

Act Early to Simplify End-of-Year Special Education Reporting & Data Review

Three districts discuss how and when they use their special education data to get a jump start on end-of-year planning.



— INTRODUCTION

Year-end reporting:

does it send shivers up your spine? It takes a lot of time to collect the data, and even more time to review it — and it's no secret that time is already hard to come by in special education, especially at the end of the year.



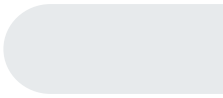
Yet end-of-year data offers an extraordinary opportunity to efficiently close out this school year and plan for the next, so you can hit the ground running. By getting a jumpstart early, you'll have more time to compile your reports AND use data to make planning and staffing decisions for the next school year.

To get a better understanding of how end-of-year data can be effectively leveraged with such limited time, we asked three districts to share their challenges and best-practice tips.

As you'll see, this is not a one-size-fits-all process! But it's exciting to see common themes around proactively using data as an end-of-year planning tool.



What Your Peers in Special Education Say About the End-of-Year Reporting & Review Process



— WHAT YOUR PEERS SAY

When does your organization's end-of-year data review process typically start?

South Sector — United Independent School District:

“April.”

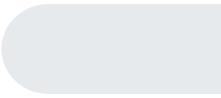
Pine Tree Independent School District:

“May. We like to take a month to make sure everything is under control before people leave for the summer. It takes about 1-2 weeks total, with all individuals involved, start to finish.”

Katy Independent School District:

“We start reviewing in January or February, to nail down student population numbers and staffing needs as early as possible before the end of the year.”





— WHAT YOUR PEERS SAY

Who reviews the data and what's involved?

South Sector — United Independent School District:

“The special education director along with special education process facilitators meet to discuss and review data.”

Pine Tree Independent School District:

“Primarily, me (the special education director) and my secretary. But other administrative and assessment staff members understand how to analyze reports, and we do discuss as a team frequently.”

Katy Independent School District:

“Starting in January, we review the data as a team of three or separately, as needed — these are shorter meetings designed to ensure all of the data is in the best shape possible and showing a live view of information, also to ensure we’re not losing any data. At the end of the year, the district leadership team sets aside three days for a comprehensive review of all the data from the past year.”





— WHAT YOUR PEERS SAY

Does end-of-year data review help you measure the efficacy of this past year's program?

South Sector — United Independent School District:

"This is our first year reviewing."

Pine Tree Independent School District:

"Yes. The goal of the district is to include as many students as possible in the general education program, and the end-of-year data paired with assessment data and discipline data can help us determine the effectiveness of the program."

Katy Independent School District:

"We currently use the data more to plan ahead than look back. We don't really use the data to consistently measure program, student or staff success — though we do use it to keep us organized throughout the school year."





— WHAT YOUR PEERS SAY

How does data help you plan for the next school year?

South Sector — United Independent School District:

“Identifying programs and systems that proved successful this year, anticipate staff development needs, changes in programs and procedures that were not effective this year and planning for the beginning of the next school year.”

“Resource planning benefits translate to students, too, because staff can be moved more effectively to better support students.”

Katy Independent School District:

“It’s helpful in compliance planning. Seeing a live view of how many students we’re evaluating on a monthly and yearly basis. To make projections for how many special education students will be in our district, and moving around to various schools within our district, in the coming school year. We also use it to see enrollment trends at each campus as we determine how we’re going to staff educational diagnosticians and speech pathologists for each campus.”

