

GBP 14 Low Incidence Funding for Specialized Books, Materials, and Equipment

California Education Code §56836.22 provides for funds to purchase specialized books, materials, and equipment as required under the individualized education program (IEP) for each pupil with low incidence disabilities as defined in Education Code §56026.5 (“hearing impairments, vision impairments, severe orthopedic impairments, or any combination thereof”).

It is also the “intent of the Legislature that local plan areas share unused low incidence books, materials, and equipment with neighboring special education local plan areas.” Items purchased with these funds may only be used by students with low incidence disabilities, unless a waiver has been approved by the State Board of Education.

IDEA now includes the requirement that the IEP team shall “consider whether the child requires assistive technology devices and services” for all students with disabilities, as well as other requirements including the need for “...Braille” for students who are “blind or visually impaired” and “language and communication needs...” for students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Existing law (Education Code §56822) provides that “sound recordings, large print, and Braille books purchased, instructional materials transcribed from regular print into special media, and special supplies and equipment purchased for individuals with exceptional needs for which state or federal funds were allowed, are property of the state, and shall be available for use by individuals with exceptional needs throughout the state as the board shall provide.”

A thorough discussion of the requirements regarding low incidence funding can be found in the CDE publication “Funding for Specialized Books, Materials and Equipment for Low Incidence Students” which is included in the appendix of this document.

Criteria

1. Each student for whom an item is to be purchased must have a “low incidence disability” (i.e., deaf-blind, deaf, hard of hearing, severe orthopedic impairment and/or visual impairment).
2. The item is “specialized” (i.e., it relates to a need or needs resulting directly from the low incidence disability, as indicated in the comprehensive assessment in all areas related to the student’s disability, involving staff who are credentialed/knowledgeable of the low incidence disability area(s)).
3. The item is “required for the child with a disability to benefit from special education” (i.e., it meets the legal definition of a related service).
4. Low incidence funds are used to “supplement,” not to “supplant” other funding sources (i.e., general education funding, other special education funding by other agencies.)

5. The item is required “under” the student’s IFSP/IEP/ITP (i.e., it relates to a goal/ objective or some other need indicated in the plan.)
6. Funds are NOT used to purchase medical equipment, to furnish medical therapy units, to construct or alter facilities or to assess the student or to provide in-service/ parent education.

Guidelines for Low Incidence Equipment/Materials Funding

1. Low incidence equipment/materials funds will only be approved to purchase equipment and/or materials for special education students enrolled in public schools with an IEP/IFSP indicating that the student meets the eligibility criteria for either severely orthopedically impaired, deaf, hearing impaired, deaf/blind, visually impaired or blind.

For low incidence purposes, severely orthopedically impaired is defined as: “A severe orthopedic impairment that is persistent and significantly restricts an individual’s normal physical development, movement, and activities of daily living. As a result, this impairment may affect the pupil’s educational performance. Accompanying sensory, intellectual, learning, and medical problems often occur which may affect the pupil’s school performance.”

2. The item(s) being requested must be documented in an assessment report prepared by staff who are credentialed/knowledgeable of the low incidence disability areas(s) in accordance with Education Code Section 56327 (h) which states, “The personnel who assess the pupil shall prepare a written report(s), as appropriate, of the results of each assessment. The report shall include, but not be limited to, the following: The need for specialized services, materials, and equipment for pupils with low incidence disabilities consistent with guidelines established pursuant to Section 56136.” The LIRC may request additional information as necessary.
3. The item(s) being requested must be specialized, in that it relates to a need(s) resulting directly from the low incidence disability, and is necessary in order for the student to benefit from his/her educational program.
4. Requests for low incidence funds must be a minimum of \$200.00 for each student. Individual items costing less than \$200.00 will be the responsibility of the district. These are frequently items that are “expendable” or should be considered as part of the base program. Exceptions to this requirement are described in the approval process section of the guidelines.
5. Computer software will be considered by the LIRC on an individual basis if it is reflected in the assessment, considered to be assistive technology and on the IEP/IFSP and only if it is specific to the low Incidence disability. The software must be intended for individual use only; it is not to be purchased for a lab. Purchasing site licenses is permitted when more than one low incidence student is or is likely to be in need of the same program.

