

WHAT DOES IT TAKE?

TITLE I SCHOOLWIDE PROGRAMS

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In 1994, Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was reauthorized in ways that provide strong levers for ensuring a quality education for students served by Title I. The law relaxed the income requirements schools must meet in order to become schoolwide programs. Schools that have fifty percent or more low income students can use their Title I funds to improve the educational program of the entire school, rather than targeting their assistance. This rule represents a great possibility for change, but requires proper planning, implementation and vigilance. Planning for schoolwide programs is an in-depth process, for which the law spells out specific requirements.

Schools implementing schoolwide programs must conduct needs assessments and develop comprehensive plans to meet the needs of various constituencies in the school. All planning and implementation must be done with the goal of making substantial yearly progress toward getting *all* students to meet high state standards. Specific school level requirements for schools implementing schoolwide programs follow:

I. ENRICHED AND ACCELERATED CURRICULUM AND EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION

The law says that all Title I programs must:

- **help students meet the challenging standards set for *all students in the State***
- **“us[ing] effective instructional strategies” to**
- **“provide an enriched and accelerated curriculum(1)**

These rules mean that schools must be teaching students what the state standards require them to know. They must teach students challenging material and give them a rich knowledge of the subject area. They must do so in ways that reach children who learn in different ways. *Increase the Amount of Learning Time*

The reauthorized Title I strongly discourages traditional “pull-out” and “remedial” programs. When students are pulled out of the regular classroom during regular school hours for remedial instruction, they do not usually catch up. Instead, they fall further behind. That does not mean that intensive, individual instruction is the wrong approach. However, it does mean that children should get this kind of help in ways that help them “catch up,” not in ways that take them away from what everyone else is learning. The law states that Title I schoolwide programs must “increase the amount and quality of learning time.(2) Title I targeted assistance programs must “minimize” pull out programs which take children out of their regular classes during regular school hours.(3) Both mandates

mean that Title I schools should be using their funding to provide the extra time and attention that students in the school need to meet state standards.

II. HIGH QUALITY AND PROFESSIONAL STAFF

Title I programs must provide **“instruction by highly qualified professional staff.(4)**

How Do You Know Who is a Good Teacher?

- The teacher has a rich understanding of the subject he/she teaches.
- The teacher understands and participates in developing high standards for what all children should know and be able to do.
- The teacher focuses the curriculum on helping children reach those standards.
- The teacher provides effective and timely assistance to students when they are having trouble learning.
- The teacher uses assessments which measure performance in reaching the standards.
- The teacher uses assessments to support the learning process.
- The teacher reaches out to include the families of all children in improving student performance.
- The teacher can and wants to work well with students from diverse backgrounds and students with disabilities.
- The teacher seeks to learn more about how children learn, and is trying to bring best practices into classroom teaching.
- The teacher works with other teachers and staff to take responsibility for the success of all students in the school.
- The teacher believes that all of the students in the class are able to meet high standards, and works to make sure that they do.

III. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Title I also requires that teachers, aides, and others working with students receive **professional development.(5)** The law requires that Title I programs **“effectively carry out”** professional development activities.(6)

In addition, the federal Eisenhower Professional Development Grant program provides money to states, school districts, and state higher education agencies in order to improve teaching and learning through long-term and intensive high quality professional activities in core academic subjects.(7)

Most teachers participate in professional development. However, it is important to find out what kind they can and do take part in. Title I and the Eisenhower program both require **“high-quality” professional development**. Good professional development should be part of a clear plan for school change and improvement. It should:

1. Focus on improving student achievement in a teacher’s school. Too often, teachers spend precious teacher learning time in training that doesn’t help them improve student achievement or the quality of learning and teaching. Title I programs must include programs which focus on improving the teaching of the academic subjects. The goal must be to “enable all children to meet the State’s student performance standards.(8) One way that Title I funds can be used to help students meet academic standards is to help teachers develop “curricula and teaching methods that integrate academic and vocational instruction.(9) Also, Title I can support teacher learning on how to provide experience-based instruction.(10)

2. Teachers should design and/or carry out the professional development together. Just like students, teachers learn best by doing. Title I requires that principals, teachers, and other school staff design the professional development.(11) The programs should be based on the needs of the school, and support the school’s Title I plan.(12) Staff turn to support materials and outside experts as resources, but not to dictate the effort.

3. Provide in-depth experiences over time. A “one-shot” training without follow-up or continued evaluation is less likely to really effect the way a person does their job. Title I supports a much richer approach to professional development. A rich approach would include support and/or mentoring over time and self-evaluation opportunities.

4. Focus, at least in part, on the subject area that the teacher teaches. Teachers must know the subject matter they are teaching *very well*, and keep up with changes. Title I requires that programs aim at getting all students to meet challenging state academic standards. This provides a great tool for demanding that schools help teachers learn more about their subject areas.

