

**Illinois State Board of Education  
Division of Funding and Disbursement Services**

**Special Education Personnel  
Questions and Answers**

Special Education Personnel Reimbursement is authorized under Section 14-13.01 of the School Code and provides supplemental reimbursement to school districts and special education joint agreements for certified and non-certified personnel providing direct and support services to students with disabilities who are receiving special education and related services in accordance with an Individualized Education Program (IEP). This document is provided to assist local education agencies with answers to common questions related to the program.

Please note that rulemaking for [23 Illinois Admin Code Part 226](#) Special Education was completed and became effective August 22, 2011. Substantive changes impact Special Education Personnel Approval for the 2011-12 school year. Specifically, Section 226.850 has been added with changes to the list of qualified workers from whom reimbursement may be claimed.

For comprehensive information regarding the Special Education Personnel reimbursement program please refer to the [Special Education Personnel Approval Procedures](#) and the [Special Education Personnel Reimbursement Instructions](#).

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## **Which Certified and Non-Certified Work Assignments are no longer valid?**

Effective with the Part 226 Special Education administrative rule changes on August 22, 2011 the following work assignments are no longer valid:

- NBK – Bookkeeper (Non-Certified Position)
- NCU – Custodian (Non-Certified Position)
- NLP – Lunchroom/Playground (Paraprofessional Non-Certified Position)
- NSC – Secretary (Non-Certified Position)
- NZZ – Other Noncertified Employee (Non-Certified Position)
- PAR – Art Teacher (Certified Position)
- PBM – Business Manager/Business Manager Assistant (Certified Position)
- PDR – Drama Teacher (Certified Position)
- PHE – Home Economics Teacher (Certified Position)
- PIA – Industrial Arts Teacher (Certified Position)
- PMU – Music Teacher (Certified Position)
- PVO – Vocational Education Teacher (Certified Position)

## **Have any work assignments changed?**

Yes, the following work assignments have changed:

- BHH – Hearing Impairment (Bilingual) changed to:  
BDH – Deaf & Hard of Hearing (Bilingual)
- BVI – Blind & Visual Impairment (Bilingual) changed to:  
BBV – Blind & Visual Sighted (Bilingual)
- ED – Emotional Disturbance/Behavior Disorder (Certified Position) changed to:  
SED – Emotional Disturbance/Behavior Disorder (Certified Position)
- HI – Hearing Impairment (Certified Position) changed to:  
DHH – Deaf & Hard of Hearing (Certified Position)
- PCI – School Counselor Intern (Certified Position) changed to:  
SCOI – School Counselor Intern (Certified Position)
- PGC – School Counselor/Guidance Counselor (Certified Position) changed to:  
SCOU – School Counselor/Guidance Counselor (Certified Position)
- PI – Orthopedic Impairment (Certified Position) changed to:  
PH – Physically Handicapped (Certified Position)
- STN – School Nurse (Certified Position) changed to:  
SN – School Nurse (Certified Position)
- VI – Visual Impairment (Certified Position) changed to:  
BPS – Blind & Partially Sighted (Certified Position)

## **Are there any new work assignments?**

Yes, TA – Individual Instruction Aide (Paraprofessional Non-Certified Position)

**What is the amount of reimbursement a district or cooperative is eligible to receive for special education personnel?**

Per Section 14-13.01 of the School Code [105 ILCS 5/14-13.01] as amended by P.A. 95-070, all districts and special education joint agreements that employ individuals who work full-time in special education for the entire school year (i.e. 180 days), can claim and receive a maximum of \$9,000 for an eligible certified position and a maximum of \$3,500 for an eligible non-certified position. Additional reimbursement is available for employees who work during the summer and provide extended year services to fulfill the individualized education plan (IEP) of students with disabilities. A maximum of 55 additional days or 235 days total can be claimed.

For each full-time certified professional the state reimburses the lesser of

- a.) The local salary per teacher (defined as total salary minus federal funds)
- b.) The full-time equivalent (FTE) days of the teacher divided by 180 times \$9,000

For each non-certified staff worker the state reimburses the lesser of

- a.) The local salary per worker (defined as total salary minus federal funds)
- b.) One-half of the total salary (defined as all funds that contribute to total salary)
- c.) The full-time equivalent (FTE) days of the worker divided by 180 times \$3,500

For each staff worker serving children in a home or hospital setting the state reimburses the lesser of:

- a.) One-half of the total salary (defined as all funds that contribute to total salary)
- b.) The full time equivalent (FTE) of the pupils served multiplied by \$1,000
- c.) \$9,000 maximum per teacher

For each reader working with blind or partially seeing children the state reimburses the lesser of:

- a.) One-half of the total salary (defined as all funds that contribute to total salary)
- b.) The full-time equivalent (FTE) of the pupils served multiplied by \$400

**What is Full-Time Equivalency (FTE)?**

For purposes of the Special Education Personnel Reimbursement program, full-time equivalency is a mathematical calculation that represents the amount of time a person is employed for a special education function. FTE is determined by dividing the number of hours employed in special education by the number of hours in a normal work day (e.g. 4 hours / 8 hours = .5 FTE). No individual may be claimed for more than 1.0 FTE across all special education work assignments unless a written request is sent to the Division of Funding and Disbursement Services with a rationale explaining the reason for the excess FTE. Approval is considered on a case-by-case basis when a person is employed by more than one district.