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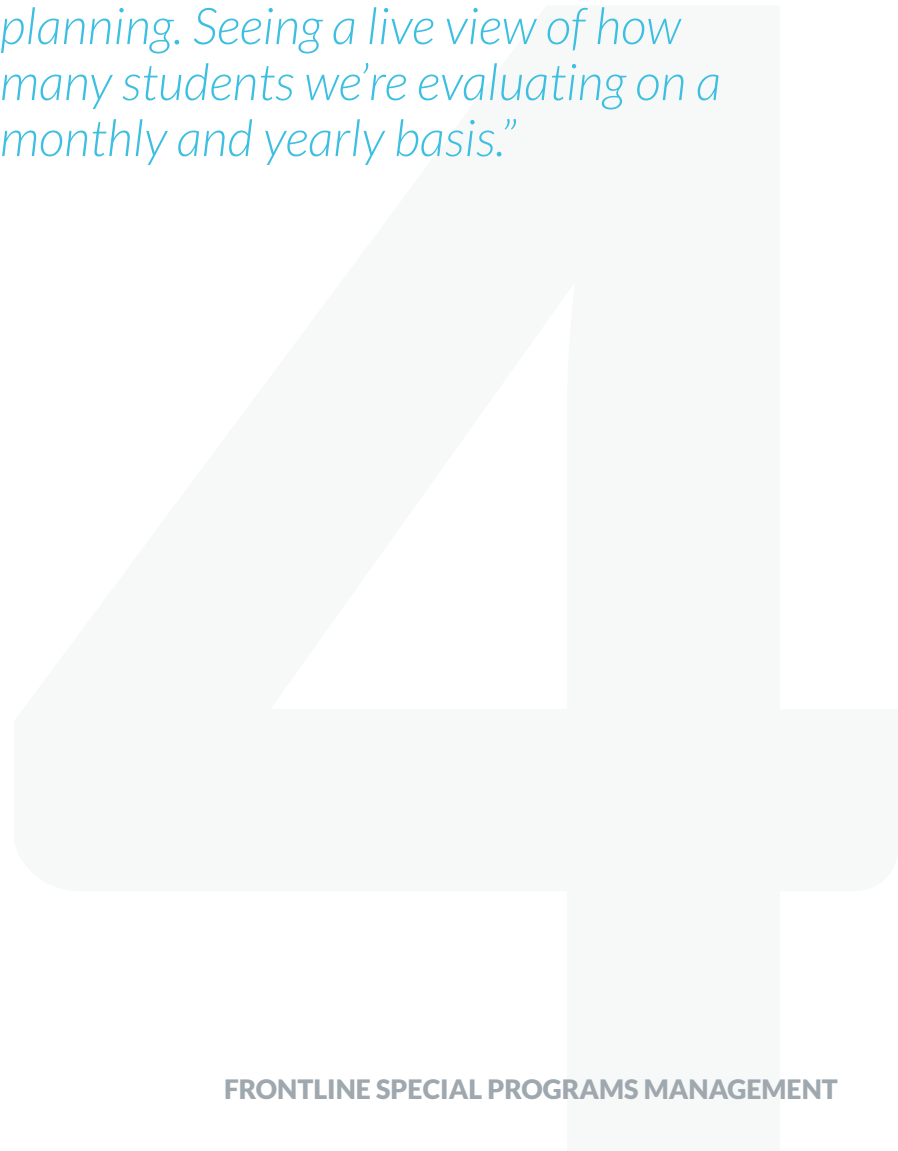


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Pine Tree Independent School District:

“Placement of service data will tell us how many students are in inclusion and how many are going to be in resource by campus next school year. We’ll use data to plan staff and decide if we’re going to have to move staff, add staff or take away staff to cover kids. Because of the data, this process can now be done in advance of the school year starting. Resource planning benefits translate to students, too, because staff can be moved more effectively to better support students. I can now preemptively pair the right students with the right staff. We’ll also use data to make sure resource planning aligns with budget.”

“[Year-end data] is helpful in compliance planning. Seeing a live view of how many students we’re evaluating on a monthly and yearly basis.”





— WHAT YOUR PEERS SAY

Which data and reports are most helpful?

South Sector — United Independent School District:

“Data for transition planning, behavior intervention plans, special education next annual review dates, re-evaluation review dates. We’ll review audit reports, demographic reports and discipline reports.”

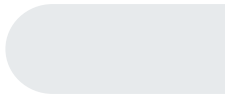
Pine Tree Independent School District:

“Student name, date of birth, grade, campus, instructional arrangement code, speech code, related services data. We use the annual state-specific special education and FIE reports. The 504 report helps to identify students with dyslexia, so we can compare teacher caseloads.”

Katy Independent School District:

“Student disability code, how many transfer students are in our district, how many students are evaluated each month, how many meetings are held each month, how many students we started with in our special education programs — and how many we end the year with, pending referrals, reports to make sure the status for each student is filled in to our data management system.”





— WHAT YOUR PEERS SAY

What challenges do you face?

