



Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge

Project #3: PreK Title I Incentive Program

Task 3.2.3: Title I Implementation Toolkit

Background

Minnesota received a federal Early Learning Challenge (ELC) grant of \$45 million for 2012 through 2015 to improve the readiness for kindergarten of children with high needs and build capacity and accountability into our early learning system. The grant targets direct services to children, birth through age five – those living below 200 percent of Federal Poverty Guidelines (142,553 children statewide) – and quality improvement supports to programs serving these children. A key strategy in the Minnesota plan is to increase access for this population of children and their families to high-quality early learning and development (ELD) programs.

Implementation of the plan will focus first on four high-need communities, called Transformation Zones – White Earth Reservation, Itasca County, Saint Paul's Promise Neighborhood, and Minneapolis' Northside Achievement Zone – using and evaluating best practices that can then be replicated and implemented in communities throughout the state.

The Title I Implementation Toolkit will provide districts/schools with guidance in the planning of their early childhood programming and services that will allow them to stay within the federal Title I use of funds requirements.

For further information on the Title I PreK Incentive Program, please contact Mike Brown at mike.p.brown@state.mn.us.

Description

The goal of the ELC Title I PreK Incentive is to encourage school districts to allocate a portion of their Title I funds to support high-quality Early Learning and Development (ELD) programs and increase their support and involvement of early childhood programs. The ELC Title I PreK Incentive provides districts with additional resources that allow them to increase the quality of their early childhood programs while also increasing access - thereby preparing children for greater success in school.

Schools in the four Transformation Zones who receive Title I funds were first eligible for the Title I PreK Incentive. At the start of Race to the Top, there were 13 eligible school districts and one BIA school. To receive the incentives, districts submitted a plan to Minnesota Department of Education in September 2012.

Starting in Years 2-4, competitive ELC Title I PreK Incentive grants were made available to identified communities and other districts to support the use of Title I funds for early childhood education.

Most districts in the state have an existing School Readiness program that will complement the ELC Title I PreK Incentive Grant and we encourage districts to examine this program to see how the two programs, and others, can be integrated and/or expanded. Choosing to expand an existing program allows districts to provide services to more high-needs children and leveraging existing funds is an excellent strategy.

ELC Title I PreK Incentive Program Goals

- Districts in the four Transformation Zones intending to use the ELC Title I PreK Incentive will commit to becoming Three- or Four-Star Rated in the Parent Aware Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS).
- The number of children with high needs who attend high-quality ELD programs will increase in each Transformation Zone.
- School district financial investment and support of early childhood programs will increase.
- Districts will work to align pre-K through grade 3 systems across the district and community.
- Districts will track the progress of pre-kindergarten students through kindergarten and beyond.
- Districts will evaluate and report on the effectiveness of their Title I PreK Incentive early childhood plan.

District Commitment or *Investment*

In order to receive the ELC Title I PreK Incentive, school districts must commit a certain amount of their current Title I dollars (or additional Title I funding, in cases where districts already operate ELD programs using Title I) toward supporting early childhood education (district *investment* dollars). Once the commitment is made, the district will receive a 1:1 funding *incentive* to add to their *investment* dollars. Technical assistance to help district develop high-quality ELD programs will be provided by Department of Education staff, local Head Start agencies, child care resource and referral agencies and experienced district staff.

Key Steps in Maximizing the Use of Title I Funds for Planning, Implementing and Evaluating High-Quality ELD Programs

1. Determine how the district is currently using Title I funds and if they are making a difference in student achievement.

District staff should take steps to determine the effectiveness of Title I funded programs in order to identify the specific programs and strategies that are, and are not, producing the needed academic achievement for students. It is helpful to conduct an annual “needs assessment” for use of Title I funds, so this information will inform future allocation of Title I funding to programs and strategies that produce the desired outcome. Various resources currently exist to assist districts with the process of assessing needs and allocating funds based upon district goals and priorities, such as:

CLASP

[View Using Title I to Finance Early Childhood Programs: Lessons from States and Districts](#)

Department of Education

[View Serving Preschool Children Under Title I](#)

[View Serving Preschool Children Under Title I - Revised 2012](#)

Granite School District – Utah

[View a Sustainable Financing Model for High Quality Preschool for At-Risk Children - PowerPoint](#)

[View a Sustainable Financing Model: High Quality Preschool for At-Risk Children - Results from the Granite School District in Utah](#)

[View High Quality Preschool Closes the Achievement Gap and Reduces Special Education Costs for At-Risk Children - 2011 Report](#)

Head Start Performance Standards

[View §1304.21 Education and Early Childhood Development](#)

PreK Now

[View New Beginnings: Using Federal Title I Funds to Support Local Pre-K Efforts](#)

[View Tapping Title I: What Every School Administrator Should Know about Title I, Pre-K and School Reform](#)

2. Determine how the district is currently funding ELD programs by identifying all funding streams used in your district.

