

Funding Classroom Audio & Assistive Listening Technology

A practical K-12 guide to finding the right funding path, the right decision-maker, and the right questions to ask.

TeachLogic created this guide to help K–12 schools identify potential funding paths for classroom audio and assistive listening technology—and know who to talk to next.

How to use this guide

Teachers: Start with the “Start here” decision tree. If the need is tied to a specific student, bring it to your special education team or 504 coordinator. For a single classroom, see section 10 on grants and community funding.

Administrators and federal programs staff: Start with the Quick reference on the next page, then read the sections that match your need.

2026 K–12 FUNDING GUIDE | Updated September 2026

Funding rules change. Use this guide to identify potential paths, then confirm eligibility and allowability with your district, state education agency, or program administrator before budgeting.

Quick reference: funding paths at a glance

Each path below is covered in more detail later in this guide. Treat every source as a potential path until the program owner confirms the purchase is allowable.

Funding path	Best fit	Who to ask
1. IDEA Part B	Assistive listening technology written into a student's IEP	Director of Special Education
2. Section 504	Assistive listening technology in a student's 504 plan (usually state or local funds)	504 coordinator
3. Medicaid School-Based Services	Reimbursement for covered services for Medicaid-enrolled students	Medicaid/SBS billing coordinator
4. Title I, Part A	Schoolwide programs with a documented listening or learning need	Title I / Federal Programs Director
5. Title IV-A	Instructional technology and student-support priorities	Federal Programs Director
6. Title III	Supplemental support for English learner programs	English Learner / Title III coordinator
7. Local capital, bond and technology budgets	Building- or district-wide rollouts, new construction and renovation	Facilities director, CTO or business office
8. State AT Act programs	Free demonstrations and short-term loans before you buy	Your state AT program (at3center.net)
9. REAP / AFUA	Extra spending flexibility for eligible small rural districts	Federal Programs Director
10. Grants and community funding	Single classrooms and small funding gaps	Teacher, principal, or PTA

Not a funding source for classroom audio: ESSER (closed) and E-Rate (network infrastructure only). See section 11.

Why classroom audio matters

Funding programs pay for documented needs, not equipment. Use the points below as a starting place for a needs assessment, an IEP or 504 discussion, or a grant request.

- **Hearing loss is more common than most people think.** About 15% of U.S. children ages 6–19 show some measurable hearing loss in one or both ears, according to the CDC. Many of these students have no IEP or 504 plan.
- **Even mild hearing loss affects learning.** ASHA notes that even mild to moderate hearing loss can hold children back in vocabulary, reading, and overall academic achievement.
- **Listening conditions affect every student.** Background noise, echo, and distance from the teacher make it harder for all students to follow instructions, especially younger students, English learners, and students with attention or processing challenges.
- **There is an objective benchmark.** The ANSI/ASA S12.60 classroom acoustics standard recommends background noise of no more than 35 dBA and a reverberation time of about 0.6 seconds in a typical classroom. Many classrooms don't meet it, which gives schools a measurable way to document the need.

Know your number before you ask.

Get a rough project estimate before approaching a funding source. A single-classroom system is often within reach of a classroom grant or a small line item. A building-wide or district-wide rollout usually belongs in Title, capital, or technology budgets. TeachLogic can help you size the project.

Start here: What are you trying to fund?

The best funding source usually depends less on the equipment itself than on the need it is intended to address.

Is the technology needed by a student with an IEP?	START WITH → IDEA Part B THEN CHECK → Medicaid School-Based Services, if applicable
Is the student on a 504 plan instead of an IEP?	CHECK → Section 504 (usually state or local funds)
Is the purchase part of a documented schoolwide academic or instructional need?	CHECK → Title I, Part A schoolwide program
Is it part of an instructional technology or student-support initiative?	CHECK → Title IV-A / Student Support and Academic Enrichment
Does it support your English learner program?	ASK ABOUT → Title III (supplemental only)
Are you building, renovating, or refreshing technology across a school or district?	CHECK → Local capital, bond, or technology budget
Is the district small and rural?	CHECK → REAP / Alternative Fund Use Authority
Do you need a trial, a small classroom project, or gap funding?	CHECK → State AT program, DonorsChoose, Voya or local/community funding

A useful rule of thumb

Start with the educational or accessibility need, document the intended outcome, and then match that need to a funding program. Avoid starting with “we want to buy classroom audio” and trying to make a funding source fit.