6. Low incidence funds will not be expended for service contracts or maintenance agreements for low incidence equipment. This responsibility will be that of the LEA/District that is providing the low incidence service. Significant repairs of equipment purchased by low incidence funds may be considered for funding through the low incidence dollars.
7. Funds will not be used to provide basic equipment or materials of the base program or to furnish low incidence classrooms. It is expected that a classroom giving services to students that have low incidence disabilities will continue to provide a base program that may include some materials and equipment that will be needed by most of the students in the classroom.
8. If the student has received other low incidence equipment, the equipment request should include a description of how the materials previously purchased are currently being used and why they no longer meet the student's needs.
9. Any equipment that is no longer being used by an individual student shall be returned in good working order to the SELPA for use by another student with a low incidence disability.
10. If a student moves **from** the LEA/school district he or she was attending when the low incidence equipment was purchased for his or her use, the LEA/District must notify the SELPA office immediately. Arrangements will be made for the transfer of the equipment.

If a student moves into the LEA/District from outside the SELPA, the LEA/District will notify the SELPA office immediately. It is expected that equipment will move with the student. If the student has brought low incidence equipment with him or her, it must be added to the inventory of this SELPA. If it needs to be requested from the previous placement, the SELPA office may provide assistance.

11. All low incidence equipment and/or materials must be clearly labeled with the following information for inventory and insurance purposes: "Property of Butte County SELPA." An annual inventory of all equipment and materials purchased will be conducted by the SELPA office.
12. Local Guidelines, as well as State Guidelines, will be distributed to all districts each year. The local guidelines and required documentation (forms) will be reviewed by the LIRC before the end of each school year for possible recommendations for adjustment and changes for the following year. The review will include a summary of the expenditures. Any significant change in the Guidelines will be taken to the Superintendents' Council for approval.

Assessment of Low Incidence Students When Requesting Low Incidence Funding

In accordance with the California Education Code §56320(g), "the assessment of a pupil, including the assessment of a pupil with a suspected low incidence disability, shall be conducted by persons knowledgeable of the disability. Special attention shall be given to the unique educational needs

including, but not limited to, skills and the need for specialized services, materials, and equipment consistent with guidelines established pursuant to Section 56136.”

In assessing the unique educational needs as well as the need for specialized services, materials, and equipment, some pupils counted as orthopedically impaired may not be eligible because they are not “severely orthopedically impaired” according to the definition of low incidence disabilities in Education Code §56026.5. Pupils who are severely orthopedically impaired require highly specialized services, equipment, and materials in accordance with Education Code §56000.5(b).

Education Code §56327(h) states, “The personnel who assess the pupil shall prepare a written report, or reports, as appropriate, of the results of each assessment. The report shall include, but not be limited to, all of the following:

The need for specialized services, materials, and equipment for pupils with low incidence disabilities consistent with guidelines established pursuant to Section 56136.”

In addition to the requirements of E. C. §56136 the assessment report shall also include all of the following:

1. How the item(s) will assist the student’s instruction in accordance with the IEP
2. How frequently the item(s) will be used
3. How the item(s) will facilitate integration in to the classroom
4. Evidence that the student is willing to use the proposed item(s)
5. In cases where computer systems, communication devices, and peripherals valued at over \$1,000 are being recommended for purchase, the report must include evidence that the student is capable of using the device. This can be demonstrated through trial teaching on the actual target device, a comparable device or, in the case of communication devices, on some type of communication system such as picture boards, communication books or voice output devices. Following are examples of basic readiness skills:
 - Physical ability to manipulate the target device or a similar device or system
 - Current use of a system involving visual or tactile representations
 - Initiating and responding with a device or system
 - Using a device or system in different environments
 - Using a device or system on a regular basis
 - Evidence the student uses the device or system safely and appropriately

Trial teaching should take place anywhere from three to six months and include target performance criteria for the student to achieve.

