

Top Classroom Supply Needs for 2025-26: Insights from Over 2,000 Teachers

Basic classroom supplies are the most urgent need and teachers often buy these supplies with their own money.

MONTPELIER, VT, UNITED STATES, August 28, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As the 2025-26 school year begins, thousands of K-12 teachers across the country are voicing a clear message: basic classroom supplies are still the most urgent need and teachers are often buying these supplies with their own money.

Since 2011, the National Life Group [LifeChanger of the Year](#) has recognized

over 8,500 educators across 2,300+ school districts, awarding more than \$800,000 in cash prizes and grants. This year, more than 2,100 educators applied to LifeChanger of the Year Back-To-School Supply Grant program between July 1 and August 15, 2025. The program will award 10 teachers with a \$700 grant to help cover essential classroom expenses.

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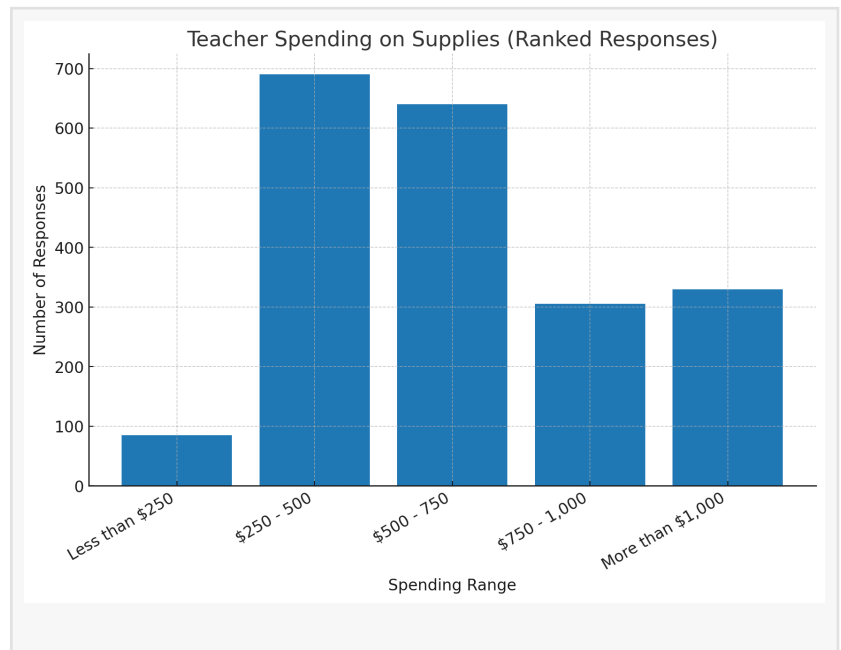
One of the most pressing needs in my classroom is having a consistent supply of basic classroom materials that are often taken for granted—yet essential for student learning and organization.”

High School Teacher, Dallas, TX

Every applicant reported spending personal funds on classroom supplies. On average, teachers spend \$623 annually, with some reporting costs exceeding \$1,000.

“At National Life, we recognize that teachers are the backbone of our communities. Too often, they shoulder the cost of basic supplies that should be readily available for every student,” said Matt Frazee, Executive Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer of National Life Group. “Through our LifeChanger of the Year recognition

program and Back-To-School Supply Grant program, we are honored to stand alongside teachers, helping to ease that burden and ensuring students have the essentials that make a real



difference in their day-to-day learning.”

What Teachers Need Most in 2025-26

An overwhelming 80% of applicants emphasized the need for everyday classroom materials that are critical for students but not always readily available. These include:

- Notebooks and graph paper
- Pencils, erasers, and highlighters
- Dry-erase markers and clipboards
- Folders and binders

“One of the most pressing needs in my classroom is having a consistent supply of basic classroom materials that are often taken for granted—yet essential for student learning and organization,” said a high school teacher from Dallas, Texas.

Teachers noted that access to these supplies helps reduce stress, prevent disruptions, and ensure equity for students whose families may not be able to afford them. Many also requested healthy snacks and personal hygiene items to support students’ well-being.

For more information, and to read personal stories from teachers about what they need most in the classroom, [visit this page](#).

Beyond Basics: STEM, SEL, and Inclusive Tools

While basic supplies topped the list, teachers also highlighted the need for specialized resources to enhance learning:

STEM and Hands-On Learning

Educators requested science kits, engineering tools, and makerspace materials to promote curiosity, problem-solving, and real-world application.

“With proper supplies, I can bring design thinking, coding, and invention to life,” said an elementary teacher from Augusta, Georgia.

Literacy and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)

Teachers emphasized the importance of books and SEL tools that help students build



confidence, regulate emotions, and connect learning to their lived experiences.

Many teachers noted the need for more sensory materials, adaptive tools, and specialized supports to help build inclusive classrooms where all students, including those with sensory and special needs, can thrive and engage. In addition, furniture and equipment such as standing desks, wobble stools, and cushions, were seen as important resources for enhancing student comfort, focus, autonomy, and engagement in learning.

Out-of-Pocket Spending Remains High

The majority (63%) of applicants reported spending between \$523 to \$723 of their own money on classroom supplies while 15% said they spend more than \$1000 each school year. Only 5% of applicants said they spent less than \$250 out of pocket annually. This information underscores the commitment that teachers make to supplying their classrooms despite the personal financial burden and the importance of programs like LifeChanger of the Year and online wish lists to provide much-needed support.

About LifeChanger of the Year

LifeChanger of the Year honors teachers and school employees who exemplify excellence, leadership, and a positive impact on students. The awards program, along with the LifeChanger grant program, is part of National Life Group's broader philanthropic efforts, which include initiatives to end childhood hunger, support children's mental health, and build community. [Learn more here](#) about National Life Group's corporate philanthropy programs.

Want to support teachers in your community? Visit Lifechangeroftheyear.com to nominate an educator or learn how you can get involved.

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