



Special Courses and Special Programs of Study

Application Guidance 2023-2024

Tennessee Department of Education | January 2023



Overview

Special courses and special programs of study (SPOS) allow a local education agency (LEA) and public charter schools an opportunity to offer elective courses to students that may be interesting, part of a special program of study through College, Career and Technical Education (CTE), or an advanced course. In accordance with [Special Courses Policy 3.201](#), LEAs and public charter schools shall seek approval from the Tennessee Department of Education (department) for new special courses in advance of each school year in which the special course will be offered by submitting a special courses application to the department. The department will make recommendations to the State Board of Education to approve courses for the following school year.

Submission Deadline

All applications must be submitted in ePlan by Feb. 15, 2023.

Key Steps

- LEAs and public charter schools apply to the department for a special course or SPOS.
 - Applications open in January and are submitted through ePlan.
- Applications are reviewed by the department's content coordinators for academic standards alignment and a determination of whether a course submission will be recommended for approval to State Board of Education.
- LEAs and public charter schools are notified of the department's decision to recommend the course to State Board of Education through ePlan notifications.
- LEAs and public charter schools have an opportunity to revise a submission if the course was denied at the department level. Resubmissions take place through ePlan.
- Courses are recommended to State Board of Education at the May meeting for final approval to be used for the following school year.

Pre-planning Application Questions

LEAs and public charter schools can access the application questions ahead of submitting the formal application in ePlan. The questions are formatted in a Word document which allows the user to complete questions and gather required materials.

Application questions can be found on the department's website.

The completed application question packet may be utilized as a presentation tool for local board meetings seeking approval to formally apply for a special course or SPOS.

Statements of Assurance

There are several statements of assurance that LEAs and public charter schools must certify in order to offer a special course or SPOS. Both [T.C.A. § 49-6-1019](#) and [T.C.A. § 49-6-2206](#) include requirements pertinent to acceptable course content. All statements of assurance for special courses and SPOS are intended to verify the LEAs' and public charter schools' intention to ensure implementation of these, and all applicable, statutory requirements.

Public Charter Schools

In accordance with the revised Special Course Policy as of October 2022, a public charter school will be required to upload, to the "Related Documents" section, written notice to its authorizer of its intent to seek approval of the special course, including the title and primary objective of the special course on the school's official letterhead.

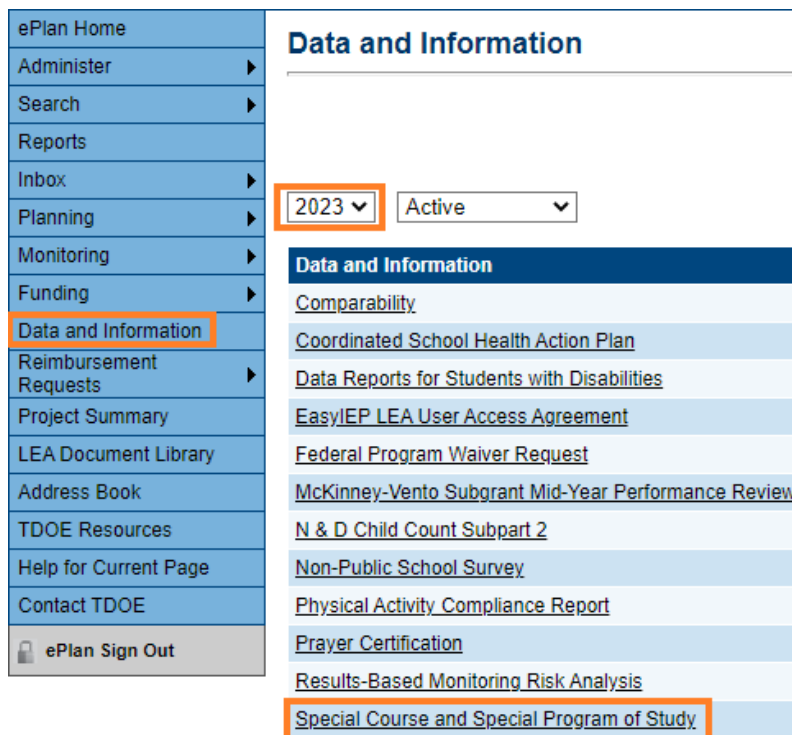
ePlan User Access Form

The LEA Special Course and Special Program of Study Director role is specific to an instructional supervisor. The only person who is permitted to complete an application in ePlan for special courses or a SPOS is a district level or public charter school instructional supervisor for either academics or CTE. Complete the [ePlan User Access form for LEAs](#) with the assignment under "Other Roles" as "LEA Special Course and Special Program of Study Director."