5. Include teacher learning about new technology. Teachers often need help in learning how to make technology a part of the entire learning process. Title I money may be used to provide staff “instruction in the use of technology.(13)

6. Include teacher learning about student assessment. Classroom assessments are critical to the learning process and it is important for teachers to learn the best ways of using assessment to help all children achieve. Title I programs may use their funds to provide “instruction in the use of assessments(14)

7. Include teacher learning on how to work with special needs populations and how to prevent gender and racial bias. Title I requires that schools help teachers learn “strategies for identifying and eliminating gender and racial bias in instructional materials, methods, and practices.”(15) Schools may use Title I funds to help teachers learn “ways to teach special needs children.”(16) Other laws require that schools provide services to special populations and that schools not discriminate against students on account of race, sex, or disability. For instance, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act require that schools provide a free and appropriate public education to students with disabilities. Title VI and the Equal Education Opportunities Act require that schools help students overcome language barriers for students whose first language is not English. Title IX prohibits sex discrimination. The United States Constitution and Title VI prohibit race discrimination. To comply with these laws, schools should provide teachers and other staff with the training they need to make sure that they know and follow the law, and that they provide rich educational experiences for all students.

8. Include learning on how to include parents and the community in school reform. Title I money can be used to provide “instruction in the ways that teachers, principals, pupil services personnel, and school administrators may work more effectively with parents.”(17) It can also be used to help school staff form “partnerships with institutions of higher education,”(18) or work together with other programs, like Head Start.(19)

9. Be supported by administrators, the district, and state. The school should support participation through scheduling, a commitment to teacher learning, and expectations that teachers will adapt what they learn to the classroom. The district and state must provide resources and policies which support the type of high quality, intensive, and long term development described above. Under Title I, states must develop teams of distinguished educators to provide support to schools having difficulty meeting State standards.

IV. EFFECTIVE INDIVIDUAL INSTRUCTION

The law requires that Title I programs and schools “**ensure that students who experience difficulty mastering any of the standards . . . during the course of the school year [receive] effective, timely additional assistance.**”(20)

The law gives some details of the kind of individual help schoolwide programs must provide. It says that schoolwide programs must provide “**effective, timely additional assistance**” to students having trouble meeting standards. The extra help must include a number of things:(21)

- Timely identification of student difficulties.
- A way of deciding what help will be effective.
- Teacher-parent conferences. Teachers and parents must discuss what the school will do to help the student meet standards, what the parents can do to help the

- student improve the student's performance, and additional assistance which may be available to the student at the school or in the community.
- Training for teachers in how to provide the above services if the school finds it possible.

In a nation which is now spending a lot of time talking about ways to prevent "social promotion," Title I offers the best way. Good Title I programs do not want to pass students from one grade to the next if they are not prepared. But they also know that holding students back is not a good way of improving achievement. Only good teaching and learning will really help. The best way to prevent failure is to prevent students from falling behind in the first place. This requires timely intervention policies which focus resources on effective programs and services for students who are at risk of failing.

V. PARENT INVOLVEMENT (22)

A. Every Title I **school** must have a **written parent involvement policy** which:

1. is jointly developed with parents;
2. has been approved by parents;
3. is distributed to parents; and
4. clearly describes how parents will be involved in making important decisions about how Title I money is spent, and how the school program is designed.

B. Every Title I School must have **written school parent compacts** which:

1. must spell out how school personnel, parents and students will work together to ensure that students are able to meet state standards;
2. make clear what each party's responsibility is;
3. should be a living document ; and
4. CAN be individualized so that it addresses the individual needs of every child.

C. Every school **district** must have a **written parent involvement policy** which:

1. is jointly developed and agreed to by parents; and
2. spells out how parents will be involved in making district level policy decisions that affect Title I schools (e.g. how district will identify and assist failing schools).

D. Title I requires schools which receive Title I money to **work with parents in many different ways**, including:

1. making joint decisions about the school program;
2. reviewing the school's needs; and
3. improving the program when necessary.

These clear legal rights make Title I an important tool for parent involvement in seeking quality programming their own children and for all students in the school.

Endnotes

(1)” 20 U.S.C. § § 6314(b)(1)(B), 6315(c)(1)(A)&(D).

(2)” *Id.* at § 6314(b)(1)(B)(iii)(I).

(3) *See* 20 U.S.C. §§ 6315(c)(1)(D)(iii), 6314(b)(1).

(4)” *Id.* at §§ 6314(b)(1)(C) & 6315(c)(1)(F).

(5) *Id.* at §§ 6314(a)(5); 6314(b)(1)(D); 6315(c)(1)(G); 6315(e)(3); & 6320.

(6) *Id.* at §§ 6314(a)(5) & 6315(e)(3)

(7) *Id.* at §§ 6641-6651.

(8)” *Id.* at § 6320(a)(1).

(9)” *Id.* at § 6320(b)(1)(D).

(10) *Id.* at § 6320(b)(2)(I).

(11) *Id.* at § 6320(b)(2)(I).

(12) *Id.* at § 6320(a)(2).

(13) *Id.* at § 6320(b)(1)(B).

(14)” *Id.* at § 6320(b)(2)(D).

(15)” *Id.* at § 6320(b)(2)(A).

(16)” *Id.* at § 6320(b)(1)(E).

(17)” *Id.* at § 6320(b)(2)(F).

(18)” *Id.* at § 6320(b)(2)(B).

(19)” *Id.* at § 6320(b)(2)(C).

(20) *Id.* at § 6320(b)(2)(H).

(21)” *Id.* at § 6314(b)(1)(H).

(22) *Id.* at § 6314(b)(1)(H)(I) - (iii).

(23) *Id.* at §§ 6314(b)(1)(E), 6314(b)(2), and 6319.