



Schoolwide Title I Programs: An Information Brief for Parents

No Child Left Behind, or NCLB, is the current version of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Title I is a section of NCLB that provides extra help for schools where students may need extra help for a variety of reasons, such as poverty, limited ability to speak English, and so forth. If your community school is a Title I school, it gets this extra funding and support from the federal government.

Most public schools receive federal funding, and they must meet standards that are set by NCLB. Schools where 40% or more of students come from low-income families automatically qualify for Title I programs. These schoolwide programs support *all* students, whatever their family backgrounds.

Title I Helps All Students

Depending on what a school needs, it can use Title I money to create or expand many types of programs. Here are some examples:

- training for teachers and other staff
- classroom equipment, such as computers
- special teachers, tutors, or classroom aides
- group activities or special events for students
- before- or after-school programs, or summer school, to provide extra learning time
- drug or violence prevention

Title I Program Standards

To use Title I funds for a program, the school must be sure the program meets certain standards.

- The program fits with state academic standards.
- The program goal is to help all students meet the academic standards.
- The teachers and other staff who work in the program are well trained and qualified.
- Community members—parents, local businesses, and community groups—support the program.
- Student progress can be measured. The school keeps track of student grades, test scores, attendance, and other data to decide whether the program helps students improve.



Title I Parent Involvement Provisions

Title I outlines things that schools, districts, and states must do to help parents be involved in education. These are based on research that shows when parents take part in school activities and decisions about education, children achieve at higher levels. The short version of the Title I definition for parent involvement calls it “participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities.” Parents are to be “full partners in their child’s education.”

State-level requirements. The state education agency (SEA)—that is, the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE)—must collect and provide information about effective parent involvement to schools and districts. The state must develop a parent involvement plan, and parents must be consulted when this plan is developed and/or changed. Title I requires WVDE to create a state report card that includes information about assessments (student test results), accountability (school performance), and teacher quality. The report card also includes data from every district, and it must be written in language that parents can understand. The department is responsible for state-level academic assessments. From the results of these state tests, the department must produce and distribute reports on individual students, written so that parents, teachers, and principals can understand and address the needs of each student.

District-level requirements. All the 55 districts in West Virginia must have written parent involvement policies that are developed jointly with parents. Each district, or local education agency (LEA), must provide a copy of its policy to parents of children in Title I schools. In addition, each district must involve parents in an annual review of the parent involvement policy and in activities of Title I schools. Parents have the right to ask the district for information about the professional qualifications of teachers and aides who work with their children. Districts must create report cards, similar to the state report card, that show district and individual school data on assessments, accountability, and teacher quality.

School-level requirements. Every school must have a written parent involvement policy, similar to the ones created by districts. These policies must be developed with parents, written in language parents can understand, and available to community members. If a school is developing a schoolwide program, parents must be involved in planning and designing the program. Every Title I school must hold an annual meeting at a time convenient for parents. During the meeting, the school explains the Title I program and parents’ rights under the law. In addition, a Title I school must work with parents to develop a school-parent compact. This written agreement between the school and parents outlines activities that parents, educators, and students will use to help children achieve to state standards.

Starting a Schoolwide Program



Part of deciding what program to use is finding out what the school needs. To do this, the school can conduct a **needs assessment**. Often, school leaders will invite parents, students, and community members to join in this process.

When the school's needs have been defined, **planning** can begin. A committee might be selected to explore a variety of programs and decide which can help the school improve.

Professional development for school staff may be part of putting a program in place. If parents or other volunteers will be helping, they might be involved in training, too.

The school will need **resources**—books or computers, for example, or extra bus trips—to support the schoolwide program. Most or all of these resources will be purchased with Title I funds, but they need to be in place for the program to succeed.

Annual reviews help the school make certain that program delivery matches the plan, and that the program does what it was intended to do. It's always easier to make changes before things get too far off track—and before students fall too far behind.

Supporting a Successful Program

Everyone connected with a school can help a program succeed. Just remember the goal—to help all children meet or exceed the state academic standards.

Most schools have experience with parents making refreshments for class parties and helping with field trips. Schools may know less about how to involve parents in supporting academics. Parents and educators may need to work together to learn about good ways to make school-family connections. The West Virginia Parent Connections Web site offers some suggestions for getting started (<http://wvpc.edvantia.org>). Once you access the home page, look under Educator Resources for the School-Family Connections section.

What does meaningful parent involvement look like? Workshops or discussions about helping with homework and creating a good study environment at home can be part of the picture. Parents can work with school staff to help them set meetings at times and places that are convenient for parents who work or who have problems with transportation.

Parents can reach out to schools by telling the teachers what they know about how their children learn and how and when they can volunteer. If parents can't volunteer, they can meet with teachers to discuss homework and ways to support academics at home.

When appropriate, schools can include students in meetings about school. Students have a good understanding of their school environment and ideas about how to make improvements.

Get More Information

For more information about parent rights under Title I and No Child Left Behind, or to find out more about the services we offer, contact West Virginia Parent Connections.

Anita Deck
Project Director and Southern Regional Resource Partner
anita.deck@edvantia.org
800.624.9120 ext. 5478 or
304.347.0478

Teddi Cox, Ed.D.
Eastern Regional Resource Partner
304.698.4950
teddi.cox@edvantia.org

Amanda Harsh
Northern Regional Resource Partner
304.368.1544
amanda.harsh@edvantia.org



Visit our Web site at <http://wvpc.edvantia.org>.



Post Office Box 1348
Charleston, WV 25325-1348
Phone 800.624.9120 or 304.347.0400
Fax 304.347.0489
www.edvantia.org

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