

GUIDANCE ON OPERATING A TITLE I PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

What is a Title I pre-kindergarten program?

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

Who is eligible?

- ▶ In targeted assistance schools, schools must 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 pre-kindergarten services solely based on income. Instead, family income levels would be 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 pre-kindergarten-aged children who otherwise qualify for the program (based on your student selection criteria).
 - Children who participated in a Head Start or a previous Title I pre-kindergarten 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. Student eligibility is determined based on educational need.
- ▶ In a schoolwide program, 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 pre-kindergarten 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 pre-kindergarten children, Title I funds may be used for identifying these children.

How would Title I funds be used to fund a Title I pre-kindergarten program?

- ▶ A Title I school could use its building level Title I funds to operate a pre-kindergarten program, OR the district could reserve an amount to operate a Title I pre-kindergarten 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) to operate a Title I pre-kindergarten program.
- ▶ A LEA's Title I application **must** describe how it will use Title I funds to support, coordinate, and integrate services under Title I with other educational services such as Head Start and other public pre-kindergarten programs. Title I schoolwide plans must also include its plans for the transition of children in those programs to elementary school programs.
- ▶ Title I funds in a targeted assistance school would only be able to fund pre-kindergarten services to those students identified in the pre-kindergarten student selection process.

Why implement a Title I pre-kindergarten 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.
- ▶ Researchers from the Center for American Progress and the Economic Policy at the Center (*Center for American Progress, 2013*) provide evidence that children who attend high quality pre-kindergarten programs perform better in reading and math throughout the elementary grades and school attendance, are less likely to:
 - be held back a grade
 - require special education
 - present discipline problems

What would be taught in a Title I pre-kindergarten program?

- ▶ Title I pre-kindergartens would teach early reading and cognitive skills in a developmentally appropriate manner to provide the foundation for formal reading instruction.
- ▶ Title I pre-kindergarten programs should do its best to address the Pre-kindergarten Standard's developmental domains of early childhood including Approaches to Play and Learning, Social and Emotional, Physical Development, Health, Expressive Arts and Creative Thinking, Language and Literacy, Mathematics and Logical Thinking, Science and Problem Solving, and Social Studies.
- ▶ Title I pre-kindergartens are encouraged to align their curriculum with the North Dakota Pre-kindergarten Content Standards located at www.dpi.state.nd.us/standard/content/draft-PreK-Content-Standards.pdf on the department's website.
- ▶ The Title I pre-kindergarten should be implementing a developmentally appropriate, research-based curriculum, not the elementary school curriculum.
- ▶ *Selecting a Comprehensive Pre-kindergarten Curriculum*, a guide to aide in selecting a pre-kindergarten curriculum is located at www.dpi.state.nd.us/EarlyChildhoodEduc/curriculum.shtm on the department's website. Title I pre-kindergartens 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.

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

- ▶ No, the earliest the State assessment is required to be administered is third grade. However, the pre-kindergarten 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 pre-kindergarten 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 pre-kindergarten children could include developmentally appropriate observational checklists or analysis of student's work completed by teachers.
- ▶ A Title I pre-kindergarten 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 pre-kindergarten program need?

- ▶ School districts who offer additional services to pre-kindergarten-aged students using Title I funds must have highly qualified teachers. Teachers must have one of the following to be considered highly qualified:
 - B3 license
 - Elementary education major and an early childhood endorsement
 - Elementary education major and a minor in early childhood education
 - 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.
 - K-8 license. The K-8 licenses are no longer issued by ESPB. However, those who already have a K-8 license may teach pre-kindergarten.
 - K-6 license. The K-6 licenses are no longer issued by ESPB. However, those who already have a K-6 license may teach pre-kindergarten.

What qualifications would an aide/paraprofessional in a Title I pre-kindergarten program need?

- ▶ Aides/paraprofessionals hired for a Title I pre-kindergarten 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 pre-kindergarten program staffed entirely by paraprofessionals is not allowed.

What are the requirements for parental involvement?

- ▶ All provisions in section 1118 apply to Title I pre-kindergarten 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 pre-kindergarten program would have to:
 - develop or revise an existing parental involvement policy,
 - host an annual parent meeting on the Title I pre-kindergarten 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.
- ▶ 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. [Section 1118(a)(2)(D) and 1118(e)(4), ESEA.]