Funding paths to investigate

1 | IDEA Part B

Best fit: Student-specific accessibility and special education needs

IDEA requires schools to provide assistive technology devices and services when a student’s IEP team determines they are needed. For hearing access, that may include a remote microphone, FM/DM, or other hearing assistive technology. IDEA Part B funds can help pay for it, with no separate grant application.

When the whole class benefits: Under IDEA’s permissive use of funds rule (34 CFR §300.208), Part B funds can pay for aids and services provided in a regular classroom under a student’s IEP, even if other students also

benefit. If a student's IEP calls for classroom amplification, the fact that the whole class hears better doesn't disqualify the purchase.

States may also set aside part of their IDEA funds for a high-cost fund that helps districts cover unusually expensive special education needs. Your state education agency's special education division can tell you whether one exists and how to request it.

Who to involve / what to ask

Who to involve: Director of Special Education, IEP team, educational audiologist.

Ask: Does the student's IEP identify a need for assistive listening or other AT support, and how will the district provide it? Has the district ever used the state's high-cost fund for a hearing-related purchase?

2 | Section 504 plans

Best fit: Students with hearing needs who have a 504 plan instead of an IEP

Many students with hearing loss are served under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act rather than IDEA. The district must still provide the aids and services a student's 504 plan calls for, including assistive listening technology. However, IDEA Part B funds generally can't be used for students served only under Section 504, so districts usually pay for these purchases with state or local funds.

Who to involve / what to ask

Who to involve: District 504 coordinator, principal, and Special Education (which may already have equipment in inventory).

Ask: Does the student's 504 plan call for assistive listening technology, and which budget covers 504 accommodations in our district?

3 | Medicaid School-Based Services

Best fit: Eligible student services that are covered by the state's Medicaid program

Medicaid can reimburse covered school-based services for eligible students, but details vary by state. Coverage of audiology services, equipment, and assistive technology depends on the state Medicaid plan,

medical necessity, provider requirements, and billing rules. Two practical points to raise with your billing coordinator:

- **Parental consent.** Before billing Medicaid for services on a student's IEP for the first time, the district must get one-time written consent from the parent and send an annual notice (34 CFR §300.154).
- **Which students are covered.** Some states now allow school-based Medicaid billing for services to all Medicaid-enrolled students, not just students with IEPs. Ask whether your state has expanded its program.

Who to involve / what to ask

Who to involve: District Medicaid/SBS billing coordinator and Special Education.

Ask: For Medicaid-enrolled students with documented hearing-related needs, what services or equipment does our state program cover?

4 | Title I, Part A

Best fit: A documented schoolwide academic need

In a Title I schoolwide program, technology and equipment may be allowable when they support the school's comprehensive needs assessment and schoolwide plan. Classroom audio should be connected to the barrier being addressed and the intended academic outcome—not treated as a stand-alone equipment purchase. Two rules to know before you ask:

- **Supplement, not supplant.** Title I funds must add to, not replace, state and local funding. Be ready to show the purchase goes beyond what the district would otherwise pay for with its own money.
- **Schoolwide vs. targeted assistance.** Schoolwide programs have the most flexibility. In targeted-assistance schools, Title I funds must serve identified students, making classroom-wide equipment much harder to justify.

Who to involve / what to ask

Who to involve: Title I/Federal Programs Director, curriculum leadership, school administration.

Ask: Does our needs assessment identify a listening, access, or instructional barrier that this technology could address? When is our next schoolwide planning meeting?

5 | Title IV-A / SSAE

Best fit: Instructional technology and student-support priorities

Title IV-A funds three areas: well-rounded education, safe and healthy students, and effective use of technology. Depending on how your district's plan frames the need, classroom audio may fit under effective use of technology or as part of a broader activity in another area.