### **How are days of employment calculated for full-term contract employees?**

The days of employment must be 180 days for the regular term plus the days established by the district board of education and approved for the summer term (max 55 days)prior to the regular term, if any. The total days of employment cannot exceed 235 days in one calendar year and should include:

- Sick leave days
- Personal leave days
- Approved institute or workshop days
- Approved parent-teacher full-day conference days
- Board-granted holidays
- Approved Act of God days
- Approved Hazardous Threat to Health and Safety days

### **What do the “status codes” mean on the special education approval and reimbursement forms?**

The status codes indicate the approval status of each work assignment code listed for a staff member based upon a verification of the credentials held by the individual.

- Status code ‘1’ indicates that the work assignment is approved;
- Status code ‘2’ indicates the individual has a time-specific approval;
- Status code ‘3’ indicates that the work assignment is disapproved; and
- Status code ‘5’ indicates a temporary approval based on a provisional certificate issued for only part of the school year.
- Status code ‘4’ indicates that a work assignment was disapproved but the other work assignment(s) entered were approved; partial reimbursement will be made.

### **What are the requirements to claim a director (DIR) or assistant director (PAD) of special education?**

Per [23 Ill Admin Section 226.800\(g\)](#) all school districts must employ a *full-time* director of special education (emphasis added). If a district is part of a special education joint agreement, the director of the cooperative must be full-time and fulfill this requirement for each of its member districts. The director must possess a Type 75 Administrator certificate and a director of special education endorsement per [23 Ill Admin Code Section 25.365](#). An assistant director of special education (PAD) is not required to be full-time, but must possess a Type 75 certificate and a director of special education endorsement.

### **What are the requirements to claim a special education supervisor (SUP)?**

A supervisor is not required to be employed full-time in special education, but must possess a supervisory certificate or endorsement for supervising and must have approval, endorsement, or certification in the disability area(s) they are supervising. This means that a Type 75 Administrative certificate in combination with a Type 03 (Elementary) or Type 09 (High School) certificate would not qualify a person to supervise special education unless they had a special education area of endorsement or approval on file with the ISBE Certification Division. If all of the conditions are met, special education supervisors are eligible for reimbursement.

**If a teacher holds an early childhood certificate, can the district claim that person as an early childhood special education (ECT) teacher?**

No. An early childhood teaching certificate is not sufficient for approval of the ECT work assignment. Early childhood special education (ECT) approval must be obtained through the certification process using [ISBE Form 73-26](#).

**What are the requirements to claim a school nurse (SN) or a registered nurse (NHA)?**

School nurses claimed for Special Education Personnel Reimbursement must meet the following approval criteria:

- The nurse must be approved on the special education approval file prior to being claimed for reimbursement as a school nurse (STN).
- The nurse must be approved with Type 73 (School Service Personnel Certificate) or Type 74 (Provisional School Service Personnel Certificate), endorsed as a School Nurse.
- A registered nurse must be approved as a Non-Certified Health Aide (NHA) to qualify for reimbursement.

Claimable FTE for school nurses must be documented to distinguish unique functions performed for special education students that are over and above functions for the regular school population (e.g. case study referrals or reevaluations). Non-claimable FTE would include, but is not limited to, Child Find screenings, dispensing daily medication or attending to unexpected injuries.

A job description with specific language that describes the duties and time serving special education students can be used to document claimable FTE. Another example of acceptable documentation would be the completion of a time and effort study that logs daily activities in quarter day increments during the school year. The reports can be summarized every two weeks in conjunction with a normal payroll cycle. A service log can be used to assist in the development of the time and effort study and used as a guide for calculating appropriate FTE.

**Can a district claim a physical education teacher who is working with special education students?**

Yes. The teacher must have approval for Adaptive Physical Education (PPE) and be teaching a class of all special education students. The period(s) of the school day spent teaching special education students may be claimed. However, teaching a classroom that includes a blend of special education and general education students is not claimable unless a general education teacher is co-teaching with the PPE teacher.

