

**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 eligible (i.e., Title I) 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).
  - 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 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.

***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.
- ▶ 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 for 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 that 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 could align their curriculum with the North Dakota Early Learning Guidelines (when available at website address).
- ▶ 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. A list of excellent curriculum models that meet the guidelines for developmentally appropriate practice can be accessed at [www.nj.gov/education/ece/curriculum/curriculum.htm](http://www.nj.gov/education/ece/curriculum/curriculum.htm).

***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.
- ▶ 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.

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

- ▶ The North Dakota State Legislature passed language in SB 2030 authorizing school districts to use state or federal funds for preschool programming.

School districts who offer additional services to preschool-age students using Title I funds have the following two options:

1. Districts may hire staff with a B3 license.

OR

2. Districts may 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.

***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 required in a regular Title I program in terms of parental involvement are required in a Title I preschool program. This means that a Title I preschool program would have to do the following:
  - Develop a parental involvement policy.
  - Develop a parent-school compact.
  - 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.
  - Inform parents of the results of the Annual Review meeting.

***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.
- ▶ Regardless of whether or not services are blended, schools need to collaborate with their local Head Start. Head Start 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](http://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. All services provided by personnel paid with Title I funds must be supplemental in terms of providing additional instructional services for students identified for Title I services.

***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 a part 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 preliteracy experiences.
  - 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. Research suggests that the more individualized and differentiated we can tailor instruction, the more gains and retention we will see in student learning.
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ A research-based curriculum is used to ensure that developmentally appropriate practices and instruction are used in the preschool program.

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

- ▶ For more information on operating a Title I preschool program in North Dakota, check out the early childhood education link on the Title I website at [www.dpi.state.nd.us/title1/earlychild/index.shtm](http://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](http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/preschoolguidance.pdf) OR [www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/preschoolguidance.doc](http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/preschoolguidance.doc).
- ▶ To review information regarding North Dakota Head Start programming, visit [www.ndheadstart.com](http://www.ndheadstart.com) to access their association's website.