

Excellence in Education Grant Request

Empowering Diverse Learners: A Multisensory Approach to Supporting Literacy and Self-Regulation Skills in Students with Learning Disabilities

Program Description

The Resource Specialist Program (RSP) is a special education model designed to provide specialized academic instruction and support to students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) within their least restrictive environment. It is designed to serve students who spend most of their school day in the general education setting. Services include targeted pull-out instruction in literacy and math, as well as push-in support in the general education classroom. The resource specialist also collaborates with general education teachers to implement classroom accommodations. All aforementioned services and supports are provided with the intention of helping students with mild to moderate learning disabilities access the general education curriculum and reach their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) goals.

Prospective Impact

The materials requested in this grant could benefit all students receiving resource services and support at Tahoe Lake Elementary (TLE). Materials would be used by special educators and instructional aides using Room 26 to work with students receiving specialized academic instruction.

The following percentage of TLE students currently receive resource services and supports:

- Students receiving resource services and supports: 27 (projected to be 30-32 students by EOY 2025-2026)
- Total enrollment: 282
- % of students currently receiving resource services and supports: ≈10%

Program Objectives

Objective 1: Removing psychological barriers to learning.

Students with language-based learning disabilities face more than just academic hurdles. According to the International Dyslexia Association (IDA), students with dyslexia and other language-based learning disabilities are disproportionately likely to experience heightened

emotional distress and diminished self-esteem when confronted with challenging literacy tasks¹. This can often manifest as task avoidance or "shutting down" during reading intervention. Some students experience these challenges during writing and/or math intervention as well.

Currently, Room 26 lacks an organized calm-down space stocked with self-regulation tools. The goal of developing and promoting the use of this space is to create a comfortable learning space which promotes students' use of self-regulation tools and strategies to manage reactive emotional responses and transition to a regulated frame of mind, ready to engage in academic tasks. Without these tools, critical instructional minutes are lost to dysregulation rather than dedicated to building foundational literacy skills.

Objective 2: Provide high-quality multisensory structured language instruction.

All students currently receiving specialized academic instruction in Room 26 entered the RSP program well below benchmark according to Dynamic Indicators of Basic Literacy Skills (DIBELS) benchmark testing. To address this achievement gap in literacy, students with language-based learning disabilities require multisensory materials which are not included in the standard Sonday System reading intervention kit.

In addition, because every student's IEP is unique and includes goals and accommodations which cannot be fully addressed by any one prescribed program or curriculum, the Resource Specialist Program requires adaptable equipment, including a single-sheet laminator, to create individualized and durable supports (e.g., visual schedules, customized phonics manipulatives, and reusable graphic organizers). This tool represents a relatively low cost, one-time investment that allows the resource specialist to produce materials tailored to individual student needs.

Methods of Implementation

The calm-down space in Room 26 will serve as a space for students to reset in the same classroom where specialized academic instruction is being delivered. By providing sensory tools - including but not limited to visual breathing prompts, sensory seating options, and weighted therapy tools - this space allows students the opportunity to self-regulate without having to leave the classroom, saving vital instructional time. Having this space in the resource room also provides an opportunity for the resource specialist to practice self-regulation strategies with students in a low-risk environment, with the eventual goal of students using learned self-regulation strategies when faced with academic challenges in either the RSP or general education setting.

Regarding multisensory literacy tools, TLE uses the Sonday System for literacy intervention. As stated above, since students receiving specialized academic instruction have diverse learning profiles, additional resources need to be added to the stock Sonday System instructional materials in order to meet their varied needs. For example, sewing screens provide

¹ "Social and Emotional," International Dyslexia Association, accessed March 25, 2026, <https://dyslexiaida.org/social-emotional/>.

tactile sensory input, and word-mapping whiteboards provide essential scaffolding in reading and spelling for students with language-based learning disabilities. Incorporating research-based multisensory tools and strategies to supplement Sonday System lessons will promote student engagement by allowing students to access literacy concepts through various visual, auditory, kinesthetic and tactile (VAKT) pathways.

Measure of Success or Achievement

This effectiveness of the requested teaching materials will be assessed in a variety of ways. Formal and informal progress monitoring by teachers will evaluate students' literacy progress with standards-based concepts. TLE uses Dynamic Indicators of Basic Literacy Skills (DIBELS) benchmark and progress monitoring measures to track student achievement.

Regarding self-regulation skills, TLE uses formal and informal data collection tools to track students' engagement with learning and progress toward other social/emotional/behavioral goals. For example, the program can be assessed using social/emotional/behavioral platforms such as Behavior Advantage and SatchelPulse, both of which are currently being used at TLE.

Special Circumstances

The resource specialist in Room 26 at TLE, Dylan Fitzsimmons, works within a split-site model, with a caseload of students at both TLE and North Tahoe School (NTS). While it can be challenging to maintain two different instructional environments, equipping Room 26 with an inventory of multisensory literacy materials and self-regulation tools will help eliminate any loss of productivity or instructional time by ensuring that the space is ready for instruction at all times.

Alignment with School Site and District PLCs

The materials requested through this grant would provide special education teachers and instructional aides with additional tools for students struggling with self-regulation who are missing valuable specialized academic instruction time as a result. As students build their self-regulation skills, they are more likely to fully engage with math and literacy intervention, and to access core curriculum in the general education setting. These practices support TLE and district-wide mental health and educational goals. In addition, multisensory teaching materials align with participation in special education PLC's, specifically the goal of incorporating research-based, multisensory teaching strategies into our district's literacy intervention curriculum.

Item(s) Cost: \$1,437.26

Item Description: Please see links in the itemized table below.

Other Funding Sources: Classroom funds and Special Education Department funds to purchase any additional units not funded by this grant.

Taxes: \$95.29

Shipping: \$18.23

Amount Requested: \$1,437.26

<u>Items</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Breathe for Change Calming Corner Kit	\$379.00
Wiggle Feet Sensory Cushions (set of 2)	\$59.98
Wobble Chairs (set of 4)	\$439.96
Clock timer	\$39.99
Laminator & Sleeves	\$35.10 (Laminator); \$15.99 (sleeves)
Organizational Bins	\$25.50
Word-Mapping Whiteboards (set of 6)	\$299.94
Sewing Screens (for tactile/kinesthetic sensory input)	\$9.99
OT Pencil Grips	\$12.71
Sub Total	\$1292.66
Shipping and Handling	Lakeshore Items: \$18.23 Amazon Items: \$0
Total Tax	Lakeshore Items: \$88.37 Amazon Items: \$6.92
Grand Total:	\$1,437.26