

Title I Services for Preschool Students

Title I Part A

Excerpts from the USDE Guidance: “Serving Preschool Children Under Title I”

<http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/preschoolguidance.pdf>

Districts may serve preschool children under Title I, Part A in the following ways [Section 1112(b)(1)(K)]:

- **School-Based Program:** A participating school may use part of its Title I, Part A funds to operate a preschool program.

To fund a preschool program within a participating school, only children ages 5 and above are counted as low-income students for allocation purposes. (For serving criteria, see below.)

- **District Operated Program:** An LEA may reserve an amount from the LEA’s total allocation to operate a Title I, Part A preschool program for eligible children in the district as a whole or for a portion of the district.

To fund a district-operated Title I preschool program, the district may reserve an amount from the total Title I allocation and distribute those funds to specific Title I schools, or other comparable public early childhood education programs to operate Title I preschool programs. Head Start, Even Start, and Early Reading First are examples of such programs. Services may be provided in public school buildings or other appropriate public and private locations. (For serving criteria, see below.)

Note: An early childhood center that is part of the public school district can qualify as a school attendance area if some/all of the students attend kindergarten. Only children who are at least 5 years of age may be counted as low-income students for allocation purposes.

Student Eligibility Criteria for Services

The following criteria are used to determine which preschool students are eligible to receive Title I services:

- **Schools Operating Approved Schoolwide Programs:** If a preschool program is part of a Title I school operating an approved schoolwide program, all preschool students in the program are eligible for preschool services.
- **Targeted Assistance Programs:** To be eligible, students must be failing or most at risk of failing to meet the state’s academic standards. Multiple, educationally related, objective measures must be used for entrance and exit criteria. These might include teacher input, parent interviews, and age-appropriate measures of child development.

Income level may be used for purposes of prioritizing when sufficient Title I funds are unavailable. 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 institutions for neglected or delinquent children are automatically eligible for Title I preschool and to continue into Title I school programs.

Components of High-Quality Preschool Programs

A high-quality preschool program should include the following three key components for reading and academic success. These include a strong foundation in: (1) language development; (2) early literacy (phonological awareness, letter knowledge, written expression, book and print awareness, motivation to read); and early math (number and operations) (Lyon, 2003).

Other characteristics consistent among high-quality educational programs that have demonstrated significant positive outcomes on measures of children's academic and social-emotional development are as follows:

- The program contains a clear statement of goals and philosophy that is comprehensive and addresses all areas of child development, including how the program will develop children's cognitive, language, and early reading skills, the cornerstones of later school success.
- Children are engaged in purposeful learning activities and play, and are taught by teachers who work from lesson and activity plans.
- Instruction is guided by a coherent curriculum that includes meaningful content (such as science) and has a strong and systematic focus on cognitive skills, including the language, early reading, writing skills and math skills children need to develop before they enter kindergarten.
- Instruction is always intentional, and frequently is direct and explicit. There is a balance between individual, small-group, and large-group activities.
- The classroom environment is one where children feel well cared for and safe. It also stimulates children's cognitive growth and provides multiple and varied opportunities for language and literacy experiences.
- Teachers frequently check children's progress. Ongoing assessment allows teachers to tailor their instruction to the needs of individual children as well as identify children who may need special help.
- The preschool staff regularly communicate with parents and caregivers so that caregivers are active participants in their children's education.
- Services are sufficiently intensive to allow more time for children to benefit from cognitive experiences. Preschools that operate for a full day, on a year-round basis, or have provided children with two years of preschool, show better results than those that offer less intense services (Reynolds, 2000).

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 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.

Professional development includes activities that do the following:

- are high-quality, sustained, intensive, and classroom-focused in order to have a positive and lasting impact on classroom instruction and the teacher's performance in the classroom;
- are not one-day or short-term workshops or conferences;
- are designed to advance teachers' understanding of effective instructional strategies that are based on scientific research;
- are aligned with and directly related to any applicable State content standards;
- provide instruction in methods of teaching children with special needs; and
- are regularly evaluated for effectiveness.

The quality of family environments and parent-child interactions is central to a child's literacy and cognitive development. High quality preschool programs provide explicit training for parents in the skills and behaviors that support their child's development.

Allowable Expenditures

Services for preschool students must meet the requirement of supplement not supplant. Use of Title I funds for preschool programs is subject to EDGAR Parts 76, 77, 80, 81, 82, 84, 85, 97, 98, and 99. Equitable services are not available for nonpublic preschool students.

Title I funds used for preschool programs must support the district/school needs assessment and priority problems. Allowable expenditures include the following:

- Additional instruction and guidance
- Transition activities such as professional development for curriculum and goal coordination, developing student portfolios, and teacher visits
- Assessments to establish eligibility
- Renting or leasing space
- Certain site preparation costs
- Health, nutrition, and other social services for targeted assistance students if funds are not available from other sources

Note: Title I is built on the concept of operating programs in eligible elementary and secondary schools. Section 1113 of ESEA and §200.78 of the Title I regulations require that an LEA allocate Title I funds to "school attendance areas and schools." An LEA that only serves preschool students in an LEA-wide program would not meet this requirement

because none of its elementary and secondary schools receive Title I funds. Title I requires that schools served by the program are held accountable for results. Therefore, any policy that intentionally or unintentionally prevents an LEA from implementing the school accountability requirements runs counter to the intent and purposes of the statute.

Title I School Improvement Funds (SIA, part a and SIA, part g)

- If a district or school receives a School Improvement Award (SIA), the district or school may use these funds to conduct a preschool program providing the emphasis is on those areas that caused the improvement status as outlined in the school's Title I Unified Plan.