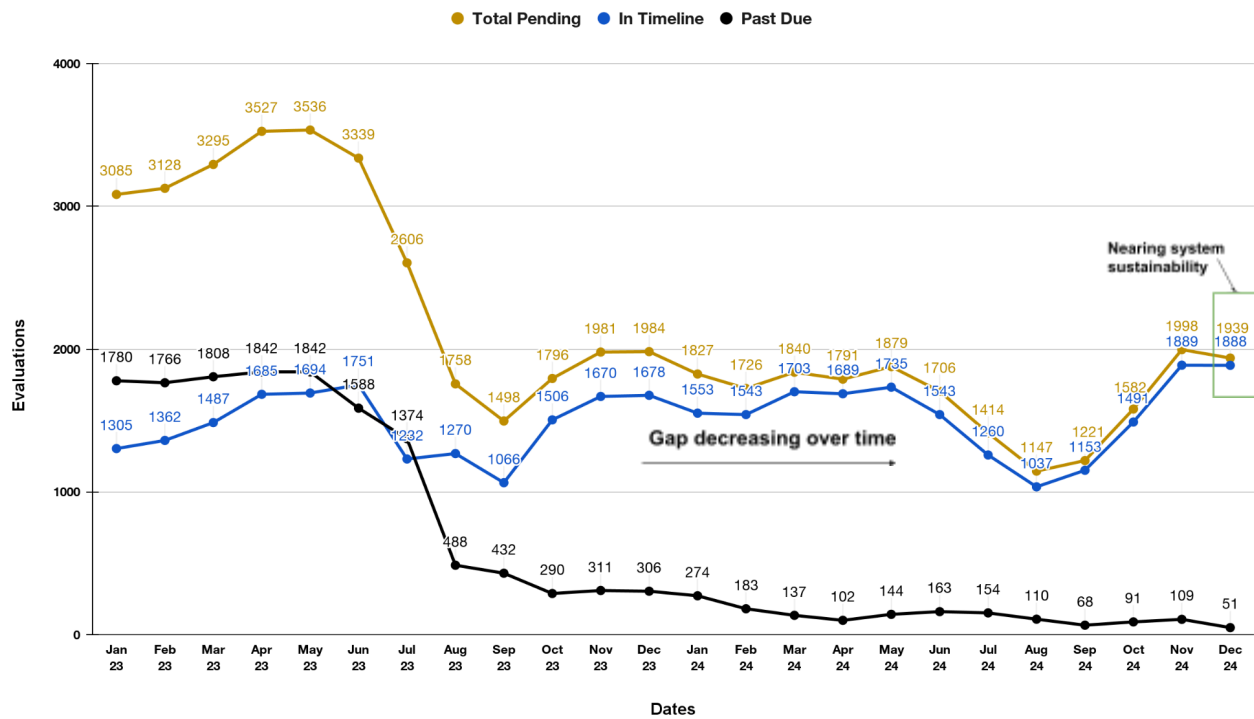




Graph 2: Total Pending Reevaluations by Month January 2023 to December 20, 2024

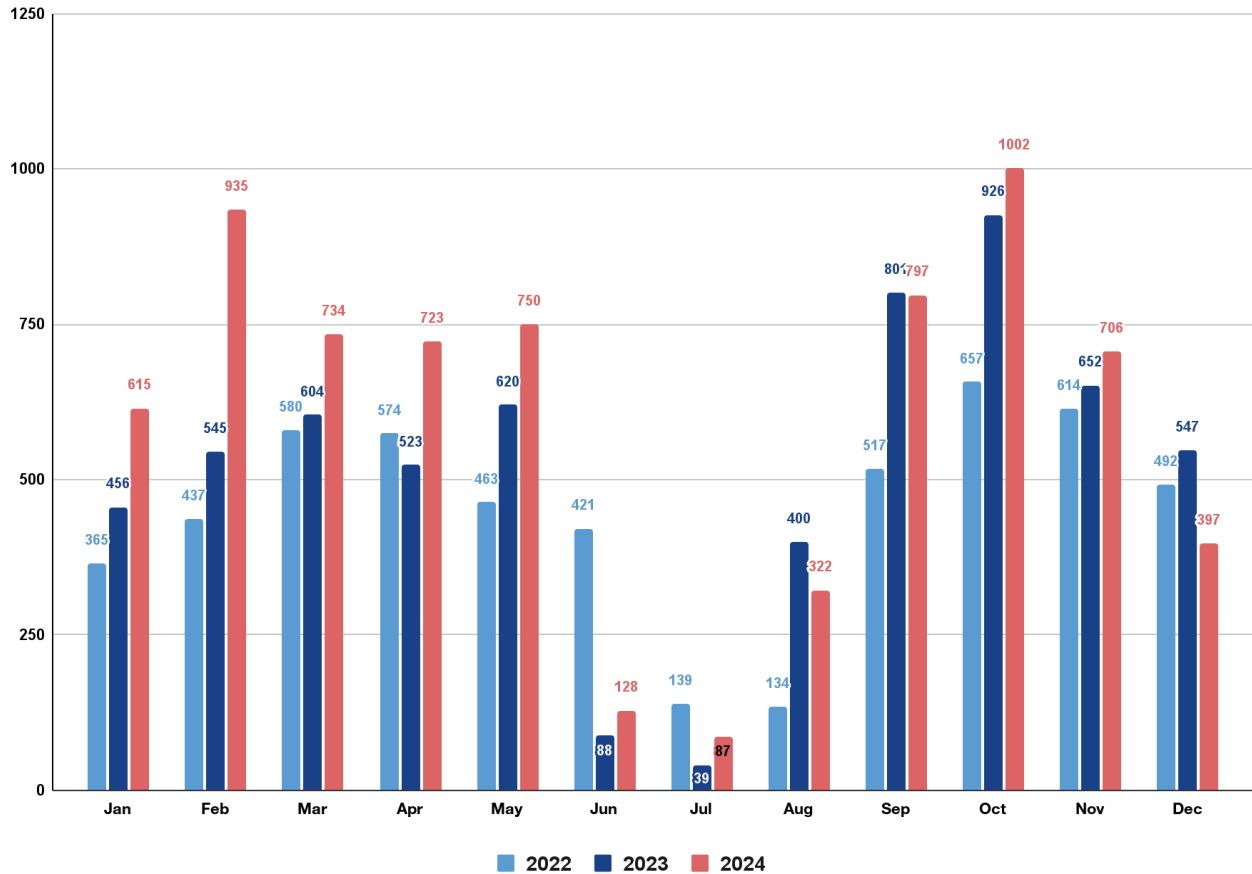


Graph 3: Total Pending Evaluations by Month (combined) January 2023 to December 20, 2024





Graph 4: Initial and Re-evaluation Requests (Inflow) by Month: 2022, 2023, 2024 (as of December 20, 2024)



Referral Requests: Year Comparison		
2022	2023	2024
5,393	6,201	7,196

Note: December requests for 2024 are still coming in, and the inflow above will continue to increase.

Key Takeaways

- Austin ISD had more evaluation referrals in October 2024 than any month in the past 3 years.
- The District saw a 33% increase in the number of evaluation requests from 2022 to 2024, with an average increase of 900 additional evaluations requested each year over the prior year.
- Based on the total referrals from 2023 to 2024, 82% of the increase is from reevaluations



alone.

- *With the increased inflow of evaluation requests, the District has been able to address and clear the backlog for initial evaluations and maintain progress on timely initial evaluations.*
- *Progress on reevaluation requests is still underway, as the overall evaluation demand has exceeded capacity during the fall months in the school year creating/maintaining a limited backlog for reevaluations.*
- *The increased evaluation inflow and this backlog is being addressed by weekend and holiday break testing, including the summer, with the use of contract staff.*
- *An examination of appropriate ratios and models for permanent evaluation staff is underway to increase capacity to meet evaluation demand while relying less on contract personnel for support.*

Current Progress & Plan Forward

The Department of Special Education has recently undergone a significant organizational change. Previously, school-aged evaluations and early childhood (SPPI-12), private school, and homeschool evaluations were conducted by separate teams. In November, the department transitioned early childhood, private school, and homeschool evaluations under the direction and supervision of the Evaluation Department. This structural shift aims to enhance alignment and provide clearer points of contact for both campuses and families.

While Austin ISD transitions to a new digital management system, the Special Education Department will continue to rely on its existing internal tracking systems, productivity, and efficiency dashboards. These tools will remain crucial for supervisors and leadership to effectively support Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs), Related Service Providers, Licensed Specialists in School Psychology (LSSPs), Educational Diagnosticians (ED Diags), and campuses. Concurrently, a steering committee has been established to review staffing and evaluation service contracts. The committee's primary objective is to optimize both productivity and efficiency while simultaneously reducing the overall costs associated with evaluation services. As the District explores potential staffing adjustments and increases, it will concurrently refine evaluation processes and assignments. This comprehensive approach will ultimately lead to a more consistent and high-quality evaluation experience for campuses and families whenever possible.

