

Therapeutic Classroom Grant

Frequently Asked Questions

Grant Application

1. May private schools apply for the competitive therapeutic classroom grant?

No, the therapeutic classroom grant provides competitive grants to public school districts. However, public school districts may partner with accredited nonpublic schools, Area Education Agencies and mental health organizations through cost-sharing agreements.

2. Are these funds available to charter schools?

The Therapeutic Classroom Grant provides competitive grants to public school districts. Public school districts may partner with other schools, Area Education Agencies and mental health organizations.

3. Can an area education agency apply for the grant?

No. The therapeutic classroom grant provides competitive grants to public school districts. However, public school districts may partner with accredited nonpublic schools, Area Education Agencies and mental health organizations through cost-sharing agreements.

4. Is there a cap on the number of students that this grant can support?

Each year, the legislature determines the appropriation for the therapeutic classroom grant. The grant required the department to equitably allocate resources across small, medium and large districts. To do so, small districts may apply for 1-2 classrooms, medium schools for 1-3 classrooms, and large schools for 1-6 classrooms. See the Grant Application Package and Worksheet for further information.

5. Is the small, medium, or large district number determined by the number of students in the entire district or just per the school that will be impacted by the grant?

Determinations are made based on certified district enrollment for the past school year.

6. Is the therapeutic classroom grant a support only for students with individualized education programs?

No, the therapeutic classroom grant supports the needs of any student (with or without an Individual Education Program).

7. The grant application asks to identify the number of students who will be served by the therapeutic classroom. Is this at the time of application, early next fall, or the maximum capacity of the classroom? If this is at the time of the application or early next fall, the numbers may be zero.

The grant asks you to identify anticipated enrollment. Count the number of students you intend to serve through the therapeutic classroom during the school year.

8. What students can we count in the formula number? Can we count any student with a BIP or any general education student receiving a continuum of therapeutic supports? Do we only count students who are served in a self-contained classroom full-time?

You would count the number of students you intend to serve in the therapeutic classroom, regardless of whether they have an IEP. This grant is not intended to provide social-emotional support for all students with a BIP, as some of those students will not need the intensified support.

Students do not need to be in a separate/self-contained class, but all students served must receive the supports as outlined in your therapeutic classroom grant application and in accordance with the Assurances provided in the Therapeutic Classroom Grant Application Package, including the following minimal therapeutic components:

- A multidisciplinary team that collaborates regularly to support design, implementation and decision-making regarding therapeutic program supports, including but not limited to an individual qualified to conduct diagnostic assessments and support social-emotional-behavioral health (SEBH) programming for individuals with social-emotional concerns
- Practices that enhance positive childhood experiences
- Clearly articulated and taught behavioral expectations and routines
- Regular assessment of social, emotional, and behavioral skills with targeted individualized and small group instruction
- Individualized behavior intervention plans (BIPs) developed based on functional behavior assessment (FBA) and trauma-informed practice
- Regular engagement of family to review progress and make decisions for more or less restrictive programming
- Supports for generalization and transition to less restrictive supports/settings, including opportunities to practice social-emotional skills in natural contexts with same-age/grade peers

9. We have multiple therapeutic classrooms that we are establishing across our district, and each is at a different point in development. What guidance can you provide on how to complete the rubric?

The first page of the rubric provides guidance for who should be on your team when you complete and score your rubric. When a district is establishing multiple classrooms, be sure that your team completing the rubric includes persons knowledgeable of district-wide resources. Additionally, score each item based on what is most consistently in place across the district. Alternatively, you may have a multidisciplinary team at each building who is establishing a therapeutic classroom, complete the rubric and submit your district's average score.

Therapeutic Supports & Service Delivery Models

Prior to applying for the grant, it is suggested that you gather your team and review the implementation resources on the [Therapeutic Classroom Grant webpage](#).

1. Is there a model classroom or handbooks from exemplar programs that you'd like this based on?

While there is no specific required model, you may find it helpful to reach out to previous grantees. Previous grantees are listed on the grant webpage.

2. Is this supposed to impact one specific classroom, or can it support a school as a whole?

This grant is not intended to provide social-emotional support for all students in a district, nor universal social-emotional instruction. It is intended to provide intensified therapeutic support for a small set of students. When you think about how this fits with your MTSS system, this grant is intended to support students who, in most cases, need intensive supports and, in some situations, supplemental supports. It is possible that some district-wide/targeted training may be included in your grant application, particularly if it aligns with therapeutic classroom supports and/or therapeutic components. For example, it is important that all educators in your school understand the purpose and intent of the therapeutic classroom and the referral process. This could be part of district-wide

professional learning, for example. We suggest that you complete the Therapeutic Classroom Implementation Rubric (found in the Application Package on the website) and consider the supports you currently have in place, as well as what is needed to best develop your therapeutic classroom.

3. Could this look like district-wide training, followed by targeted training and support for teachers who work with a specific group of students?

Please see the answer to question #2.

