

Guidance on Operating a Title I Preschool Program

What is a Title I preschool program?

- ▶ A Title I preschool program is a program of educational services for students who are below the age at which the school provides elementary education.
- ▶ A Title I preschool program must be focused on raising the academic achievement of students once they reach school.

Who is eligible?

- ▶ In targeted assistance schools, schools would need to develop a student selection process using multiple, educationally related, objective criteria.
 - 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 based on income. Instead, family income levels would be a good criteria to use to prioritize which students are selected 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 (based on your student selection criteria).
 - 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 the Title I pool. Students are then determined to be eligible, based on educational need.
- ▶ In a schoolwide program, the school does not need to identify particular children as eligible. All children in the attendance area of that school are eligible to participate.

May a LEA or school use Title I funds to identify eligible preschool children?

- ▶ Generally, it is the responsibility of a local educational agency (LEA) and school to use information it already has available to identify at-risk children. However, if a LEA has no existing assessment data for preschool children, Title I funds may be used for identifying these children.

How would Title I funds be used to fund a Title I preschool program?

- ▶ A Title I school could use its building level Title I funds to operate a preschool program, OR the district could reserve an amount to operate a Title I preschool program for eligible children in the district as a whole or as a portion of the district.
- ▶ Title I funds could also be used in conjunction with other public early childhood education programs (e.g., Head Start and Even Start) to operate a Title I preschool program.
- ▶ A LEA's Title I application **must** describe how it will coordinate and integrate services under Title I with other educational services such as Even Start, Head Start, Early Reading First and other

preschool programs. Title I schoolwide plans must also include its plans for the transition of children in those programs to elementary school programs. [Section 1112(b)(1)(E)(i), ESEA.]

- ▶ A LEA must also describe, if appropriate, how it will use Title I funds to support preschool programs for children, particularly children participating in a Head Start, Early Reading First or Even Start program as these children are automatically eligible for the Title I pool when they enter kindergarten. A LEA may support preschool programs by providing such services directly or through a local Head Start agency, an agency operating an Even Start program, Early Reading First, or another comparable public early childhood education program. [Section 1112(b)(1)(K), ESEA.]
- ▶ Title I funds in a targeted assistance school would only be able to fund preschool services to those students identified in the preschool student selection process.

Why implement a Title I preschool program?

- ▶ Recent research has found that services for educationally disadvantaged students may be most effective if focused on students in earlier grades.
- ▶ Serving children in the early years, especially at-risk children, is an important strategy for preparing children to demonstrate reading proficiency by the end of third grade.
- ▶ Research over the last 20 years (Reynolds 2000) has provided evidence that children who attend high quality pre-kindergarten programs—
 - perform better in reading and math throughout the elementary grades;
 - are less likely to be held back a grade;
 - are less likely to require special education;
 - are less likely to present discipline problems; and
 - are more likely to be enthusiastic about school and have good school attendance.

What would be taught in a Title I preschool program?

- ▶ Title I preschools would teach early reading and cognitive skills in a developmentally appropriate manner to provide the foundation for formal reading instruction.
- ▶ Title I preschools should address all of the developmental domains of early childhood including social, emotional cognitive, linguistic, physical, language, and cognitive.
- ▶ Title I preschools are encouraged to align their curriculum with the North Dakota Early Learning Guidelines (<http://www.nd.gov/dhs/info/pubs/docs/cfs/nd-early-learning-guidelines-for-ages-3-thru-5.pdf>).
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ Developmentally appropriate, research-based curriculum is used within a Title I preschool program. It is important to recognize the difference between a comprehensive and a supplemental curriculum. A comprehensive curriculum is intended to be the primary instructional tool used to guide high quality instruction in prekindergarten classrooms and designed to meet children's learning needs in multiple areas. A comprehensive curriculum provides activities, materials, and guidance for an entire preschool day. A supplementary curriculum is intended for flexible use as part of differentiated instruction or as an intervention that meets children's learning needs in specific areas (phonological awareness, oral language, literacy, math, etc.).

Supplemental curricula are **not** intended to provide activities, materials, and guidance for an entire preschool day.

Title I preschools emphasize learning through play, encouraging teachers to use constructive and imaginative play as intentional opportunities for children to develop their vocabulary, understanding and ability to think about the world around them.

