



Early Learning under ESSA Eligibility and Funding Summary

Eligibility:

Title I, Part A of the ESEA allows LEAs to provide preschool programs to improve educational outcomes for eligible children from birth to the age at which the LEA provides a free public elementary education. Title I preschool programs are intended to assist children most at risk of failing to meet the State's challenging academic standards based on multiple, educationally related, objective criteria. Certain children are also "automatically eligible" to participate in a Title I preschool program (e.g., an LEA or school need not identify the child as most at risk of failing to meet the State's academic achievement standards), including:

- Children who participated in Head Start, received services supported by the Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grants program within Literacy Education for All, Results for the Nation (LEARN) (formerly known as Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program), or attended a Title I preschool program at any time in the prior two years;
- Children who received services under Title I, Part C (migrant education) in the prior two years;
- Preschool-age children experiencing homelessness; and
- Children who are in a local institution or attending a community day program for neglected or delinquent children and youth (ESEA section 1115(c)(2)).

Funding:

A Title I LEA or school may use its Title I funds to support a district-operated preschool program or a school-operated preschool program, or for coordination with other preschool programs, based on the needs of its eligible students and the most effective use of those funds. The use of Title I funds for a preschool program is a local decision. The ways in which an LEA or school may use Title I funds to support a preschool program are described in Table 1. As a Title I recipient, an LEA or school that uses Title I funds to operate a preschool program must comply with the same requirements that apply to all Title I programs. For example, a Title I preschool program may only include children who are most at risk of not meeting a State's challenging



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academic standards when they enter elementary school unless the preschool program is part of a schoolwide program, in which case all children may attend. In addition, if an LEA chooses to provide preschool services using Title I funds, the district must "support, coordinate, and integrate services provided under (Title I) with early childhood education programs".

Table 1. Mechanisms by which schools and LEAs can use Title I, Part A funds to support preschool programs.

Program Type	Program Details
<p>School-Operated: A Title I school may use all or a portion of its Title I funds to operate a preschool program for eligible children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schoolwide Program: If a school operates a preschool program in a schoolwide program school, all preschool children who reside in the school's attendance area are eligible to be served. If the school's Title I budget cannot support serving all eligible children interested in attending, then the LEA may utilize a locally-determined method to determine which children are most at-risk, similar to a TAS program. • Targeted Assistance Program (TAS): A school may serve preschool children who reside in its attendance area and whom the school identifies as most at-risk of failing to meet the state's academic achievement standards when they reach school age.
<p>District (LEA)-Operated: An LEA may reserve a portion of funds from its Title I allocation to operate a preschool program for eligible children in the LEA as a whole or in a portion of the LEA. Eligible children must live within a Title I attendance area. This model is advantageous as the LEA may flexibly serve the neediest children across all Title I attendance area schools rather than as set number to be divided equally at each school.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District (LEA) as a Whole: An LEA may serve preschool children who reside throughout the LEA and whom the LEA identifies as eligible because they are at risk of failing to meet the State's academic achievement standards when they reach school age. An LEA may not use Title I funds to implement a preschool program throughout the district to benefit all



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	<p>preschool students in the LEA unless all the schools in the LEA are Title I schools operating schoolwide programs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portion of the District (LEA): An LEA may serve preschool children who reside in specific Title I school attendance areas (e.g., its highest-poverty school attendance areas) served by some or all of its Title I schools if, for example, an LEA does not have sufficient Title I funds to operate a preschool program for the district as a whole.
<p>Coordination with Other Early Childhood Programs: An LEA or school may use Title I funds to improve the quality or extend the day or number of days of State preschool, Head Start, child care, or other community-based early learning programs for eligible children.</p>	<p>Title I funds may be used to provide preschool services for Title I eligible children who are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not eligible for Head Start services based on income requirements; • Eligible for Head Start but not served in a Head Start center due to unmet need; • Enrolled in a State preschool, Head Start, or another community-based early learning program and are in need of additional services (e.g., extending the day, increasing number of days etc.) or • Would benefit from home visiting because they are most at risk of not meeting the State’s challenging academic standards.

Performance Standards

A preschool program that is funded wholly or in part by Title I, Part A funds must comply with section 641A(a)(1)(B) of the Head Start Act, which is the educational performance standards of



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the Head Start program. Preschool programs funded wholly or in part by Title I, Part A funds are not required to comply with the entire Head Start Program performance standards. To the extent that the state's Early Learning standards meet or exceed the education performance standards under the Head Start Act, they may be used in LEAs that use Title I, Part A funds to provide preschool programs. In addition to providing direct preschool services, Title I funds may also be used to support early learning in other ways, such as for professional learning (including joint professional development for early childhood staff and elementary school staff); minor repairs or remodeling of space to accommodate a Title I preschool program; and health, nutrition, and other comprehensive services for children in a Title I preschool program.