This important step establishes a district baseline of early learning expenditures for this first year of the ELC grant. This information will allow districts to track new spending and allow for planning and sustainability. ***Please note you are only allowed to use current Title I funding as your district *Investment*.** State and federal funding available to support the implementation of ELD programs include:

State	Federal
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• General Education Revenue• Literacy Incentive Aid• ECFE• Head Start• Taconite Revenue• Professional Development• Compensatory Revenue• Integration Aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School Improvement Grant (SIG)• Title I Part A• Head Start• Title II, Part A• Migrant Education Program• Special Ed. Part C and Special Ed. Part B 619• Special Ed. Coordinated Early Intervening Service Funds• Special Ed. Funds for State Personnel Development Grant

Other resources you may find helpful include:

[Blending and Braiding Early Childhood Program Funding Streams Toolkit: Enhancing Financing for High-Quality Early Learning Programs](#)

[View Blending and Braiding Fund to Support Early Care and Education Initiatives](#)

[View Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes: Financing Early Care and Education](#)

[Annotated Bibliography of Resources](#)

3. Determine ELD program services within your district's boundaries.

The next step is to inventory the ELD programs (public and private) that already exist within the district boundaries. This identifies where and how children are presently being served throughout the district prior to kindergarten. Gathering this type of information will yield insights regarding which programs are most prevalent within the district and the identification of organizations, other than the district, that provide ELD programs.

In addition, this process will specify the existing ELD programs in the neighborhoods of the schools funded by Title I in order to better understand how children who live in the district's high poverty neighborhoods are served (or not served) prior to kindergarten. It will be useful to know how many children in each of the Title I school neighborhoods are served by each program and how this number compares to the number of kindergarten children in those Title I schools.

If you are already using Title I funds for services to children before they enter kindergarten, the quality of the services should be examined to determine what is working and what needs to be improved. District staff need to know if the children with greatest needs in the highest poverty Title I school neighborhoods are being served and if present services need to be expanded or improved. **If school districts intend to use the Title I PreK Incentive to support school-based PreK programs they must commit to the program becoming Three- or Four-Star Rated through Parent Aware.**

Districts should review special education and English Language Learner services when assessing the types of ELD programs that are currently operating within the district boundaries. Valuable information will be gained by using the lens of the continuum of services and supports offered through IDEA (Parts B and C) and Title II Part A to examine local service delivery.

Resources available to assist you in analyzing ELD services in your district include:

- Local child care and planning councils
- Local child care resource and referral agencies
- Survey questions for parents/families about their children's ELD experiences as they register for kindergarten (e.g. kindergarten enrollment form) or as they begin the kindergarten school year. (*see Appendix B*)
- Community / District PreK-3rd Grade Early Learning System Map. (*see Appendix A*)
- Identify a core group of early learning community and district stakeholders to form a District Leadership and Implementation Team to guide and facilitate the work.

District-Community Leadership and Implementation Team & School-based Leadership Team

The first key step in implementing the PreK-3rd framework is to establish a **District-Community Leadership and Implementation Team (DCLIT)** with explicit responsibility for guiding PreK-3rd efforts. The role of this team will be to formalize connections among partners, prioritize PreK-3rd Grade reform efforts and to ensure sustainable implementation.

Key district and community stakeholders include:

- Superintendent
- School board
- Principals
- Early care and private early learning providers
- Head Start
- K-12 administrators and staff (Title I, Curriculum/Assessment, School Readiness)
- After-school and extended-day learning programs
- State and local early learning advocacy groups
- Corporations / businesses
- Foundations
- Government and civic leaders
- Families

Implementation of Title I Funded ELD Programs: Two Common Approaches

Approach I: Improve, Connect and/or Expand Existing Programs

The simplest way to begin using Title I funds for ELD programs is to focus on **improving quality** through joint training and professional development of ELD program staff on various topics. Such as:

- Effective instructional strategies
- Parent involvement/education
- Teaming and collaboration
- Aligning curriculum and assessments
- Using peer supports

- Differentiated instruction
- Inclusion
- Positive behavior supports

Improving quality should focus on finding ways for key personnel from all programs to work together and share their skills and knowledge.