Austin ISD has engaged in the following strategies for improvement in compliance and quality of evaluations:

- **Balancing Requests for Evaluation:** While Austin ISD monitors and addresses any delayed Review of Existing Evaluation Data (REEDS), we have identified that some students have exceeded their three-year review window prior to the ARD or REED process to consider if additional/updated testing is needed. In these cases, we are already out of timeline prior to a REED being held/completed. Reevaluations have been largely fulfilled by additional weekend and holiday break testing. The department is continuing to make progress on past due triennials (reevaluations) already out of timeline with an increased inflow of evaluation requests each month. Training for evaluation and campus staff on projecting and targeting reevaluation needs in advance is ongoing.
- **Streamlining Processes:** Austin ISD has streamlined the evaluation process, such as better



coordination, using technology for documentation, and simplifying the referral process and consent procedures.

- **Enhanced Collaboration with Parents and Families:** Austin ISD continues to build partnerships with our parents and families to improve the evaluation process. Developing a parent and family guide to the evaluation process has helped evaluators and campuses engage them early in the referral process and keep them informed at each stage.
- **Data Management and Tracking:** Austin ISD has implemented district-created tracking systems and dashboards that alert evaluators and administrators when timelines are approaching.
- **Professional Development:** Austin ISD has ensured all staff are trained on legal requirements and best practices. Specifically for evaluation, evaluators are provided ongoing training for legal requirements, dyslexia, emotional, behavioral assessments, the latest assessment tools, and best practices.
- **Leveraging Technology:** Austin ISD has invested in tools and software to streamline evaluation efficiency and clarify documentation composition.
- **Culturally and linguistically appropriate evaluations:** Under IDEA, evaluations must be culturally and linguistically appropriate, ensuring that no student is discriminated against due to language or cultural factors. Austin ISD's evaluation team did a deep dive into their current assessments and protocols last year and over the summer to ensure practitioners are mindful of the individual student's background and needs when choosing assessments.
- **Multi-tiered systems of support and Referral Processes:** MTSS Manual roll-out and training began in August and continues to be an ongoing priority. To also provide checks and balances, the evaluation team has developed an audit process to ensure all referral packets are complete and robust when evaluators receive them.



Appendix 1: Glossary

- ARD: Admission, Review, and Dismissal meeting refers to the procedure used to determine, review and potentially change a student's educational plan. Occurs on a yearly basis.
- FAPE: A Free and Appropriate Public Education requires schools to provide students with disabilities special education and related services, at public expense, designed to prepare those students for the future.
- IDEA: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is a federal law that ensures special education and related services to eligible children with disabilities throughout the nation.
- MTSS: Multi Tiered Systems of Support is an integrated framework for the systemic alignment of research-based prevention and intervention practices to support all the needs of all students. MTSS encompasses academic, behavioral, and mental health/wellness support for all learners.
- OOT: Out of Timeline represents the number of evaluations that are beyond the required 45 school day timeline provided through the state.
- REEDs: Review of Existing Evaluation Data is the process to review student level data to determine if a student requires additional assessment for continued eligibility and/or make adjustments to their programming needs. Also known as triennial as it occurs every three years.

Appendix 2: Supporting Implementation Data / Research

Research on special education evaluations and Child Find emphasizes the critical role of both in ensuring that children with disabilities receive the appropriate services and support in a timely manner. Parents and students are afforded rights for the provision and completion of timely evaluations through federal and state guidelines, including protections under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Legal Framework.

- TEA Order, Priority 3 Monthly Reporting ([TEA - Austin ISD Agreed Order - 9/25/23](#))
- [Technical Assistance: Child Find & Evaluation](#)
- The Texas [The Texas Legal Framework](#)

Appendix 3: Defining the Progress Measure

CPM 1.2 SPED Evaluations

Constraint progress measure CPM 1.2 for special education evaluations was developed to ensure student rights are protected and to closely monitor evaluation progress and timeliness. Timely special education evaluations are essential in helping identify the specific needs of students who may require additional support in their learning. Primarily, the CPM 1.2 emphasizes that the evaluations requested (regardless of total number) be completed within legal compliance timelines.

- The CPM states, “the number of pending evaluations will be less than the set goals for summer, fall, and spring at 0 evaluations exceeding the required evaluation timelines by December 2025.” Primarily, the CPM emphasizes that the evaluations requested (regardless of total number) be completed within legal compliance timelines.
- Key performance indicators for this constraint to ensure the district is meeting their state and



federal obligations include:

- Number of pending evaluations (in and out of timeline)
- Number of completed evaluations