About the 15% cap: Federal law limits spending on technology infrastructure to 15% of the funds a district uses for effective use of technology. That cap is tied to infrastructure bought under that area, so don't rule out Title IV-A before asking how the purchase would be classified.

Title IV-A funding levels have also been part of recent federal budget debates, so confirm your district's current-year allocation.

Who to involve / what to ask

Who to involve: Federal Programs Director, curriculum, and IT.

Ask: Which Title IV-A area fits the documented need? Would the purchase count toward the technology-infrastructure cap, and how much of that cap is still uncommitted this year?

6 | Title III, Part A

Best fit: Districts with English learner programs, as a supplemental option

Title III supports supplemental language instruction for English learners. Clear classroom audio can support language access, and some districts may be able to connect it to their English learner program. The rules are strict: funds must supplement the core services the district already must provide, and the purchase must directly support the English learner program. Treat this as a question to ask, not a sure thing.

Who to involve / what to ask

Who to involve: English Learner / Title III coordinator, Federal Programs Director.

Ask: Could classroom audio be part of our Title III supplemental language instruction activities, and how would it need to be documented?

Additional paths and flexibility

7 | Local capital, bond and technology budgets

Best fit: Building- or district-wide rollouts, new construction and renovation

For many districts, this is how classroom audio actually gets paid for. When a district builds or renovates schools or refreshes classroom technology, it can write audio into the project scope and fund it through capital budgets, voter-approved bonds, technology levies, or the annual technology budget. Planning early matters: it's much easier to include audio in a project's specifications than to add it after the budget is set.

Practical next step

Ask your facilities director, CTO, or business office whether any upcoming construction, renovation, bond, or technology refresh projects could include classroom audio.

If your district uses cooperative purchasing contracts, ask whether classroom audio is available through one it already belongs to. Cooperative contracts can simplify the competitive-bid process.

Planning upgrades to an auditorium, gym or cafeteria?

The 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design require an assistive listening system in assembly areas where hearing what's said is part of how the space is used, when those spaces are built or altered. That's a compliance requirement, not a funding source, but it can help justify including assistive listening in the project budget.

8 | State Assistive Technology Act programs

Best fit: Product evaluation, demonstrations and short-term loans

Every state and territory has an Assistive Technology Act program. Programs typically provide device demonstrations, device loans, reutilization, and financing resources. Inventory varies, so schools should ask whether classroom listening, remote microphone, or related technology is available. A successful trial is also strong evidence to attach to an IDEA, Title I, or Title IV-A request.

Practical next step

Use the AT3 Center directory (at3center.net) to find your state's program.

9 | REAP / AFUA

Best fit: Eligible small rural districts

The Rural Education Achievement Program provides additional flexibility for eligible rural LEAs. Under Alternative Fund Use Authority, eligible districts may use certain Title II-A and Title IV-A funds for activities authorized under specified ESEA programs. This is a flexibility tool—not a blanket exemption from federal cost and program rules.

Practical next step

Ask your Federal Programs Director whether the district is SRSA-eligible and using AFUA this year.

10 | Grants and community funding

Best fit: Smaller classroom projects or funding gaps

DonorsChoose can support teacher-led classroom projects. Voya Unsung Heroes provides competitive grants for innovative classroom projects. Local education foundations, service clubs, and community organizations can also help close smaller gaps, although priorities and eligibility vary locally.

Practical next step

Before applying, confirm district rules for outside grants, gifts, equipment ownership, and procurement.

11 | What not to count on

ESSER and E-Rate

ESSER is closed. ARP ESSER funds had to be obligated by September 30, 2024, and the later liquidation extensions only applied to money already obligated by that date. There is no ESSER money available for a new purchase.

E-Rate is primarily a broadband-connectivity program. Classroom microphones, speakers, and sound-reinforcement hardware should not be presented as E-Rate-eligible equipment. Separately priced network components should be evaluated under the current Eligible Services List.