Examples of comprehensive and supplemental curriculum can be found on page 18 at http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PDF/ECE_protocol.pdf . The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/topic.aspx?tid=13> provides information on curriculum that have been reviewed to determine their effectiveness in improving preschool children's cognitive and language competencies associated with school readiness (cognition, language, literacy, and math skills).

- ▶ Guidelines for curriculum adoption can be found at <http://nieer.org/resources/policybriefs/12.pdf>

If a Title I school decides to operate a Title I preschool program, would they be required to assess preschool-aged children on the State assessment?

- ▶ No, the earliest the State assessment is required to be administered is third grade. However, the preschool program would need to utilize assessments tied to developmentally appropriate, research-based curriculum. Schools should develop age appropriate screening and assessment measures so that all Title I preschool students develop a strong foundation in literacy and numeracy.
- ▶ Throughout the year, teachers should regularly monitor children's academic, social, and emotional development in a variety of ways. Through progress monitoring, teachers are better able to plan instruction and ensure that children's needs are being met. There should be formal and informal observations of children's progress in academic and social activities.
- ▶ Assessments for preschool children could include developmentally appropriate observational checklists or analysis of student's work completed by teachers.
- ▶ A Title I preschool program may utilize Head Start outcomes as a developmentally appropriate assessment practice to determine a child's progress.
- ▶ The National Institute for Early Education Research has created a database that includes information about early education assessments as well as the kinds of information that can be gathered by these assessments. This database can be accessed at <http://nieer.org/assessment/basic.php> .

What qualifications would a teacher in a Title I preschool program need?

- ▶ The North Dakota State Legislature passed SB 2030 authorizing school districts to use federal funds for preschool programming. School districts who offer additional services to preschool-aged students using Title I funds have the following options:
 1. hire staff with a B3 license,
 2. hire staff with an elementary education major and a kindergarten endorsement. A plan of study may be granted for the kindergarten endorsement which will allow a teacher two years to complete the required coursework for the endorsement.
 3. hire staff that have a K-8 license. The K-8 licenses are no longer issued by ESPB. However, those who already have a K-8 license may teach preschool.
 4. hire staff that have a K-6 license. The K-6 licenses are no longer issued by ESPB. However, those who already have a K-6 license may teach preschool.

5. hire staff with an elementary education major and an early childhood endorsement.
6. hire staff with an elementary education major and a minor in early childhood education.

What qualifications would an aide/paraprofessional in a Title I preschool program need?

- ▶ Aides/paraprofessionals hired for a Title I preschool program need to meet the Title I requirements specified in the NCLB Act for aides/paraprofessionals.
- ▶ Aides/paraprofessionals would need to either have a valid North Dakota teacher license or hold a valid Title I Aide/Paraprofessional Certificate of Completion. To obtain a Certificate of Completion, an applicant can:
 - obtain an associates degree (or higher) from an institution of higher education,
 - complete at least two years of study in an institution of higher education, or
 - meet a rigorous standard of quality, which includes an assessment of reading, writing, and math. North Dakota has three assessments on our state approved list.
- ▶ Since aides/paraprofessionals must be under the direct supervision of a certified teacher, a Title I preschool program staffed entirely by paraprofessionals is not allowed.

What are the requirements for parental involvement?

- ▶ All provisions in section 1118 apply to Title I preschool programs except the requirement in section 1118 (d)(2)(A) concerning discussion of the school-parent compact at parent-teacher conferences in elementary schools. This means that a Title I preschool program would have to:
 - develop or revise an existing parental involvement policy,
 - host an annual parent meeting on the Title I preschool program,
 - provide opportunities for training parents to support the student at home,
 - assess parents regarding their opportunity for involvement in the program,
 - inform parents of their children's progress, and
 - inform parents of the results of the Annual Review meeting.
- ▶ Parental involvement in the education of children should begin as soon as they start school. Early childhood, preschool, and kindergarten programs that train parents to work with their children at home tend to have significant, positive effects. Children who participate in these programs have better grades and ratings from teachers both of which tend to improve the longer they are in the program. They also make greater gains than children who do not participate in such programs (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Studies that compared levels of involvement found that achievement increased directly with the extent to which parents were engaged in the program. Children who participated from all family backgrounds and income levels made gains and in some cases, children having the most difficulty in school made the greatest gains (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

- ▶ The quality of family environments and parent-child interactions is central to a child's literacy and cognitive development. Parents strengthen their child's literacy development and school-related competencies when they engage in language-rich, parent-child interaction, provide supports for literacy in the family, such as by reading to their children, and hold appropriate expectations of the child's learning and development. High-quality preschool programs provide explicit training for parents in the skills and behaviors that support their child's development.