Communication Devices

Following, are examples of basic skill guidelines when communication devices are being considered:

1. Simple Communication Boards/Books

This category includes communication boards consisting of graphic symbols, pictures, or objects. The boards may consist of one or multiple pictures and various sizes depending on the user's ability. Various display set-ups may be used. Often with items within this category, communication displays are made for specific activities or to take along into the community or to a situation where a voice output device may not work as easily or well. This type of communication display is also often used to encourage use of visual language strategies as with calendars, schedules and step-by-step directions.

This type of communication board or book may be used as the only AAC option for a young communicator or a child with a very limited vocabulary and considered to be a beginning level communication system or as a back up to a more complex voice output device.

2. **Simple and /or Low Cost Voice Output Devices**

These devices provide voice output with one message or one set of messages available to the user at a time. Pressing a key or cell produces one message. These devices are available in any number of messages from 1 to usually 32. The amount of buttons available to the child will depend on their physical and cognitive ability. Most children will begin with one switch and advance to multiple switches as their skills improve.

Examples of skills needed:

- **Single-message communication:** This is a diagnostic step to show evidence that the student has the physical ability to operate a switch and to show understanding of cause and effect. Used mainly for introducing switches as a form of language and for full inclusion environments.
- **Two-message communication:** You will want to see evidence that the student understands cause and effect before providing opportunities for two-message communications.
- **Three-message communications:** At this stage, the student is learning to understand new symbols and to discriminate among a growing number of messages, presented three at a time. By the time they get to three messages, you should be fairly confident that they discriminate among symbols.
- **Four-Message Communications:** The student has a vocabulary set of three or more symbols and participates in communicative interactions at least 3 times per day.
- **Eight-message Communications:** The student communicates among at least 4 switches or cells. They are able to discriminate between labels and/or textures. The student participates in communication interactions at least 3 times per day.
- **Sixteen to thirty-two message Communications:** The student has demonstrated the ability to distinguish picture icons, up to the allotted number of cells available. This size of device is usually considered to be the device that will fit the student's needs for several years. A student uses this type of device to be able to communicate basic needs and information and is to be used throughout the day.

3. **Leveling or Layering Devices**

This category includes those devices capable of storing several layers of messages. Each level can be programmed with different messages. Changing from one level to another requires pushing a button (or sliding a switch) and physically changing the overlay.

Examples of skills needed:

The student uses a minimum of 3 overlays containing 8 or more symbols or uses only one overlay containing 16 or more across three categories. The student will initiate responses on the device regularly and does not require prompting before making a request.

When considering this device, needs for the next several years should be considered.

4. **Devices using Icon Sequencing or Minspeak**

Minspeak/Icon sequencing is a way of organizing language, which uses an ordered array of pictures to code vocabulary. The user presses one, two, or three keys in sequence to produce one message. Prentke-Romich Co. devices typically use icon sequencing with their own set of picture symbols called Minspeak.

Examples of skills needed:

- The student uses a minimum of 3 overlays containing 8 or more symbols or uses one overlay containing 16 or more labels across 3 categories.
- Student has a cognitive ability and is able to demonstrate an understanding of the associations of the Minspeak pictures to their meanings.

5. **Dynamic Display Devices**

This category of device include those that represent pictures on a screen, much like a laptop computer; usually the screen is capable of touch activation and pressing a picture on the screen produces a message. The devices automatically change the picture overlays and the corresponding messages. (This high-end device usually requires purchase of a commercial mounting system also.)

Example of skills needed:

- Prior to purchasing one of these systems, less expensive options (such as Speaking Dynamically Pro) must have been trail taught, reviewed and found to be inadequate.
- The student must be able to discriminate among and access 24 icons simultaneously displayed.
- The student must also demonstrate the ability to locate a third level label. For example, when asked to find banana the student selects the following:

First level of categories for “Daily Activities”

“Home” “School” “Community” “Leisure” “Food”

Second level of categories for “Food”

“Drink” “Fruit” “Fast Food” “Meat” “Vegetables”

Third level Menu of choices for “Fruit”

“Apple” “Orange” “*Banana*” “Melon” “Pineapple”

This device is capable of growing with the child and should be considered the only device the student will need for communication purposes for several years.