**What is the recourse if the district cannot find a fully qualified special education teacher?**

A district that is unable to employ a fully qualified LBS1 teacher for students with a specific learning disability (SLD), an emotional disturbance (ED), cognitive disability/mental retardation (MR), or an orthopedic impairment (PI), must request a Short-Term Emergency Special Education Certificate using [ISBE Form 73-86](#).

**Can the district claim teachers given a Short-Term Emergency Special Education Certificate?**

Districts should report the disability codes for the students that the teacher is serving. ISBE will verify proper certification, including this new certificate.

**Can substitute teachers be listed on the special education approval file?**

Substitute teachers with a Type 39 certificate are not credentialed in a specific disability and therefore cannot be listed on the approval file. However, a certified teacher holding an early childhood, elementary, high school or special certificate credentialed in a specific disability may substitute teach for a period not to exceed 120 school days, can be listed on the approval file and receive reimbursement.

**A teacher is under contract but is being docked for disciplinary reasons. Can the district hire a substitute teacher and be reimbursed?**

Yes. A certified substitute teacher may be placed on the special education approval file and claimed for reimbursement if the substitute teacher is properly credentialed for the position. A person who possesses a substitute Type 39 certificate only does not qualify for reimbursement.

**Should all certificates that an instructor has obtained be placed on the approval file?**

No. The work assignment entries on the approval file should reflect the primary disability of the students the teacher is serving. A maximum of three work assignments can be entered. ISBE will check for valid certification.

**Can a program aide be assigned to more than one teacher and still be claimed?**

For purposes of special education personnel reimbursement, special education aides are not assigned to a particular teacher. A “floater” working all day in special education can be reported for approval and claimed for reimbursement.

**Under what circumstances are non-certified employees other than aides approved?**

Certain work assignments are reimbursable for personnel employed in separate schools or in schools having separate special education classrooms. For example, a non-certified health aide assigned full-time to a school serving only special education students would be reimbursable for the time spent at that separate school.

**Can a special education teacher who is teaching a class with a blend of students with disabilities and general education students who are assigned to the class be claimed for reimbursement?**

Special education personnel reimbursement is applicable to staff who are teaching students with disabilities. If there is a single teacher in a blended class, no FTE is claimable; however, the special education teacher can be claimed if he or she is teaching students with disabilities along with a general education co-teacher in the same class.

**Can a special education certified teacher, providing Tier 2 or Tier 3 interventions to students who do not have IEPs, be claimed for Sp Ed Personnel reimbursement?**

No. If the special education teacher is not providing approved special education services to students pursuant to IEPs then personnel reimbursement is not appropriate. Furthermore, although it may be appropriate to utilize the special educator in the provision of those interventions, districts should be exercising care in how that is actually implemented and make sure boundaries are not being overstepped in providing special education services without first going through the appropriate evaluation and drafting an IEP.

**A student with disabilities attends a general education classroom for one class a day. The instructor is a general education teacher. The student has a one-on-one aide while in the classroom. Can the district claim reimbursement for the time the aide spends one-on-one with the student with disabilities?**

Yes. If the IEP for the student requires a one-on-one aide and the aide is approved through the special education approval procedures, the district can claim reimbursement.

**Can a district claim a teacher who instructs a student with disabilities in a jail, detention center or correctional institution?**

Yes, as long as the costs for the teacher are not being claimed under the special education individual orphanage program. A certified special education teacher must provide instruction for a student with disabilities to fulfill the IEP. If the student does not have an IEP, the district must complete a diagnostic evaluation of the student and develop an appropriate IEP.

**Are interns claimable for special education personnel reimbursement and if so, what ID Codes should be used on the claim?**

Yes. A district may claim reimbursement for interns (i.e. School Counselor Intern, School Psychologist Intern, School Nurse Intern, School Social Worker Intern, Speech/Language Pathologist Intern) if they are entered on the special education approval file and verified with the Division of Certification at ISBE. Enter ID Code 1 if at least a portion of the employee's salary is being paid with local funds. Enter ID Code 7 if the employee's salary is fully paid with funding sources other than local funds.

**If a district does not consider study hall as instruction time, and teachers have a full day schedule without the study hall, when the district uses special education teachers to supervise such a study hall, can the teachers be claimed as working full-time in special education?**

No. Study hall is considered instructional time regardless of how the district defines it. If special education teachers supervise a study hall which includes any regular education students, the time claimed for special education reimbursement must be prorated.