Teachers and parents are partners in preparing children for future school success. It is essential that teachers engage in consistent and meaningful sharing of information with parents and caregivers, including meeting with parents to talk about any areas in which their child is experiencing difficulties. In addition, by sharing specific information about the topics children are

learning and the skills they are developing, teachers strengthen parents' ability to support their children's learning at home.

- ▶ Title I LEAs and schools should, to the extent feasible and appropriate, coordinate and integrate Title I parental involvement strategies and activities with parental involvement strategies under other programs such as Head Start, Reading First, Early Reading First, or Even Start. [Section 1118(a)(2)(D) and 1118(e)(4), ESEA.]

How should a Title I preschool program be coordinated with other preschool programs?

- ▶ A school may include appropriate Title I activities as part of another public preschool program. For example, a Title I preschool program could provide, in full or part, the early childhood component of an Even Start project.
- ▶ Title I funds could also be used to complement or extend a Head Start program. Title I funds could be used to provide services to Title I eligible children who are not eligible for Head Start services. Title I could also be used to provide additional services to Head Start children who are also eligible for Title I services by extending the daily program for additional time or increasing the number of days, or providing services for Title I eligible students at times Head Start is not operating.
- ▶ Districts that are able to collaborate with a Head Start or other preschool program basically have two options:
 - hire staff to go over and work in a Head Start or locally run preschool program or
 - purchase slots at a Head Start or locally run preschool program. If this option is selected, the district needs to identify a preschool liaison in the school district that is responsible for ensuring compliance with all of the Title I regulations.

Regardless of which option is selected, it is critical to remember that when Title I funds are used to support a Head Start or locally run preschool program, it becomes a Title I program and must follow all of the Title I regulations.

- ▶ Regardless of whether or not services are blended, schools **need** to make an attempt to collaborate with a local Head Start or locally run preschool program. These programs can be a valuable resource in selecting components of a preschool program which includes outcomes, curriculum, assessment measures, etc., as they have established programs and experience in operating early childhood programs. A map showing the North Dakota Head Start sites can be accessed at www.ndheadstart.com/hssites.htm.

Must Title I preschools meet the supplement not supplant requirement?

- ▶ Yes. Title I preschools must still supplement and not supplant district responsibilities. The "supplement not supplant" regulation means that Title I funds and Title I services must supplement and not supplant all regular school programming. In other words, a school may not use Title I funds to perform a service that would normally be paid for with local or state dollars.

What would a high quality Title I preschool program look like?

- ▶ In high quality preschool programs, you should see students doing the following:
 - Learning the letters of the alphabet.
 - Learning to hear the individual sounds in words. Students need to rhyme, to break words apart into their separate sounds (segmenting), and put sounds together to make words (blending).
 - Learning new words and how to use them.
 - Learning early writing skills.

- Learning to use language by asking and answering questions, and by participating in discussions and engaging in conversations.
- Learning about written language by looking at books and by listening to stories and other books that are read to them every day.
- Becoming familiar with math and science.
- Receiving language development and appropriate pre-literacy experiences.
- Engaged in gross and fine motor activities.
- Developing social and emotional competencies through interactions with peers and adults.
- Developing creative thinking and an appreciation of the arts through music, dance, dramatic play, and art activities.
- Participating in a balance of small group, large group, and individual activities.

Are there other characteristics or considerations for operating an effective Title I preschool program?

- ▶ Although there are no federal mandates regarding class size or teacher/student ratios, schools are strongly encouraged to keep group sizes low with no more than 20 children per classroom with one adult for every ten children. Research suggests that the more individualized and differentiated we can tailor instruction, the more gains and retention we will see in student learning.
- ▶ It is highly recommended that districts/schools provide a half-day or full-day program with a duration at least equal to ninety full days of instruction. Research suggests that children at risk need a preschool program of at least that duration to make significant progress with school readiness skill development.
- ▶ Schools need to meet all health and safety standards as well as provide a stimulating environment for students.
- ▶ Schools must address the nutritional needs of students during the preschool hours of operation.
- ▶ If preschool children have need for health, nutrition, and other social services, a portion of Title I funds in a targeted assistance school may be used to address those needs, based on a comprehensive needs assessment and funds are not reasonably available from other public or private sources.
- ▶ To promote collaboration between schools, pre-kindergarten programs, child care providers, and Head Start programs serving young children at risk of school failure, the superintendent of each school district operating a Title I preschool program should consider the establishment of an early childhood education advisory council consisting of at least:
 - The Title I authorized representative (school administrator).
 - The Title I paid preschool teacher.
 - The director of a Head Start program serving the school district, or the director's designee.
 - Designees from the kindergarten, local Part B program serving preschool children with disabilities, Even Start, and Early Reading First.
 - The parent of a child enrolled in the district's early childhood education program.
- ▶ The Title I authorized representative or designee could serve as the chairman. The advisory council could provide advice and recommendations regarding matters such as coordination and cooperation with private sector early childhood education providers and Head Start programs, the admission of eligible children, opportunities to jointly address staff training needs, issues encountered by working families, communication and outreach services, facility usage,