Title I funding can be **integrated and connected** with a variety of existing programs and, in some cases, to community based programs to expand the availability of high-quality programs for children. There are many ways to utilize multiple funding sources, and all of them need to be explored to maximize the services for children. While direct services to children can be maximized by combining Title I funds with funds from other programs, care must be taken that the fiscal and reporting requirement of each program are met as each program has its own specific rules and compliance issues which must be followed. One such compliance issue that is common is the supplement not supplant requirement for Title I Part A.

In addition, services for preschool children who have disabilities and/or are learning English need to be considered in making these connections, and district staff members who work with special education and English Language Learners should be involved in the planning.

Districts that already have ELD programs that are funded with Title I or other district funds may consider serving more children by **expanding** and creating more classes or spaces. Often, this can be accomplished relatively quickly and easily, because an infrastructure exists that is needed to support the development and implementation of the several components required to operate a high-quality and effective ELD program.

Approach II: Create New ELD Programs

The ELC Title I PreK Incentive Program is an opportunity for districts to implement an innovative, long-range approach by using Title I funds to create new ELD programs. The use of Title I funds provides districts with the greatest flexibility to develop programs to meet the needs of the district and the community. We encourage districts to consider using Title I funds for the creation of new ELD programs as well as collaborating with those that already exist through Head Start, state or special education.

It is important to note that ELD programs funded by Title I must comply with new standards established under section 641A(a) of the Head Start Act. [View the Education and Early Childhood regulations at 45 CFR 1304.21 – Education and Early Childhood.](#)

The creation of preschool classes using Title I funds must address the needs of children with disabilities and/or who are learning English. The use of Title I funds need to be considered in the context of special education services and support currently offered under IDEA. Important considerations include the establishment of a referral process for special education services and full-inclusion opportunities to ensure that children are served in the least restrictive environment.

The following list comprises the components that need to be included as part of the district's plan to begin an ELD program that utilizes Title I funds. The planning and development process will be a key function of the District Leadership and Implementation Team.

- Facilities
- Eligibility
- Teachers and paraprofessionals
- Professional development
- Parent and community engagement
- Standards
- Curriculum and assessments
- Accountability
- Parent Aware Star Rating

General Considerations for Each Component:

Facilities are the first important step districts need to take in creating a new ELD program. Please note that Title I funds cannot be used for construction of facilities.

- Facilities, including portables must meet all state licensing requirements
- Unused classrooms may be used for ELD with certain required modifications (Title I funds may be used to meet licensing requirements)
- ELD programs are usually half-day program, so two classes can share a room. Through inclusion efforts, classrooms can be shared through team teaching and collaboration with general education and special education staff.
- The ELD facility that is operated by the school district must be on school property.
- Leasing a portable building is allowed under Title I.

- If there is no daytime space available, a program that operates after the regular school day could be considered. A kindergarten classroom could be used for ELD. Other activities could take place at the same time such as adult education classes, supplementary education services and tutoring for other grades.
- In the complete absence of facilities, a home visitor program may be effective; it can be supplemented by Saturday morning classes.

Eligibility of children to be served is an important part of the planning. Children who live in the attendance area of a Title I school are eligible for the Title I school that has the largest percentage of low-income parents should be the highest priority for an ELD program.

- If it is a school-wide program, all children are eligible.
- If the school is a targeted-assistance program, criteria need to be created based on what is used in kindergarten and higher grades to determine who can be served.
- Children from the identified Title I school neighborhood are eligible to attend the ELD program even if the parents choose to send them to another school, including a non-public school, when they enter kindergarten.
- If the ELD program is multi-funded (for example, Head Start and Title I), children from other school attendance areas could attend if their parents meet the stringent Head Start income requirements. For example, if the program is funded 50 percent from each program, half of the children could be from the Title I attendance area and the other half would have to be income eligible for Head Start.

Teachers and paraprofessionals

- If this is a new program, it is necessary to consider the ESEA and future Head Start requirements for highly qualified staff.
- It is highly advisable that a close working relationship is developed between the kindergarten and ELD teachers – both at the district level and at the school level.
- Comparisons of ELD salaries with those of K-3 teachers should be made, and if the requirements are similar, the salaries should be as well. There is a general movement toward higher levels of college training including a bachelor's degree for teachers.

Professional Development to support quality teaching is essential and must promote articulation between ELD and kindergarten teachers.

- Resources must be allocated for teachers to participate in staff development. These resources include release time, instructional materials and other professional development resources that can be accessed and/or available online.

- Teachers and paraprofessionals should participate in ongoing professional development offered through the district and community in person and/or online.