South Sector — United Independent School District:

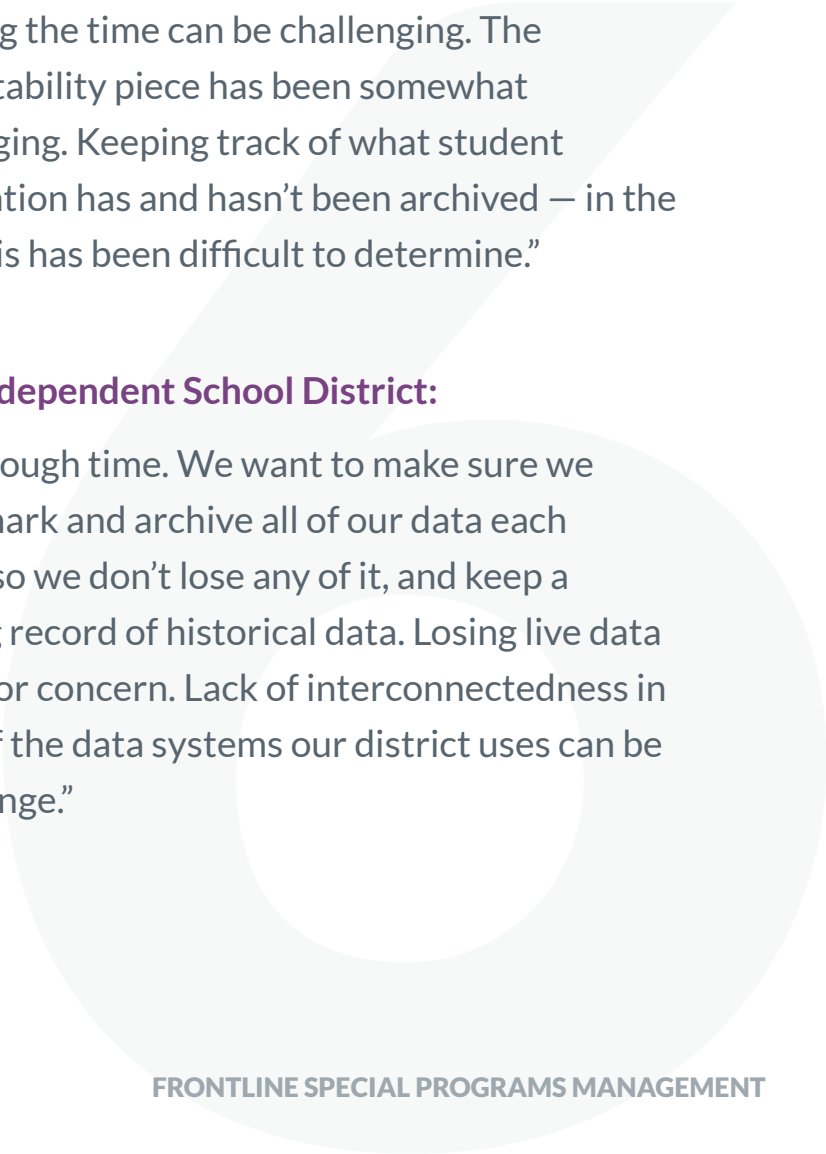
“Staff has continued to work on active files instead of creating drafts; it is imperative to have the ability to lock active files once (student information) is archived to help maintain active and historic student records.”

Pine Tree Independent School District:

“Finding the time can be challenging. The accountability piece has been somewhat challenging. Keeping track of what student information has and hasn’t been archived — in the past, this has been difficult to determine.”

Katy Independent School District:

“Not enough time. We want to make sure we benchmark and archive all of our data each month so we don’t lose any of it, and keep a running record of historical data. Losing live data is a major concern. Lack of interconnectedness in some of the data systems our district uses can be a challenge.”



— FINAL THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER

It's safe to say that end-of-year data review in special education is a MAJOR effort — but all four districts used insights gathered during this process to inform plans for the next school year. Time and data loss were common challenges, while better compliance and resource management were common goals.

Do these themes resonate with what you've experienced in the trenches? Are there other ways your team can use data that will positively affect your students and staff next year?

— LEARN MORE

For information on how our state-specific Special Programs Management software can help you protect, archive and benchmark your data, please visit:

FrontlineEducation.com/Special-Ed-Software ➞

These interviews have been edited for brevity and clarity.

About Frontline Education

Frontline Education is a leading provider of school administration software, connecting solutions for student and special programs, business operations and human capital management with powerful data and analytics to empower educators. Frontline partners with school systems to deliver tools, data and insights that support greater efficiency and productivity, enabling school leaders to spend more time and resources executing strategies that drive educator effectiveness, student success and district excellence. Frontline's broad portfolio includes solutions for proactive recruiting and hiring, absence and time management, professional growth, student information systems, special education, special programs, Medicaid reimbursement, school health management, inventory control and asset management, payroll, benefits, and financial management. Over 9,500 school districts representing millions of educators, administrators and support personnel have partnered with Frontline Education in their efforts to develop the next generation of learners.