4. We would like to add therapeutic support to our "BD" classrooms and change them to be more supportive of social-emotional-behavioral skills, and use trauma-informed practices and add trauma-informed practices to their BIPs. Would these qualify as therapeutic classrooms? Or are these only referring to fully self-contained therapeutic classrooms?

Including trauma-informed practice is one required component of therapeutic classrooms. To be considered a therapeutic classroom, the program would need to ensure the following therapeutic components are met as required:

- A multidisciplinary team that collaborates regularly to support design, implementation and decision-making regarding therapeutic program supports, including but not limited to an individual qualified to conduct diagnostic assessments and support social-emotional-behavioral health (SEBH) programming for individuals with social-emotional concerns
- Practices that enhance positive childhood experiences
- Clearly articulated and taught behavioral expectations and routines
- Regular assessment of social, emotional, and behavioral skills with targeted individualized and small group instruction
- Individualized behavior intervention plans (BIPs) developed based on functional behavior assessment (FBA) and trauma-informed practice
- Regular engagement of family to review progress and make decisions for more or less restrictive programming
- Supports for generalization and transition to less restrictive supports/settings, including opportunities to practice social-emotional skills in natural contexts with same-age/grade peers

Therefore, in addition to the supports you noted, you'll want to review these additional supports and identify what else you may need to consider a therapeutic classroom.

Students served do not need to be in a separate/self-contained class. Students with an IEP must be served in the least restrictive environment. (See [IAC 281-14.3 for more details.](#))

5. Can the Therapeutic Classroom be a “calming room” for kids to go to in order to self-regulate, or does there need to be a therapeutic classroom teacher in the room providing explicit instruction?

A therapeutic classroom cannot solely be a “calming room”. It must include all the services noted in the answer to Question #4. We were unable to find a “calming room” within the research base on mindfulness and/or self-regulation. Most interventions in these areas focus on teaching students specific self-regulation strategies. Research results for children in this domain are considered promising but not established.^{1,2,3,4}

¹ [Montero-Marin J, Allwood M, Ball S, et al., \(2022\).](#)

² [Pandey A, Hale D, Das S, Goddings A, Blakemore S, Viner RM \(2018\).](#)

³ [Ask a REL Response \(2018\).](#)

⁴ [Semple RJ, Droutman V, Reid BA \(2017\).](#)

6. I see that students served through a therapeutic classroom need to have an FBA and a BIP. I thought that this was aimed at both identified and unidentified individuals. Could you explain this more, please?

If we're understanding your questions correctly, you're asking whether the therapeutic classrooms are for both students with and without IEPs, and, if so, whether students without an IEP can have an FBA and a BIP?

Yes. The therapeutic classrooms funded by this grant are for both students with and without IEPs.

Yes. Both students with and without IEPs who are served by this grant must have a BIP that is developed from an FBA.

The FBA and BIP in themselves are not exclusive to students with IEPs. They are best practices for assessment and instruction, respectively. Schools are cautioned against reserving such best-practice supports only for students with IEPs, as this prevents them from supporting students who may be in crisis and/or need therapeutic supports for other non-disability-related reasons (e.g., traumatic life circumstances). It's also important to recognize that FBA and BIP are not a single set of specific assessments and interventions and may be more or less intensive depending on the student and the situation.

7. Would it be more beneficial for a special education teacher or a general education teacher to receive training from this grant?

Whether it is more beneficial to have a general education teacher, a special education teacher, or both receive training depends on your teachers' experiences, your students' needs, and the service delivery model you use for your program.

Additionally, multiple people will likely need training to support a therapeutic classroom. As students who need therapeutic supports may have multiple complex needs, it is important that a school provides supports through a multidisciplinary team and that teaching staff have access to that team to aid in decision-making. Please review the Therapeutic Classroom Implementation Rubric that is part of the Application package. As programs decide who will provide teaching supports to students, they must ensure that teachers are qualified to teach their students, as is required of any school and program. For students with disabilities, a general education teacher may provide specially designed instruction, but the Individual Education Program must be coordinated and overseen by a qualified special education teacher.

8. Is there a desired length of time for a student to receive supports through a therapeutic classroom?

No. The number and length of therapeutic supports are dependent on the student and their needs. This could range from more acute supports a student may need due to, for example, a traumatic life circumstance, or more long-term supports for students who have more complex needs and or disabilities. However, the intent of therapeutic classrooms should be to support students in developing social-emotional-behavioral skills necessary to function with fewer supports and more typical settings. Programs must routinely evaluate student needs to determine whether to intensify or reduce supports. Please review the Assurances in the Application package to ensure these requirements are met.

9. To place a student in a therapeutic classroom, a parent must provide permission. Do you have a template you suggest or one that must be used?

You are correct that parent permission and active engagement throughout a student's enrollment in a therapeutic classroom are required. There is no required or suggested template.