6. **Spelling with a Speech Synthesizer/Written Text**

This type of device allows the user to type and the device either speaks or prints out the message. These devices often feature abbreviation expansion features to allow storage of longer messages with a few keystrokes to activate.

Example of skills needed:

- This category of device requires the user have good spelling skills and the fine motor ability to isolate a single key.

Computers

Generally, computers are not considered Low Incidence equipment. They are considered ordinary equipment in a classroom and should be provided through the base program. There are, however, certain circumstances when computers may qualify as Low Incidence equipment and be purchased through Low Incidence funds.

The Low Incidence inventory includes Macintosh and PC desktop and laptop computers. Special needs software and adaptive computer devices are available for these systems. Low Incidence funds, according to California state law, may not be used to purchase curriculum software (such as math or reading programs).

Low Incidence funds may not be used to purchase more than one computer per eligible student. Low Incidence funds may not be used to purchase additional hardware or peripherals to upgrade a second computer owned by the district or program.

Eligibility criteria require that the student demonstrate both the ability and the willingness to use a computer at a level of independence deemed acceptable by the Low Incidence committee.

Shared use of equipment to benefit other students is allowable under the following condition: The low incidence student is *always* given priority for use.

Macintosh and PC Platform Desktop Computers

Low Incidence students may need computers under the following circumstances:

1. **Access:** The student has a physical impairment that requires an access modification or a special needs software program that is not required by classroom peers. Examples might include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The student can only access the computer using head control. A computer head-control device (such as Headmaster) can only be achieved using a computer.
 - The student can only access the computer by using a joystick, an on-screen keyboard or a specialized adaptive keyboard and needs the computer to complete a majority of their class assignments.
 - The student is able to access the computer through use of specialized enlargement or screen reader programs and needs to use a computer to complete a majority of their class assignments.
2. **Writing:** The student has a physical impairment, which makes paper/pencil tasks so inefficient that the student cannot keep pace with classroom demands placed on peers. The student receives daily assignments requiring note taking or writing. Special needs writing software might include programs such as: Write: Outloud word processing or Co: Writer word prediction programs.
 3. **Communication:** The student's ability to use a multi-level communication system is being determined by using a computer equipped with a communication program such as Speaking Dynamically Pro.

Macintosh and PC Platform Laptop Computers

A student may require a portable computer because s/he moves among three or more environments in the academic setting and these environments demand software use, note taking, and/or writing. A portable computer should only be considered when a word processor, such as an AlphaSmart, has been determined to be inappropriate in meeting the student's needs.

The committee requires a written loan agreement to be signed by the parents that specifies the purpose and the responsibility of the equipment. Equipment abuse, neglect, or use for purposes not authorized under low incidence guidelines will result in recall of the equipment.

Laptop computers require monitoring in order to manage battery life, transportation, and appropriate use in the academic setting. The student's team must identify an adult at the school site who will assume responsibility for the laptop and its use.

How to Apply for Low Incidence Funding

1. Check with the Clearinghouse for Specialized Media and Technology (CSMT) to determine whether material can be acquired through that agency. (916-445-5103)
2. For students with orthopedic impairments, check with CCS to see if they have access to the appropriate equipment.
3. Attach an assessment report for each student in accordance with Education Code §56320(g) and the assessment guidelines outlined in this guide.

4. Attach the student's current IEP, which includes documentation of the need for the specialized books, materials, or equipment.
5. Complete a request for Low Incidence Equipment/Material form for each student. All requests must be submitted on the requisition form. Be sure to fill the form out in its entirety. Partially completed forms will be returned to the originator.
6. Submit all of the above to the Butte County SELPA Office on or before April 15.

Approval Process for Low Incidence Equipment Requests

All requests for low incidence funds must be reviewed and approved by the Low Incidence Review Committee (LIRC). The committee will meet monthly for this purpose.