Navigating ePlan

Location of Application

Navigate to the [ePlan website](#). Then navigate to applications from the ePlan homepage, click the **Data and Information** tab on the left menu bar. **NOTE:** For users with ePlan roles for multiple organizations, return to ePlan home to select the correct organization before proceeding to Data and Information. Select the desired fiscal year (2023) from the dropdown in the upper left corner of the screen. Data and information tools are stored in ePlan according to the state fiscal year (i.e., 2022 indicates the 2021–22 school year). Click on **the Data and Information tool name** to access the tool.



The data and information tool loads to the Sections page. To begin the tool, next to **Change Status To:** click on **Draft Started**.



NOTE: Once a draft has been started, users may wish to access previous versions. To access previous versions, return to **Data and Information** and select the appropriate prior year.

Cover Page

The first page to complete in ePlan is the cover page. This series of questions requires details for the point of contact who will be responsible for any correspondence regarding the application. Only a district-level supervisor or public charter school instructional supervisor may apply for special courses and SPOS. Ensure all contact information provided is accurate.

Academic Course Details

Course content that is non-CTE will be completed in this section. The course details



outline the nature of the course content and how the course was developed. The applicant will provide a detailed justification for offering this course within their school(s). A thorough and specific course description is also required. LEAs and public charter schools should be prepared to provide all academic standards covered throughout the course.

Not Applicable Selection

There is an allowance of up to ten courses that may be applied for under the “Academics” section. For all courses that are not being applied for, the “N/A” checkbox must be made at the top of each course detail page prior to submitting as “LEA Special Course and Special Program of Study Director Draft Completed.”

N/A

Which content area best describes academic course 2?
Select...

Course Name: Be specific and include district name in the course title.

Course Level
Select...

CTE Program of Study Details

Program of study details will be submitted by course year. If the course is intended to be a beginner level course the questions in section “Year 1,” are required to be completed. Mostly, CTE SPOS applications will require all four course years to be entered, thus completing the course work for the four-year program. However, single special courses may be submitted that are CTE content but are not considered part of a program of study. The applicant will need to select the course year appropriate for the course work and complete that section only for an isolated CTE special course.

The course details outline the nature of the course content and how the course was developed. The applicant will provide a detailed justification for offering this course within their school(s). A thorough and specific course description is also required.

LEAs and public charter schools should be prepared to provide all academic standards taught throughout the course.

If no academic special courses are being applied for and only special programs of study are included, then the “Not Applicable” checkbox must be made for all ten academic courses in the Academic section. See the previous section in this guide for “Academics Course Details” for detailed information on “Not Applicable” checkbox.

Related Documents

In the “Related Documents” section, the applicant must upload a series of documents.

Academic Standards



- Download the provided academic standards template. Complete the document with all academic courses that will be taught during the course. Then, upload the completed document to the “Related Documents” section.

CTE Market Data Summary

- This data must be uploaded on district letterhead with a title that includes “Market data + SPOS title.” Upload the completed document to the “Related Documents” section.

Public Charter Schools

- Upload a copy of written notice to its authorizer of intent to apply for a special course or special program of study that includes the following:
 - The uploaded Word document or PDF must be completed on official school letterhead, signed by the principal, and dated prior to the date of application.
 - The notice must include the course title and primary objective of the special course or special program of study.
 - A separate notification must be completed for each course and or special program of study that will be applied for.

Approval Notification

The point of contact will be sent a notification in ePlan from the content coordinator reviewing the application. The notification will include if the course(s) is/are being recommended to State Board of Education, if additional information is needed, or if the course(s) is/are being denied. The LEA or public charter school may appeal a denial by submitting additional documentation to ePlan that would support a recommendation to state board for approval. The content coordinator will provide you with the



necessary information to assist you in an appeal. All documents must be submitted to ePlan. All courses that will be recommended to the State Board of Education will be heard during the May 2023 meeting. Following the State Board of Education meeting, course codes will be activated for approved special courses and special programs of study.

Additional Information

Contacts

For questions specific to the application process, please contact Lacey Noel at Lacey.Noel@tn.gov. For questions specific to CTE, please contact Chuck Carter at Chuck.Carter@tn.gov.