

North Dakota Department of Public Instruction
TITLE I FAST FACT SERIES

Issue: Implementing a Title I Preschool Program

Preparing children to enter school with the language, cognitive and early reading skills that they need to succeed once they enter elementary school by using Title I funds to implement a Title I preschool program for eligible students is a perfectly allowable use of Title I funds. A high quality Title I preschool program could play a key role in ensuring that students will meet challenging State academic achievement standards in elementary school and beyond.

Much of the regulations applicable to a regular Title I program still apply to a Title I preschool program. Several of these regulations are outlined below.

Funding—Title I funds may be used to fund Title I preschool programs. In large school districts, individual buildings could use their Title I building allocation to fund the program or the district could reserve an amount from the district allocation to operate a Title I preschool program for eligible children in the district as a whole or in a portion of the district.

Student Selection Methods* – In a targeted assistance Title I school, preschool children would still need to be identified as eligible to participate through some type of student selection process.

- The school needs to identify multiple, educationally related, objective criteria for selecting students.
- The criteria could be different than the criteria used at the elementary and secondary level.
- These criteria should include teacher judgment, interviews with parents, and developmentally appropriate measures of child development.
- Using family income levels as one of the multiple student selection criteria is allowable, but a school cannot identify a student for Title I preschool services solely on the basis of income. Instead, family income levels would be a good criteria to use to prioritize which students get to participate in the program when there are not sufficient Title I resources to serve all preschool aged children who otherwise qualify for the program.
- In addition, children who participated in a Head Start, Even Start, Early Reading First, or Title I preschool program at any time during the two preceding years, homeless children, and children in neglected and delinquent programs are automatically eligible for Title I preschool.

In a schoolwide Title I school, all children of preschool age in that school's attendance area would be eligible to participate in the Title I preschool program.

*Please note, unlike student selection criteria at the elementary and secondary levels, if a school/district has no existing assessment data for preschool children, Title I funds may be used for identifying those children.

Staff Qualifications

- **Teachers**—Preschool teachers in a Title I preschool program would need to meet Title I, Part A teacher qualification requirements for "highly qualified" teachers.
- **Aides/Paraprofessionals**—Aides/paraprofessionals would need to meet the Title I requirements for aides/paraprofessionals specified in Title I law. Since aides/paraprofessionals must be under the direct supervision of a certified teacher, a Title I preschool program staffed entirely by paraprofessionals is not permitted.

Instruction – Title I preschool programs would need to provide high quality instruction to eligible children.

- Title I preschools would teach early reading and cognitive skills that provide the foundation for formal reading instruction.
- Literacy would be an integral part of everything that goes on in a Title I preschool program.
- The Title I preschool should NOT be implementing an elementary school curriculum.

Assessment – A Title I preschool program would need to regularly monitor children's academic, social, and emotional development in a variety of ways. Progress monitoring of Title I preschool students would allow the teacher to better plan instruction and ensure that all children's needs are being met. A Title I preschool program would require formal and informal observations of children's progress in academic and social activities. Title I preschool teachers could monitor children's progress by—

- Observing children as they play with each other, respond to directions, participate in activities, and use language to communicate.
- Collecting samples of children's drawings and writings.
- Documenting progress.
- Talking with children about their own progress.
- Talking with parents about what they have observed at home.
- Screening and diagnostic tools that assist in identifying students for referral to special services.

Parent Involvement – All provisions for parent involvement required for a regular Title I program apply to Title I preschool programs.

- **Parent Permission** to participate in the Title I preschool program.
- **Annual Parent Meeting** – Title I preschool staff would need to conduct a meeting for parents outlining what they and their child(ren) can expect from participating in the Title I preschool program.
- **Parent-School Compact** – A parent-school compact must be written and disseminated to Title I preschool parents outlining the key player's responsibilities for learning.
- **Parent Involvement Policy** – This policy is developed and distributed to Title I parents and outlines the activities and services parents can expect from the Title I preschool program throughout the school year.
- **Assessment of Parent Involvement** – This is often done through a survey. This assessment provides Title I preschool parents with the opportunity to give feedback on the Title I preschool program and the parent involvement components.

If you have additional questions regarding this issue, please contact:

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