Practical next step

Ask your E-Rate coordinator about eligible network infrastructure only; do not assume the audio hardware qualifies.

Finding funding in your state

There is no single national database that tells a district, “this state will pay for classroom audio.” State appropriations, competitive grants, federal-program implementation, Medicaid rules, special-education high-cost funds, and technology priorities are handled differently from state to state.

Important 2026 context

Federal K-12 programs such as IDEA, Title I, and Title IV-A still exist and keep their federal requirements. The U.S. Department of Education is also giving some states more flexibility through waivers. As of September 24, 2026, seven states have approved Returning Education to the States waivers: Iowa, Louisiana, Indiana, Vermont, Arkansas, South Dakota, and Mississippi.

What this means for districts: In most approved states, the waiver mainly gives the state education agency more flexibility over its own share of federal funds. It usually doesn’t change the rules for district allocations. Details vary by state, so unless your state confirms otherwise, assume the normal Title IV-A rules, including the 15% cap, still apply to your district.

A simple 3-step state funding check

1. Find your State Education Agency (SEA)

Use the U.S. Department of Education's State Contacts directory to reach your state's education agency. From there, look for Grants, Federal Programs, Special Education, Title IV-A/SSAE, Education Technology, and School Finance.

2. Check your state's Title IV-A and federal-program guidance

States administer Title IV-A allocations and provide district guidance. Ask the state or district Federal Programs office how classroom audio would be classified and whether any current state waiver changes the normal requirements.

3. Check state-specific accessibility resources

Use the AT3 Center to find your state's Assistive Technology Act program. For student-specific needs, also ask your state education agency about IDEA high-cost programs and your district Medicaid/SBS coordinator about state Medicaid coverage.

State funding finder: live starting points

- [U.S. Department of Education — State Contacts](#) — Best first stop for the official education agency in every state and territory.
- [U.S. Department of Education — Title IV-A / SSAE](#) — Current allocations, guidance and federal program contacts.
- [U.S. Department of Education — Returning Education to the States](#) — Current information on federal flexibility and state waiver activity.
- [AT3 Center — State AT Programs](#) — Directory of Assistive Technology Act programs in every state and territory.
- [USAGov — State Governments](#) — Backup directory for state agencies, including education, health, and Medicaid agencies.

Search tip

On your state education agency's website, try these search terms: "K-12 grants," "Title IV-A," "federal programs," "education technology grants," "special education high cost," "assistive technology," and "school-based Medicaid."

Your funding action plan

- 1 **Define the need.** What problem are you solving—student accessibility, speech intelligibility, instructional access, a schoolwide academic need, or a technology priority?
- 2 **Identify the decision-maker.** Special Education? 504 coordinator? Federal Programs? Curriculum? IT? Facilities? Business office? Medicaid billing? Start with the person who owns the relevant program.
- 3 **Match the need to a potential funding path.** Use the Quick reference and decision tree in this guide. Treat every source as a potential path until allowability is confirmed.
- 4 **Check state-specific rules.** Review your SEA guidance, current state grants, waivers, Medicaid rules, and state AT resources.
- 5 **Document the outcome you expect.** Connect the purchase to access, instruction, student support, or another documented priority. Avoid making the funding request about hardware alone.
- 6 **Confirm allowability before purchasing.** Get the appropriate district/program approval and follow procurement, inventory, competitive-bid, and grant-recordkeeping requirements.
- 7 **Consider a pilot or demonstration.** Where possible, use a state AT program, evaluation system, or small initial deployment to document the need and results before a larger rollout.
- 8 **Build your classroom audio plan.** Once you have identified a potential funding path, TeachLogic can help you determine the classroom audio approach, system configuration, and project scope that fit your schools, classrooms, and existing technology.