**Can the district claim special education personnel reimbursement for certain non-instructional staff based on the ratio of students served to the total number of students assigned? For example, if a guidance counselor has a caseload of 100 students and 10 of these are special education students, could 10% of the counselor's time be claimed for personnel reimbursement?**

No. Persons employed to perform a regular education function are not reimbursable because they also perform the same function for a student with disabilities. Special education personnel reimbursement is limited to persons who are assigned to perform a special education function, not a general education function. Adequate documentation of employee time and effort must be kept to document claimable FTE and reimbursement. A job description with specific language that describes the duties and time serving students with disabilities can be used to document claimable FTE. Another example of acceptable documentation would be the completion of a time and effort study that logs daily activities in quarter day increments during the school year. The reports can be summarized every two weeks in conjunction with a normal payroll cycle. A service log can be used to assist in the development of the time and effort study and used as a guide for calculating appropriate FTE.

**Why are regular term days sometimes recalculated by ISBE when processing the reimbursement claim?**

Regular term days are recalculated due to the approved term code or because of certification issuance dates. ISBE reimburses for 30 days prior to the issuance date pursuant to Section 14-12.01 of the School Code.

**Who is claimable for summer school?**

Summer term reimbursement is allowable for special education personnel who provide instruction to students who require extended year services (ESY) per their IEP. This should not be equated with a teacher who simply teaches summer school. Please see the [November 2001 memorandum](#) regarding the distinction between summer school and extended year services. Reimbursement also extends to persons who work directly with students in a diagnostic capacity or for other personnel needed to support instruction and diagnostic staff. Reimbursement is not allowed for office or other clerical staff that work during the summer.

### **How is summer term FTE computed?**

In order to claim summer term special education personnel reimbursement, as authorized by Section 18-4.3 of the School Code, at least 60 total class hours of instruction is required, with 4 class hours constituting one summer school day. In addition to the required 60 class hours of instruction, the district is allowed to count class preparation time by the teacher. Summer term full-time equivalency is computed by dividing the class hours employed by 4 class hours.

### **A district conducts special education early childhood classes during the summer term for students who are three to five years of age. The class hours are two hours a day, not four hours. Can the district claim reimbursement for the certified teachers?**

To receive full reimbursement, four class hours per day are required for summer term. However, if the children can only attend two hours a day, calculate the FTE by dividing the class hours employed by four class hours ( $2/4 = .500$  FTE). If the district has 50 summer term days, enter .500 FTE and 50 days in the appropriate fields on the Special Education Personnel Reimbursement claim.

### **How are days of employment for contract employees hired or terminated during the term calculated?**

Any individual, certified or non-certified, employed for less than full-term (180 days) whose compensation is based on a specified amount per hour, or a specified amount per day, and whose condition of employment does not include compensation for sick leave, personal leave, approved institute or workshop, approved parent-teacher full-day conference, board-granted holiday, approved Act of God Day, and/or approved hazard threat to health and safety day, can only be included on special education personnel reimbursement claim for the actual number of days worked and paid.

### **Can districts claim Teacher Retirement System (TRS) contributions as local salary?**

Districts may claim TRS contributions as salary when the district pays a salary and deducts a portion of that salary for TRS. For example, if a salary of \$60,000 is paid and \$5,000 of the total is deducted for TRS contributions then \$5,000 can be claimed as local salary. However, if the district pays a salary of \$60,000 and pays an additional \$5,000 contribution to TRS, the additional amount is not part of the salary and is non-claimable.

### **Can a stipend be claimed as a part of the local salary?**

If a stipend is not part of the contractual salary, stipends cannot be included in the salary column.

### **What is considered local funds?**

Per the Illinois Program Accounting Manual, local funds are those that are identified as unrestricted grants-in-aid in revenue classifications 3000 or 4000 or any revenue posted in revenue classification 1000 that can be appropriately used for salaries.

**Can transportation personnel be approved and claimed for reimbursement?**

No. Transportation aides and other transportation personnel cannot be claimed for special education personnel reimbursement. Costs for these staff can be claimed on the district or cooperative's Annual Claim for Pupil Transportation Reimbursement.

**An approved non-certified health aide is working 10% of the day with students with disabilities, can this time be claimed?**

The staff member may be claimable; however, when personnel are assigned to special education functions on a part-time basis, ISBE auditors will require that the special education FTE be clearly documented through time sheets. The district will also want to specify what functions the health aide is performing beyond what is performed for the regular education population.

**Does Staff Development training qualify for summer school reimbursement?**

No, Staff Development training does not qualify for summer school reimbursement. Reimbursement is for days employed for the instruction of students who need extended year service per their IEP.

**When computing special education personnel reimbursement claims, what salary costs can be included and can I include benefits?**

Claim only the salary costs that are included in the teacher's contract for regular days and summer days, if included. Enter only salary in the salary fields. Do not include insurance, fringe benefits, FICA or workman's compensation.

**Can a district receive Special Education Personnel reimbursement for a Driver's Education Instructor who teaches driver's education to special education students?**

No, Driver's Education is funded through the Driver's Education Program and therefore does not qualify for Special Education Personnel reimbursement.