

WHAT IS TITLE I?

Public Law 107-110, No Child Left Behind Act, was passed by Congress in December 2001 and took effect July 1, 2002. Title I is the section of the law that provides funding to support “educationally deprived” students in schools with concentrations of poverty that meet the criteria outlined in the law. The new law represents significant expansion of the federal role in K-12 education.

First, the federal government has set minimum qualifications for teachers in all the nation’s public schools.

Second, the government has established a national deadline for all public schools to bring all their children to an achievement level deemed “proficient” by the state. For schools that receive Title I aid, the penalties can include restructuring.

Third, the new law authorizes use of federal funds for a voucher-like program of extra tutoring for children in the most troubled Title I schools.

The bill mandates the use of curricula and techniques grounded in scientifically-based research for federally funded programs.

The lever for these changes is Title I, Part A, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended. Title I is the largest single program of federal aid for elementary and secondary education. Title I has long been the vehicle for the federal government to implement the twin missions of the Education Department: enforcing equity and promoting excellence in education. Title I has successfully drawn attention to the special needs of children in high-poverty schools. In particular, the “strings” associated with receipt of federal funds have probably played some role in prompting state and local governments to level the fiscal playing field for their high-poverty schools.

Whether Title I has done all that much to promote excellence is another matter. Evaluations of the program’s effectiveness have produced mixed results. Researchers reported significant gains in the 1960’s and 1970’s, but there is little evidence of additional progress since then, although some argue that Title I has prevented low-income and minority children from falling farther behind.

This lack of progress—both in Title I in particular and the nation’s education system in general—led directly to the No Child Left Behind Act. When federal aid first became a significant part of local education budgets in 1965, the focus of federal oversight was simply seeing that programs were operated according to the rules and regulations. But over time the focus has changed to demand proof that programs actually worked.

The regular school budget provides the same level of support for all children who attend school. Schools with a high concentration of low-income families often have special educational needs which are brought on by the conditions of poverty. After a

school qualifies for Title I, the educational program is designed to meet the special educational needs of any children in that school who have a particular learning need. In other words, all the children in a Title I school will continue to get the regular help a school provides all children. If the child has special problems in reading, Title I then provides extra help to students who need it most in Title I eligible schools. These are children who are the furthest from meeting the standards the state has set for all children.

The purpose of this title is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging State academic achievement standards and state academic assessments. This purpose can be accomplished by —

- (1) ensuring that high-quality academic assessments, accountability systems, teacher preparation and training, curriculum, and instructional materials are aligned with challenging State academic standards so that students, teachers, parents, and administrators can measure progress against common expectations for student academic achievement;
- (2) meeting the educational needs of low-achieving children in our Nation's highest-poverty schools, limited English proficient children, migratory children, children with disabilities, Indian children, neglected or delinquent children, and young children in need of reading assistance;
- (3) closing the achievement gap between high- and low-performing children, especially the achievement gaps between minority and nonminority students, and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers;
- (4) holding schools, local educational agencies, and States accountable for improving the academic achievement of all students, and identifying and turning around low-performing schools that have failed to provide a high-quality education to their students, while providing alternatives to students in such schools to enable the students to receive a high-quality education;
- (5) distributing and targeting resources sufficiently to make a difference to local educational agencies and schools where needs are greatest;
- (6) improving and strengthening accountability, teaching, and learning by using State assessment systems designed to ensure that students are meeting challenging State academic achievement and content standards and increasing achievement overall, but especially for the disadvantaged;
- (7) providing greater decisionmaking authority and flexibility to schools and teachers in exchange for greater responsibility for student performance;
- (8) providing children an enriched and accelerated educational program, including the use of schoolwide programs or additional services that increase the amount and quality of instructional time;
- (9) promoting schoolwide reform and ensuring the access of children to effective, scientifically based instructional strategies and challenging academic content;

(10) significantly elevating the quality of instruction by providing staff in participating schools with substantial opportunities for professional development;

(11) coordinating services under all parts of this title with each other, with other educational services, and, to the extent feasible, with other agencies providing services to youth, children, and families; and

(12) affording parents substantial and meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children.

Where does the money come from for Title I? Federal tax dollars are provided to state departments of education to distribute to local school systems.

Who decides how much money a school system gets? The amount of money a school system receives is decided by the number of children from low-income families who live in a school district. This information is received from the United States Census, which is taken every ten years and updated more often by the federal government.

Which schools are Title I schools? The local system is asked to identify the schools with the greatest concentration of low-income students. This is done by a procedure that is established in the state and federal guidelines for the Title I program.

Does a child have to be economically disadvantaged to get assistance from Title I? No. If a child attends a school that is eligible for Title I services, he can receive the services if he has the educational need for the services.

Who decides what will be done with Title I money in a school? A local plan has to be developed and forwarded to the State Department of Education. The proposal states what a school system will do with Title I funds. The proposal is written by the school system's Title I staff with the planning assistance of other school staff and parents. Each school has its own Targeted Assisted School Program Narrative or Schoolwide Title I Plan to help in the implementation of their program. Each school's plan is reviewed and revised annually.

Why must a school district involve parents? Experience has shown that programs are more effective when the people receiving services are involved in the planning of those services. The United States Congress therefore mandated parental involvement. This provision insured that parents of children served by the program would have input into the program's planning, implementation and evaluation process.

What do schools usually do with Title I money? Title I programs provide services under several program areas which are called program components.

1. Instructional Component

Instructional components of a Title I program provide teachers and teacher aides to work with Title I students, in reading or any other area which has been

identified as the greatest need by the project proposal. Instructional materials are also provided for the teachers/aides to use in working with the students.

2. Staff Development Component

Staff development component provides in-service training for staff members working in Title I schools to help them learn methods of dealing with the problems addressed in the proposal. Since Title I students have some special need and are not making progress in certain areas of their school work, the most effective techniques must be used by Title I staff.

3. Evaluation Component

The evaluation provides information about the effectiveness of the program. Determination of effectiveness is made based on what the students have learned when compared to what they were expected to learn and whether the project has conducted activities as originally projected. Performance evaluation looks at how the children performed and process evaluation provides information about the activities conducted as compared to the activities identified as a part of the planning process.

4. Parental Involvement Component

Some of the money must be used for parental involvement activities. Each school staff is responsible for implementing the parent activities, and this is an important component of each school's narrative plan.

How is the local program monitored? In addition to the regular reports sent to the state agency, federal program monitoring is accomplished through Department of Education involvement and is based on a five-year review cycle.