transportation, and any other matters that impact the provision of early childhood education services within the district.

What type of professional development enables teachers to provide a high-quality early childhood education program?

- ▶ Teacher knowledge is a crucial ingredient in a high-quality early education program. Children’s cognitive growth and language development are primarily influenced by the daily interactions between children and the adults who are teaching them, caring for them, and guiding their learning opportunities. The curriculum, learning environment, and materials available to children are important elements of quality, but it is the teacher’s ability to implement the curriculum and to use effective instructional approaches that result in a long-term difference for learning (Whitebrook, 2003). See www.irle.berkeley.edu/cscce for additional information.

Many preschool teachers do not have formal training in providing explicit instruction or supporting and expanding children’s cognitive and language skills. Some school-based early education programs hire elementary school teachers and, although these teachers traditionally have at least a bachelor’s degree in education, they need additional training in child development, language acquisition, early literacy, observation, and assessment.

Professional development for preschool staff should be based on knowledge from scientifically-based research of how children develop their cognitive language, literacy, and other essential skills for school readiness. For example:

- strategies for reading to children,
- extending discourse, and
- teaching new words.

In addition, preschool educators can benefit from sustained professional development that uses such strategies as mentoring and coaching. For example, a coach might model effective teaching strategies for the teacher, and/or observe the teacher’s instruction, which is followed by discussion and reflection on the effectiveness of instructional strategies and how they support young children’s progress.

What are the transition activities that should take place between a Title I preschool and the local elementary school?

- ▶ A schoolwide program **must** include plans for assisting preschool children in the transition from early childhood programs, such as Title I preschool, Head Start, Even Start, or Early Reading First, to local elementary school programs. *[Section 1114(b)(1)(G), ESEA.]*
- ▶ Targeted assistance programs must coordinate with and support the school’s regular education program – whatever it may be. They may include services to assist preschool children in the transition from early childhood programs such as Head Start, Even Start, Early Reading First, or state-run preschool programs to elementary school programs. *[Section 1115(c)(1)(D), ESEA.]*
- ▶ Activities that increase coordination between the LEA or school district and an Even Start Family Literacy program; a Head Start agency; and if feasible, other federal, state or local entities carrying out early childhood education and care programs, such as the Early Reading First program; or early childhood education and care centers in the community serving children who will attend the schools of the LEA include but are not limited to:
 - Developing and implementing a systematic procedure for receiving records regarding such children, transferred with parental consent from any of the programs mentioned above.

- Establishing channels of communication between school staff and their counterparts (including teachers, social workers, and health staff) in federal, state, and all education and care centers to facilitate coordination of programs.
 - Conducting meetings involving parents, kindergarten or elementary school teachers, Even Start Family Literacy staff, Head Start teachers or, if appropriate, teachers from other early childhood development programs to discuss the developmental and other needs of individual children.
 - Organizing and participating in joint transition-related training of school staff, Even Start Family Literacy staff, Head Start program staff, Early Reading First program staff, and, where appropriate, other early childhood education and care program staff.
 - Linking the educational services provided by school district and/or building staff with the services provided by local Even Start Family Literacy programs, Head Start agencies and other federal, state and local early childhood education and care programs.
- Title I Preschool programs that are collaborating with Head Start are encouraged to follow the transition guidelines in SEC. 642A. HEAD START TRANSITION AND ALIGNMENT WITH K-12 EDUCATION. [42 U.S.C. 9837a](a) In General-

Each Head Start agency shall take steps to coordinate with the LEA serving the community involved and with schools in which children participating in a Head Start program operated by such agency will enroll following such program to promote continuity of services and effective transitions, including:

- Developing and implementing a systematic procedure for transferring, with parental consent, Head Start program records for each participating child to the school in which such child will enroll.
- Establishing ongoing channels of communication between Head Start staff and their counterparts in the schools (including teachers, social workers, local educational agency liaisons designated under section 722(g)(1)(J)(ii) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11432(g)(1)(J)(ii)), and health staff) to facilitate coordination of programs.
- Establishing ongoing communications between the Head Start agency and local educational agency for developing continuity of developmentally appropriate curricular objectives (which for the purpose of the Head Start program shall be aligned with the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework and, as appropriate, State early learning standards) and for shared expectations for children's learning and development as the children transition to school.
- Organizing and participating in joint training, including transition-related training for school staff and Head Start staff.
- Establishing comprehensive transition policies and procedures that support children transitioning to school, including by engaging the LEA in the establishment of such policies.
- Conducting outreach to parents and elementary school (such as kindergarten) teachers to discuss the educational, developmental, and other needs of individual children.
- Helping parents of limited English proficient children understand:
 - the instructional and other services provided by the school in which such child will enroll after participation in Head Start; and

- as appropriate, the information provided to parents of limited English proficient children under section 3302 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7012).
- Developing and implementing a family outreach and support program, in cooperation with entities carrying out parental involvement efforts under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6301 et seq.), and family outreach and support efforts under subtitle B of Title VII of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq.), taking into consideration the language needs of parents of limited English proficient children.
- Assisting families, administrators, and teachers in enhancing educational and developmental continuity and continuity of parental involvement in activities between Head Start services and elementary school classes.
- Linking the services provided in such Head Start program with educational services, including services relating to language, literacy, and numeracy, provided by such LEA.
- Helping parents (including grandparents and kinship caregivers, as appropriate) to understand the importance of parental involvement in a child's academic success while teaching them strategies for maintaining parental involvement as their child moves from Head Start to elementary school.
- Helping parents understand the instructional and other services provided by the school in which their child will enroll after participation in the Head Start program.
- Developing and implementing a system to increase program participation of underserved populations of eligible children; and
- Coordinating activities and collaborating to ensure that curricula used in the Head Start program are aligned with:
 - the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework, as developed by the Secretary; and
 - state early learning guidelines, as appropriate, with regard to cognitive, social, emotional, and physical competencies that children entering kindergarten are expected to demonstrate.

If appropriate facilities are not available to house a preschool program in the district or a school, how might preschool services be provided?

- ▶ If appropriate district or school facilities are not available for preschool services, the district and school should consider working with children in existing childcare programs such as Head Start, Even Start, Early Reading First, or a program funded under the Child Care Development Block Grant, or a site conducting a family literacy program.
- ▶ Preschool services may be provided at any location that other Title I services may be provided, including public school buildings, public libraries, community centers, privately-owned facilities (including facilities owned by faith-based organizations, the child's home, and other appropriate settings).
- ▶ The cost to rent or lease space in privately-owned buildings is allowable if the space is necessary to ensure the success of the program, appropriate space is not available to the grantee, and the cost is reasonable.

What type of oversight responsibility do SEA's have for Title I preschools?

- ▶ As the Title I grantee, the state educational agency (SEA) is responsible for oversight of all Title I programs, including preschool programs supported with Title I funds.

- ▶ Completion of a survey at the end of the year is required for districts using Title I funds for preschool programming. The Department of Public Instruction’s Title I Preschool End-of-Year Survey is currently available at www.dpi.state.nd.us/title1/earlychild/index.shtm on the Title I website.
- ▶ The Department of Public Instruction is required to monitor Title I preschool programs for compliance. The Title I Preschool Monitoring Tool is currently being updated and should be available soon at www.dpi.state.nd.us/title1/earlychild/index.shtm on the Title I website.

Where can I get more information on Title I preschool programs?

- ▶ For more information on operating a Title I preschool program in North Dakota, access the early childhood education link on the Title I website at www.dpi.state.nd.us/title1/earlychild/index.shtm.
- ▶ To review the official U.S. Department of Education’s Title I preschool program guidance, *Serving Preschool Children Under Title I*, go to the U.S. Department of Education’s website at www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/preschoolguidance.pdf OR www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/preschoolguidance.doc.
- ▶ To review information regarding North Dakota Head Start programming, visit www.ndheadstart.com to access their association’s website.

Who can I contact for more information regarding Title I preschool programs?

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