Questions worth asking internally

- Is this an individual-student need, a classroom need, or a districtwide initiative?
- If it's for a specific student, is the student served under an IEP or a 504 plan?
- Which current district plan or documented need does the purchase support?
- Who controls the relevant funding stream?
- Is there an upcoming construction, renovation, or technology refresh project this could be part of?
- Is there a state-specific grant or flexibility we should check before using local funds?
- Does the purchase trigger any federal technology-infrastructure limitation?
- Are there procurement, inventory, accessibility, or reporting requirements tied to the funding source?
- Would a pilot help us document results before a larger investment?



About TeachLogic

Better audio supports better learning.

TeachLogic designs classroom audio systems that help students hear instruction clearly throughout the classroom. Our solutions support speech intelligibility and listening access while giving schools flexible options for classroom-wide audio, students with hearing needs, and broader school or district deployments.

Whether you are evaluating classroom audio for a single room or planning a larger initiative, the TeachLogic team can help you understand system requirements, evaluate options, and develop a classroom audio plan that fits your instructional goals and existing technology.

Planning a classroom audio project? [Visit TeachLogic](https://teachlogic.com) (teachlogic.com)

[Contact TeachLogic](https://teachlogic.com/contact) (teachlogic.com/contact)

Detailed live resources

Use these links to verify current rules, locate state contacts, and check program-specific requirements. They are official or program-owner sources wherever possible. Web addresses are listed for printed copies.

[IDEA assistive technology — Myths & Facts](#)

Federal guidance on AT devices/services and IDEA funding.

sites.ed.gov/idea/idea-files/myths-and-facts-surrounding-assistive-technology-devices-and-services

[IDEA §300.105 — Assistive technology](#)

Federal IDEA regulation.

sites.ed.gov/idea/regs/b/b/300.105

[IDEA §300.208 — Permissive use of funds](#)

Allows IDEA-funded classroom aids that also benefit other students.

sites.ed.gov/idea/regs/b/c/300.208

[IDEA §300.154 — Methods of ensuring services](#)

Parental consent and notice rules for billing Medicaid.

sites.ed.gov/idea/regs/b/b/300.154

[CMS — School-Based Services Resources](#)

Current federal school-based Medicaid guidance; state rules still control many details.

medicaid.gov/resources-for-states/medicaid-state-technical-assistance/medicaid-and-school-based-services/school-based-services-resources

[Title IV-A / SSAE — U.S. Department of Education](#)

Program description, allocations, guidance, and contacts.

ed.gov/grants-and-programs/formula-grants/school-improvement-grants/student-support-and-academic-enrichment-program-title-iv-part

[REAP Uses of Funds Guide](#)

Current REAP/AFUA guidance.

ed.gov/grants-and-programs/formula-grants/rural-and-insular-areas/rural-education-achievement-program-reap/rural-education-achievement-program-reap-uses-of-funds-guide

[State Education Agency directory](#)

Official starting point for state-specific funding and program guidance.

ed.gov/about/contact-us/state-contacts

[Returning Education to the States](#)

Current federal information on state flexibility and waivers.

ed.gov/about/initiatives/returning-education-states

[AT3 Center — State AT Programs](#)

Find state AT demonstration, loan, and related programs.

at3center.net/state-at-programs

[FCC — FY2026 E-Rate Eligible Services List](#)

Verify eligible network services/equipment; audio hardware should not be assumed eligible.

docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DA-25-921A1_Rcd.pdf

[ED — Education Stabilization Fund Liquidation Extensions](#)

Current ESSER/ESF liquidation information.

ed.gov/grants-and-programs/formula-grants/response-formula-grants/covid-19-emergency-relief-grants/education-stabilization-fund-liquidation-extensions

[DonorsChoose — Teachers](#)

Teacher project eligibility and process.

donorschoose.org/teachers

[Voya Unsung Heroes — Classroom Grants](#)

Current classroom grant program.

voya.com/page/classroom-grants

[CDC — Hearing Loss in Children: Research](#)

Hearing-loss prevalence context.

cdc.gov/hearing-loss-children/research/index.html

[ASHA — Effects of Hearing Loss on Development](#)

Background on educational effects of hearing loss.

asha.org/siteassets/ais/ais-hearing-loss-development-effects.pdf

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