

ISBE Guidance for Nonpublic Special Education Programs

**Chief Administrator and Supervisor
Requirements**

July 2026

Overview

This document is intended to provide guidance to nonpublic special education programs on the new chief administrator requirement that takes effect beginning with the 2026-27 school year.

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) is committed to ensuring that facilities have appropriate staff on site to administer and supervise their programs.

As listed in 23 Ill. Adm. Code 401.240(a):

Beginning with 2026-2027 school year, each facility's staff must include a full-time chief administrator of a special school or, in the instance the chief administrator oversees multiple program locations, a full-time supervisor or administrator who is located onsite and meets the requirements of 23 Ill. Adm. Code 226.800(g) or holds a valid professional educator license and a general administrative, principal, or director of special education endorsement, unless a head teacher is serving as permitted by Section 10-21.4a of the School Code, in which case the head teacher shall be required to hold a supervisory endorsement. This shall be allowable at educational programs with no more than three teachers, including the head teacher.

This document provides guidance on the following areas:

- Chief administrator requirements
- Supervisor requirements
- ISBE program accountability

Chief Administrator Requirements

Beginning with the 2026-27 school year, each nonpublic special education facility approved by ISBE must list a full-time chief administrator of a special school on the personnel roster.

Per 23 Ill. Adm. Code 226.800(h), the chief administrator must meet the following qualifications:

- Hold a Professional Educator License (PEL) with a Learning Behavior Specialist I (LBS1), Teacher of Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired, or Teacher of Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing endorsement
- Have a principal, director of special education, or general administrative endorsement

Supervisor Requirements

If a provider has a chief administrator who oversees multiple program locations, each location must, at minimum, have a full-time on-site supervisor at the facility. The employee listed as the full-time supervisor must meet the following criteria and be listed on the personnel roster as the supervisor.

- LBS1 + supervisory endorsement
- PEL + school support personnel endorsement + supervisory endorsement + two years of special education experience
- LBS1 + administrative endorsement (general administrative, principal, or director of special education)
- LBS1 + administrative endorsement (general administrative, principal, director of special education, superintendent, or chief school business official)
- PEL + administrative endorsement (general administrative, principal, or director of special education)

Other Considerations

The following questions and answers address additional considerations related to the chief administrator and supervisor requirements.

- 1. If a provider operates multiple program locations, may the chief administrator serve in the full-time on-site role for one program location while overseeing other program locations? For example, if an organization has three sites, can two of the sites have a dedicated site supervisor and the third site list the chief administrator as on site at that location to supervise the program?**

Per 23 Ill. Adm. Code 401.240(a), each facility's staff must include a full-time chief administrator of a special school or a full-time supervisor or administrator located on site. A chief administrator is not prohibited from serving as the full-time administrator of a specific location while overseeing one or more other program locations; however, the chief administrator's oversight obligations cannot conflict with their ability to serve as a full-time on-site administrator for their specific program location.

- 2. Will ISBE continue to allow sitting administrators of currently approved programs hired prior to the 2016 update to the definition of chief administrator of a special school in Section 226.800 to qualify to serve in the chief administrator role?**

Yes, chief administrators who are currently qualified and serving in this role will continue to be allowed to hold this position.

Please note that initial applications or new administrative hires to existing approved programs will be required to demonstrate adherence to 23 Ill. Adm. Code 226.800(h).

Any program that has an administrator hired in 2017 or 2018 to whom Question 2 applies must provide ISBE a letter stating such by the start of the 2026-27 school year and every thereafter while the administrator is employed.

Licenses/Certifications That Meet Site Supervisor Requirements per 23 Ill. Adm. Code 401.20

Supervisory Endorsements Relevant to PEL		Administrative Endorsement
23 Ill. Adm. Code 226.800(g)(2)(A)	23 Ill. Adm. Code 226.800(g)(2)(B)	23 Ill. Adm. Code 226.800(g)(2)(C)
1. One of the following PELs: • LBS1 • Teacher of Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired • Teacher of Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing • Early childhood special education 2. Supervisory endorsement relevant to PEL 3. Two years of teaching experience in that area	1. PEL with school support personnel endorsement that includes any one of the following: • School social worker • School psychologist • School counselor • School nurse • Speech language pathologist 2. Supervisory endorsement relevant to PEL 3. Two years of experience in that area	1. One of the following PELs: • LBS1 • Teacher of Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired • Teacher of Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing 2. Administrative endorsement issued pursuant to 23 Ill. Adm. Code 25.43 that includes any one of the following: • Superintendent (23 Ill. Adm. Code 25.355 or 25.311) • Principal* (23 Ill. Adm. Code 25.337) • Chief school business official (23 Ill. Adm. Code 25.345) • Director of Special Education* (23 Ill. Adm. Code 25.365) *Note: Holding the principal and/or director of special education endorsement along with any one of the PELs listed above also meets the requirements for chief administrator of a special school according to 23 Ill. Adm. Code 226.800(h).

Any valid PEL along with administrative endorsement issued pursuant to 23 Ill. Adm. Code 25.337 or 25.365 that includes any one of the following:

- Principal (23 Ill. Adm. Code 25.337)
- Director of special education (23 Ill. Adm. Code 25.365)

- General administrative endorsement

Accountability

Programs that cannot maintain the new requirements of the chief administrator will be required to adhere to the following notification requirements.

Notification Requirements

Per 23 Ill. Adm. Code 401.20(b):

(4) Any change in the number, type, or duties of the professional or paraprofessional positions identified as part of the application for SBE approval of an educational program or the education component of a combination program, or in the licensure/certification status or credentials of any individual employed in such a position, if the change will affect the program's compliance with the requirements of this Part.

(4)(A) If any professional staff position subject to the notification requirements of this subsection (b)(4) remains vacant, the provider shall provide written notification to the State Superintendent and to the placing public school districts after 20 business days, after 40 business days, and again every 40 business days thereafter until the vacant position has been filled of its attempts to permanently fill those positions and of other efforts, including the use of substitutes or the use of virtual instruction, undertaken in order to provide necessary instruction and related services to the students enrolled.

Programs that continue to not meet the requirements of the chief administrator after 40 business days may receive a status change to administrative review per 23 Ill. Adm. Code 401.240(d):

If the State Superintendent determines that a program has been operated for more than 40 business days in noncompliance with the requirements of this Section, the State Superintendent shall change the provider's SBE approval status accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Section 401.30.

If after the status change to administrative review (80 days) a program continues to not follow the chief administrative requirement, additional status changes could occur.

- 40 days: notification requirement
- 80 days: administrative review
- 40 days: pending review
- 40 days: pending review if showing progress
- Total = 200 days



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