- 10. As a student transitions out of a therapeutic classroom and back to their home classroom or school, we intend to provide coaching to the home building/classroom staff that is faded out as the student transitions in. Can we still count this student in our therapeutic classroom enrollment if this fading and coaching are happening?**

Entrance and exit criteria, as well as the process for a therapeutic classroom, are a local decision. The intent of therapeutic classrooms should be to support students in developing social-emotional-behavioral skills necessary to function with fewer supports and in more typical settings. Programs must routinely evaluate student needs to consider the intensification and or reduction of supports.

Funding/Use of Funds

Review the grant application package for allowable use of funds and budget estimates.

- 1. Does this grant provide funding for a certain number of years, or is it a one-time fund?**

This is one-time funding for the upcoming school year. Therapeutic classroom grant funding may be legislated and appropriated in subsequent years.

- 2. How soon do the funds have to be spent? Can you hold the money for future expected expenses?**

While districts must use a portion of the grant award during the current school year to establish therapeutic classrooms, they may carry forward funds as long as the funds remain within the purposes outlined in the grant.

- 3. Would this grant allow the school district to hire a licensed mental health therapist to work in the district?**

See the Grant Application Package for guidance on how to use the funds. It is allowable, but not recommended, for districts to use funds for things that are recurring costs. Items such as salaries, ongoing mental health services, and supports would not be sustainable with one-time upfront resources. However, you might consider using the resources to contract with community partners and or the area education agency to help leverage resources and build capacity within your program.

Please note the [requirements for Statements of Professional Recognition](#) for licensed mental health providers who provide mental health services for schools.

- 4. May the therapeutic classroom grant funds be used to support all students in developing social-emotional-behavioral skills?**

No. Please see the answer to Question #2 under Therapeutic Supports & Service Delivery Models.

- 5. The grant can be applied to current programming if I'm understanding that correctly. Can the funds be used for licensed therapists who would support that program and are district employees, or can they only be used for licensed teaching staff/paraeducators?**

Yes. The grant can be applied to enhance current programming. See also question #3.

- 6. If grant funds are used for PD or training, are districts limited to a certain number of staff?**

There is no limit on the number of staff you may train to support your therapeutic classroom program.

- 7. Can this money support a sensory room where students can be supported by various staff?**

Without further discussion, it is unclear if a sensory room provides evidence-based supports as outlined in the Therapeutic Classroom Implementation Rubric. Competitive applicants will outline a program that provides a continuum of therapeutic supports. Including those that:

- support students in developing the skills necessary for success in typical age/grade settings;

- support students to participate in typical age/grade opportunities to the fullest extent;
- provide intentional planned opportunities for practice in natural contexts with reduced therapeutic supports over time.

Sustaining Therapeutic Classroom Supports

1. How can therapeutic classrooms be sustained after the grant concludes?

The competitive therapeutic classroom grant is intended to support public school districts in **establishing** therapeutic classrooms. [Iowa Code 256.25A](#) provides allowable reimbursement to schools for the cost of providing therapeutic classroom services to students who have not been assigned a weighting through special education.

Reimbursement is dependent on legislative appropriation for each fiscal year.

Additionally, schools may consider partnering with community mental health partners and/or area education agencies to help leverage resources, build capacity, and sustainability within your program.

2. We're considering sources of funding for our therapeutic classroom. Can another district purchase seats?

No. A district may not purchase seats. However, you may consider entering into a consortium agreement with one or more other school districts to administer the therapeutic program. If you do so, in addition to other consortium requirements, the applicant district must assure that:

- The therapeutic classroom is housed within the applicant district boundaries.
- The applicant district is fiscally responsible for the therapeutic classroom.
- The applicant district shall not enter into an agreement with another school district to purchase seats in such a classroom.
- The applicant district is responsible for operating the therapeutic classroom.

Please contact the Department's School Finance personnel for further information.

Consortium Agreements & Therapeutic Classrooms

1. Can we enter a consortium agreement to support the therapeutic classroom?

The therapeutic classroom grant encourages districts to collaborate with other entities to maximize the quality and availability of therapeutic classroom supports. This may include such entities as AEAs, accredited nonpublic schools, nonprofit agencies and institutions that provide children's mental health services.

A public school district may enter into a consortium agreement with one or more other public school districts. They may also enter into a contract service/agreement with an AEA to support a therapeutic classroom.

Please contact the Department's School Finance personnel for further information.

2. Can a consortium apply for the therapeutic classroom grant?

No. The public school district in which the therapeutic classroom resides must be the one that applies for the grant. This is required because [Iowa Code 256.25](#) limits the grant to public school districts. Additionally, [Iowa Administrative Rules 281-14.13\(5\)](#) requires the public school district in which the therapeutic classroom is located to have fiscal and administrative responsibility for the therapeutic classroom.

- 3. We are applying for the therapeutic classroom grant as a consortium. Since our consortium comprises multiple districts, which Certified District Enrollment should we use to calculate our grant's Award & Use of Funds Worksheet?**

Please also see question #2 in this section. The district in which the therapeutic classroom resides would apply for this grant, and its Certified District Enrollment would be used in the calculation.

Additional Questions

Refer to the [Therapeutic Classroom Grant webpage](#) for additional information, resources or contacts.