How should a Title I pre-kindergarten program be coordinated with other pre-kindergarten programs?

- ▶ A school may include appropriate Title I activities as part of another public pre-kindergarten program. For example, 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 local pre-kindergarten or Head Start have two options:
 - Hire staff to go over and work in a Head Start or locally run pre-kindergarten program or
 - Purchase slots at a Head Start or locally run pre-kindergarten program.
 - If this option is selected, the district needs to identify a pre-kindergarten 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 pre-kindergarten program, it becomes a Title I program and must follow all of the Title I regulations.

Must Title I pre-kindergartens meet the supplement not supplant requirement?

- ▶ Yes. Title I pre-kindergartens 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.

Are there other characteristics or considerations for operating an effective Title I pre-kindergarten 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 16 children per classroom with one adult for every ten children. Research suggests individualized and differentiated instruction, produces gains and retention. It is highly recommended that districts/schools provide a half-day or full-day program with duration at least equal to ninety full days of instruction. Research suggests that children at risk need a pre-kindergarten 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 providing for the nutritional needs of students during the pre-kindergarten hours of operation.
- ▶ If pre-kindergarten 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 pre-kindergarten program should consider the establishment of an early childhood education advisory council consisting of at least:
 - Title I authorized representative (school administrator)
 - Title I paid pre-kindergarten teacher
 - Director of a Head Start program serving the school district, or the director's designee
 - Designees from the kindergarten, local Part B program serving pre-kindergarten children with disabilities
 - 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.

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).

Professional development for pre-kindergarten staff should be based on:

- Scientifically-based research of how children develop their cognitive language, literacy, and school readiness.
- 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 pre-kindergarten and the local elementary school?

- ▶ A schoolwide program **must** include plans for assisting pre-kindergarten children in the transition from early childhood programs, such as Title I pre-kindergarten or Head Start 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 pre-kindergarten children in the transition from early childhood programs such as Head Start or state-run pre-kindergarten programs to elementary school programs. [*Section 1115(c)(1)(D), ESEA.*]
- ▶ Activities that increase coordination between the LEA or school district and a Family Literacy program; a Head Start agency; and if feasible, other federal, state or local entities carrying out early childhood education and care programs.
 - Developing and implementing a systematic procedure for receiving records regarding such children, transferred with parental consent from any early care education programs.
 - Establishing channels of communication between school staff and their counterparts (including teachers, social workers, and health staff) to facilitate coordination of programs.
 - Conducting meetings involving parents, kindergarten or elementary school teachers, Family Literacy staff or Head Start teachers to discuss the developmental and other needs of individual children.
 - Organizing and participating in joint transition-related training of school staff, Family Literacy staff, Head Start program staff, and, where appropriate, other early childhood education program staff.
 - Linking the educational services provided by school district and/or building staff with the services provided by local Family Literacy programs, Head Start agencies and other federal, state and local early childhood education and care programs.
- ▶ Title I pre-kindergarten 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) The North Dakota Head Start transition and alignment guidelines are located at www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childfamily/headstart/docs/hssco-needs-assessment11-12final.pdf on the Department of Human Services website.

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

- ▶ Pre-kindergarten services may be provided at any location that other Title I services may be provided, including public school buildings, public libraries, existing child care programs, 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 pre-kindergartens?

- ▶ As the Title I grantee, the state educational agency (SEA) is responsible for oversight of all Title I programs, including pre-kindergarten programs supported with Title I funds.
- ▶ The Department of Public Instruction is required to monitor Title I pre-kindergarten programs for compliance. The Title I Pre-kindergarten Monitoring Tool is located at www.dpi.state.nd.us/title1/earlychild/index.shtm on the Title I website.

Where can I get more information on Title I pre-kindergarten programs?

- ▶ For more information on operating a Title I pre-kindergarten 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.
- ▶ North Dakota Department of Human Services www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childfamily/headstart/
- ▶ To review information regarding North Dakota Head Start programming: North Dakota Head Start Association www.ndheadstart.com.

Who can I contact for more information regarding Title I pre-kindergarten programs?

Questions specific to Title I:

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