Committee Membership

The committee consists of a representative from each of the low incidence categories, an assistive technology specialist, and the SELPA Director. Low incidence representatives will be approved by the SELPA Coordinating Council.

Committee members are responsible for:

- a) Attending monthly expenditure review meetings
- b) Representing the concerns of selected low incidence groups
- c) Providing training and consultation support in completing requests and supporting staff in understanding criteria and requests

Review Process

The LIRC will review all requests for equipment using the following guiding principles:

1. Specialized equipment, materials are necessary to allow the pupil access to classroom instruction within the student's classroom environment.
2. The equipment/materials requested are not meant to supplant funding for normally used specialized equipment in Special Day Classes. All program operators will be expected to make all reasonable efforts to set up classrooms with appropriate equipment and assure that surplus equipment was researched.
3. Equipment/materials address the individual needs of the student in the most cost effective manner.
4. The committee places priority on students with low incidence disabilities who are enrolled in public schools and who require specialized equipment in order to access the general education curriculum.
5. If there is not enough money in the low incidence budget to honor all requests, the committee will allocate remaining funds on a priority basis according to the nature and number of requests.

Criteria for Purchases

The LIRC retains the right to modify or add criteria as the need arises to monitor expenses and better define guidelines for appropriate purchases.

Low incidence funds are not available for the purchase of certain materials / equipment. The current list of **unallowable** equipment for purchase using low incidence funds includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- a. Ordinary computer hardware, software, and monitors used as a general learning resource in the classroom
- b. Standard classroom necessary toilet devices
- c. Data collection devices used as diagnostic and assessment tools for student or teacher
- d. Any duplication of existing classroom equipment for student or teacher
- e. Non-specialized recreational equipment
- f. Instructional materials used primarily by teachers instead of student
- g. More than one specialized computer per student
- h. Service contracts and maintenance agreements

Exceptions to the previous may be allowed when requests and information determine that a special circumstance exists.

The **lowest cost of equipment** that can be presented for purchase of new equipment will be \$200.00. Exceptions to the \$200.00 cost base are:

- a. Very specialized textbooks in appropriate media (i.e. large print dictionaries)
- b. Items which constitute a system (there is no limitation on the lower cost of items necessary to create one piece of equipment as long as it constitutes part of the same new system and the total value exceeds \$200.00)
- c. Repairs/modifications under \$200.00 for previously purchased equipment costing over \$200.00
- d. Applications or software designed to support student's access needs when a mobile device/computer has been provided through LI funds.
- e. Batteries, rechargeable or otherwise, required to operate the LI device.
- f. Ink and toner cartridges for LI printers.

Process for Denials

It is anticipated that a representative will be in touch with the appropriate program director or specialist whose request is denied, in order to assist in clarifying the reason for the denial. In the event additional information is needed to reconsider the request, the representative will assist the appropriate district staff. If the requesting district is not satisfied with the final results, a letter of rebuttal may be submitted to the committee for review and response. No personal appearances to appeal directly to the committee will be allowed unless authorized in advance by the SELPA Director.

Ordering Procedures

1. Once approved by the Low Incidence Review Committee, the SELPA Office will order the appropriate materials and/or equipment.
2. Materials and/or equipment will be shipped directly to the requesting LEA staff person.
3. Once the materials/equipment are received, the LEA must immediately send to the SELPA Office:
 - All packing slips and/or invoices
 - A completed Low Incidence Equipment/Materials Inventory form.
 - If the item is to be used at home, a loan agreement must be signed by the parents and submitted to the SELPA office.
4. The SELPA office will register the equipment, assign an inventory number and mail inventory tags to the LEA to be applied to the equipment.
5. The invoice shall not exceed the dollar amount approved, unless the student is using an electronic device. In which case, \$200.00 will be set aside at the time of purchase for additional apps for each student. Applications fit the LI requirement for accessing the educationally related needs as they pertain to the student's Low Incidence disability. A written request (either at a meeting or through email) for the application requires a brief summary with justification of the need. Requests for new applications must be approved by the team and listed in the inventory. Applications will be managed by the Low Incidence Secretary.