

Title I Schoolwide Programs Approval Process

Background

A schoolwide program is a comprehensive reform strategy designed to *upgrade the entire educational program in a Title I school*; its primary goal is to ensure that all students, particularly those who are low-achieving, demonstrate proficient and advanced levels of achievement on state academic achievement standards. This schoolwide reform strategy requires that a school do the following:

- Create a planning committee;
- Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment;
- Identify and commit to specific goals and strategies that address those needs;
- Create a comprehensive plan; and
- Conduct an annual review of the effectiveness of the schoolwide program and revise the plan as necessary.

Adopting this strategy should result in an ongoing, comprehensive plan for school improvement that is owned by the entire school community and tailored to its unique needs.

Whereas Title I targeted assistance programs only provide educational services to identified individual students, schoolwide programs allow staff in schools with high concentrations of students from low-income families to *redesign their entire educational program to serve all students*. The emphasis in schoolwide program schools is on serving all students, improving all structures that support student learning, and combining all resources, as allowed, to achieve a common goal.

Required Steps for Approval

Before a school is approved to operate a Title I schoolwide program, there are criteria that must be met.

- A school must be a Title I school.
- A school's poverty rate must be at least 40%. (LEAs may submit a waiver request to the USDE to operate a schoolwide program if the school's poverty rate is less than 40%.)
- The school must demonstrate that they operate additional learning opportunities for their low-performing students.
- The school must implement a planning year during which school administration creates the schoolwide planning committee, discusses the viability of introducing a schoolwide approach, and develops the comprehensive schoolwide plan (Unified Plan).
- The year of planning may be waived with sufficient justification that the school has an operating school planning committee and an existing educational plan that includes similar components of the Title I Unified Plan.
- At least three members of the planning team must attend a Title I-sponsored Unified Plan TA session.

- Completed *Application to Operate a Schoolwide Program* and Unified Plan are submitted to the NJDOE for review and approval.

Should My School Become Schoolwide?

The primary consideration for a high-poverty school when considering whether to operate a schoolwide or a targeted assistance program is *which strategy provides the greatest likelihood of improving the achievement of its students with the greatest needs*. Properly implemented, schoolwide programs enable Title I schools with high concentrations of poverty to improve the achievement of their lowest-performing students by *redesigning their total educational program* rather than merely adding on services for students identified as especially at-risk.

The original schoolwide concept (which was first included in the law in 1978) drew on “effective schools” research that pointed to the value of implementing *comprehensive improvement strategies throughout an entire school as a way of improving outcomes for individual students*. Research findings since that time reinforce the fact that all children, including the lowest-performing children, in high-poverty communities can master challenging academic content and complex problem solving skills when resources, practices, and procedures are coordinated across an entire school.

The Title I schoolwide process supports the creation of high-performing schools by encouraging schools to make *significant, even radical, changes* in how they do business, and providing them with a comprehensive process for doing so. It is not a fiscal quick fix to plug budget holes. Nor is it a way to avoid helping only students who are low performers.

Note: If a school consolidates funds in a schoolwide environment, the school plan must document that it has met the intent and purposes of Title I. That is, there must be a mechanism to provide additional academic support to those students who need it and the school must implement the ten required components of all schoolwide programs.

Resources

www.nj.gov/education/title1/program/

- *2009-2010 Application to Operate a Schoolwide Program*
- Title I Unified Plan Template
- Title I Unified Plan Instructions
- USDE Guidance “*Designing Schoolwide Programs*”

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