

Funding the Gearing Up for Kindergarten Program

Gearing Up for Kindergarten is a school readiness and parent education program.

This document outlines various possibilities and resources available to districts and schools for funding a Gearing Up for Kindergarten program. The funds outlined in this document could be used to fund the program or to supplement the amount of funds received through the NDSU Extension Service, for costs such as materials and snacks.

State Funds

During the 2011 62nd North Dakota Legislative Assembly, within SB 2150, flow-through funds were appropriated to the NDSU Extension Service to help support the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program in the amount of \$625,000. The NDSU Extension Service has approximately \$500,000 available for grants to implement the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program.

Since these funds flow through the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI), but are administered through NDSU, there are no additional federal requirements that must be adhered to, making it an ideal funding source for districts. However, since the amount appropriated probably cannot serve all North Dakota schools, some schools and districts may need to look for other sources of funding to implement a Gearing Up for Kindergarten program.

Federal Title Funds

- **Title I** – Title I funds can be used for the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program in Title I buildings. Schoolwide programs could serve all students and parents. Targeted assistance programs could only serve at-risk students and their parents as identified through a selection process. All Title I rules and regulations would still need to be followed in regard to the program.
- **Title I ARRA Funds** – The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction has applied for a waiver to extend the period of availability for ARRA funds. If approved, we will have an extension for LEAs to spend the Title I ARRA funds through June 30, 2012. These Title I ARRA funds can be used to support the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program.
- **Title I Parent Involvement Set Aside** – If a district's Title I allocation is \$500,000 or more, then they are required to set aside 1% of their district's Title I allocation for parent involvement. Only 5% of these funds may be used at the district level, 95% must be given to the participating schools. Districts must document on their consolidated application that they have reserved, at a minimum, the 1% for parent involvement and specifically outline how these funds will be spent. These funds are ideal to help support the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program.

- Title I – Program Improvement 10% Set Aside for Professional Development – A school or district identified for program improvement (during years 1 and 2) must spend not less than 10% of the district’s/school’s allocation of Title I Part A funds for the purpose of providing high-quality professional development that directly addresses the academic achievement problems that caused the identification. Since this is a parent training program, these set aside funds for professional development could be used to pay the stipends for teachers to provide training to parents, as well as other costs to support the training aspects of a Gearing Up for Kindergarten program.
- Title II A – Title II A funds designated for professional development could be used to support professional development in the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program.
- REAP (Rural Education Achievement Program Initiative) – These funds target small rural districts. Eligible school districts are allowed to combine the funding under the federal Title programs and can use these funds for any authorized activity. If your district is eligible, funds can be REAPed into Title I to support the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program. All Title I rules and regulations would still need to be followed in regard to the program.
- Transferability – These funds target larger urban districts. If your district is eligible, funds can be transferred into Title I and used to support the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program. All Title I rules and regulations would still need to be followed in regard to the program.
- Program Improvement Funds – Schools in program improvement may receive additional funds to help them make adequate yearly progress. Using these additional program improvement dollars to support the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program would be an allowable use of the funds. In particular, elementary schools may want to pursue this.
- Small Rural Schools Achievement Program Funds through REAP – Eligible schools can apply these additional funds through the U.S. Department of Education. These funds can be used for authorized activities under the Title programs and can support any of the supplemental activities under the federal programs, including the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program.
- Reallocated Title I Funds – These funds are available to school districts that would like to add to their Title I program, but need additional funds to accomplish their plan. The funds must supplement your current local and Title I budget. These funds are made available each year in September/October and could be used to support any additional activity that will enhance services for Title I students.

Special Education Funds

- Special Education Discretionary Funds – The NDDPI Special Education unit is in the process of updating the forms and requirements for the 2011-2012 discretionary grants. Once the forms are updated, these grants will be available to special education units, school districts, and agencies working to improve outcomes for children and students with disabilities. Grant approval is extremely competitive and based on need and program description. The maximum amount given for each grant will be \$15,000, which must be used during the 2011-2012 school year. In addition, schools would have to show in their application that the funds will be used for children with disabilities as a way to offer early learning before they begin school. A final report will be required in July 2012. As stated, the funds are competitive, but requesting

funding for the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program would be an allowable use of these funds. Schools that partner with a special education unit would increase their chances of receiving a discretionary grant.

The discretionary grant information will be posted on the NDDPI Special Education unit website. We will inform special education units, school districts, and other agencies through email when this information is posted.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call Alison Dollar at (701) 328-2277 or adollar@nd.gov.

- Special Education Preschool Funding – The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction Special Education Unit is also responsible for administering Special Education preschool funding. These preschool funds may be a potential source of funding for the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program. To inquire about the possibility of utilizing these funds, please contact Nancy Skorheim at [nkorheim@nd.gov](mailto:nskorheim@nd.gov) or (701) 527-1384.

Other Options

- Pool Your Resources – In North Dakota, it is becoming quite common for districts to cooperate and share services. Federal regulations allow school districts to pool their resources to share services among several schools. One district would simply agree to be the fiscal agent and the funds would flow through that district to pay for the shared activities. Several area districts close in proximity could pool their funds to support the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program. Another viable option would be to share resources through your local Regional Educational Association (REA).
- Gifted funds specifically for the program (e.g., gifts from community, trust fund from former student)
- Granted funds specifically for the program (e.g., fundraisers)
- Tuition (e.g., parents pay a fee for the program)
- Donations specifically for the program (e.g., organized donations from city)
- Education Jobs Fund Program – In August 2010, Congress approved the Education Jobs Fund Program. North Dakota received \$21.5 million for the Education Jobs Fund Program. Each district received an allocation proportionate to the amount of funds allocated through the State School Aid formula for the 2011-2012 school year. It will be a standalone grant that districts can access through September 30, 2012.

Districts have the discretion to decide how to use these funds, within the parameters of the law. Allowable expenditures include compensation and benefits necessary to support school level positions. Therefore, these funds may potentially be allowable to help support the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program.

Congress is currently debating another potential Jobs bill, which has a provision for educators. If passed, funding could be available in school year 2012-2013.

Jerry Coleman, the department School Finance Director, is the contact person for the Education Jobs Fund Program and can be reached at jcoleman@nd.gov.

This information, as well as other Title I related information, can be found online at www.dpi.state.nd.us/title1/earlychild/index.shtm