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Q and A on Professional Development

Professional development plays a huge role in the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) Act. All schools and districts are expected to be implementing professional development to support the programs and initiatives of the school or district to help students make sufficient progress. In addition, the law requires schools and districts identified for program improvement to spend 10% of the district's Title I allocation on professional development initiatives.

Professional development is highlighted throughout the NCLB Act, but specifically section 9101, defines professional development; as including activities that

- Improve and increase teachers' knowledge of the academic subjects they teach,
- Are high quality, sustained, intensive and classroom focused, and
- Positively impact classroom instruction and teacher performance.

The State Title I office often receives questions from the field regarding professional development. We felt it would be beneficial to share these questions as well as our responses.

Q. If we use Title I funds for professional development, can we only include Title I teachers?

A. It depends, as the requirements vary depending on whether the school operates as a targeted assistance program or a schoolwide program.

For a schoolwide program, schoolwide Title I funds can be used to support all personnel for professional development purposes as long as it has been outlined in the schoolwide plan and is aligned to the schoolwide goals.

For a targeted assistance program, Section 1115(C)(1)(F) of NCLB states that schools may use Title I funds to provide professional development for teachers, principals, and paraprofessionals who work with children participating in the Title I targeted assistance program. This professional development must, however, meet the following requirements:

- ▶ The professional development must be focused on helping at-risk students.
- ▶ The cost of the training must be reasonable.
- ▶ The teachers, principals, and paraprofessionals participating must be reflective of the grades being served by the Title I program. For instance, if a school serves Title I students in grades K-2, then only teachers in grades K-2 could participate in the professional development.
- ▶ All professional development expenditures must be detailed and approved in the district's consolidated application or budget revision before they are implemented.

When determining whether or not Title I funds can be used to fund a whole school professional development activity, review each of the above items. If the professional development is not exclusively focused on helping at-risk students or is extremely expensive, then it would be more appropriate to do a cost share between programs. School districts receive Title II funding specifically for professional development purposes. The district could calculate the number of children receiving Title I services versus those not participating in Title I and share the professional development costs accordingly.

For more information on this issue, please refer to www.dpi.state.nd.us/title1/targeted/general/facts/index.shtm.

Q. If we have a teacher participate in a professional development opportunity, what are we obligated to pay?

A. It is up to the school or district to decide what will be paid. Typically, the school or district does cover the cost of the training (registration, travel expenses, hotel, meals, etc.). Some schools and districts only cover these costs if the school/district requires or requests the teacher to attend. However, it is the school or district's decision whether or not a stipend will be paid.

Q. Are we required to pay stipends for professional development?

A. No. Schools and districts are not required to pay stipends for professional development; however, it is very common among schools and districts across the state. In particular, if the professional development is happening outside the regular contracted school day or calendar year, stipends are typically paid.

Q. If we do pay a stipend, how much are we required to pay?

A. There is no requirement on the amount a school or district must pay if a stipend is given. The State Title I office has seen stipends range from \$10-\$30 per hour.

If your school or district is having difficulty deciding what to pay for stipends, you may want to take the following into consideration:

- ▶ The average hourly rate for teachers at the school.
- ▶ The amount of funding available for professional development stipends.
- ▶ The amount typically paid in past years.

Q. Can stipends be paid to paraprofessionals?

A. Yes. Most often, schools and districts paying stipends to paraprofessionals have a different pay rate than what is being paid to teachers.

Q. If we pay stipends, are we also obligated to pay for benefits?

A. Yes. Regardless of the amount of the stipend or how it has been done in the past, schools and districts MUST also include ALL benefits when paying stipends.

Q. Can a school or district dismiss early for professional development purposes?

A. Yes. During the 2007 Legislative session, HB 1270 provided districts with several choices regarding professional development. These include:

- ▶ Having two full days for professional development during the school year. They defined a full day as six hour sessions, exclusive of meals, breaks, etc.

OR

- ▶ Having four half days for professional development during the school year. They defined a half day as a four hour session, exclusive of meals, breaks, etc. This option would essentially be "early dismissal" as the bill also clarifies that schools can operate a half day of instruction and provide a half day of professional development.

Q. What funds are available for professional development?

A. Schools and districts have a variety of funds available to access for professional development. All of the federal program funds can be used for professional development, particularly when it meets the intent and purpose of that particular program. These federal funding sources include:

- ▶ Title I
- ▶ Title II A
- ▶ Title II D
- ▶ Title IV
- ▶ Title V
- ▶ Special Education