Parents and key community stakeholders must be involved from the beginning in the development of an ELD program, and district leaders need to reach out to the parents and involve them in their children's education.

- Staff members should be assigned to make home visits with these visits being at least once every three months.
- Head Start and School Readiness programs require parent meetings/input on a regular basis, which could be considered for Title I.
- Parents should have opportunities to volunteer in the classroom or in other meaningful ways.
- Teachers should reach out to parents to insure that the home environment supports the learning that takes place within the classroom.
- Teachers and teacher assistants should receive professional training on how to work effectively in a culturally sensitive manner with parents **and children**.

Standards for ELD, referred to as the Early Childhood Indicators of Progress: Minnesota's Early Learning Guidelines (ECIPs). These standards, available on the MDE website, describe the knowledge and skills that children should be able to know and do prior to entering kindergarten. These standards are aligned with the state's kindergarten content standards and support social-emotional development. An alignment with the kindergarten standards is also located on the MDE website.

- Curriculum and Assessments that are comprehensive, aligned, individualized and developmentally appropriate will support a high-quality learning program.
- It is important to note that ELD programs funded by Title I must comply with new standards established under section 641A(a) of the Head Start Act. [View the Education and Early Childhood regulations at 45 CFR 1304.21 – Education and Early Childhood.](#)
- Connections between ELD and kindergarten for staff and parents should be established throughout the school setting. Time to meet should be incorporated into the planning process to support implementation at specific points during the year.
- An aligned comprehensive approach to teaching and learning, including curriculum, daily schedule, assessment and goals should be articulated between ELD and kindergarten to facilitate a smooth transition.
- Guidelines for social development must be consistent with school expectations, using positive behavior supports throughout the school.

- Regular screenings, ongoing observations and assessments of progress are particularly critical for children with special needs and those who are English language learners.

Accountability is essential to the success of ELD programs so that children achieve both short- range (ready for kindergarten) and long-range (state test scores in grades 3, 6, 8 and graduation from high school) outcomes. This is an important piece of an ELD program, and it can take a variety of shapes and forms.

- An efficient child progress tracking system must be established. School districts have systems in place but they usually begin with kindergarten. The system needs to be adjusted so that children can be followed from the time they begin the district ELD program through high school graduation.
- A health and developmental screening must be conducted when children enter ELD programs.
- Children's progress must be monitored and assessed at the end of the year prior to kindergarten.

Parent Aware is Minnesota's Quality Rating and Improvement System, designed to support and improve the quality in early childhood programs and inform parents about that quality. In order for a district to access ELC Title I Incentives, the district program must commit to becoming rated through Parent Aware. School district programs applying for a rating will need to satisfy requirements for curriculum, assessment and teacher training. For further information and to apply and receive a rating, please [contact Jessica Mattson](#).

Appendix A

Community / District PreK-3rd Grade Early Learning System Map

District Name: _____

<p>Elementary Schools</p> <p><i>List all elementary schools located in the district.</i></p>	<p>Early Learning Settings Located within the District Enrollment Area</p> <p><i>Locate and list all early learning programs located within your district enrollment area.</i></p> <p><i>(Identify Feeder Programs)</i></p>	<p>Current Strategies to Link Early Learning and Public School Settings</p> <p><i>How are you engaging early learning providers in your enrollment area?</i></p>	<p>Family Engagement Strategies</p>	<p>Community Resources</p> <p><i>These may be services and programs to address preventions, intervention, or treatment of a variety of health and mental health issues and include enrichment activities and service to children, youth and adults.</i></p>	<p>Stakeholder Partnerships</p>
<p>Total Number of Elementary Schools:</p> <p>Full-Day Kindergarten Classrooms Per Site:</p> <p>Number of PreK Classrooms per Site:</p>	<p>Licensed Family Child Care Settings:</p> <p>Child Care Centers:</p>	<p>PreK- to Kindergarten Transition Plan:</p> <p>Joint Professional Learning Opportunities:</p> <p>Other:</p>	<p>How does your program communicate about parent involvement opportunities to families?</p> <p>How do you engage difficult to reach families?</p> <p>How are you using all of your district contacts to connect with families in a meaningful way</p>	<p>What is currently in place in the community to address student and family development?</p> <p>Home Visitation Programs:</p>	<p><i>Who is working with whom in the community?</i></p> <p><i>What groups or organizations have engaged in this work and how do they contribute?</i></p>

<p>Are your PreK classrooms <i>Parent Aware</i> rated?</p>	<p>Parents, Family, Friend and Neighbor Care (FFN):</p> <p>Are your Early Learning partners programs <i>Parent Aware</i> rated?</p>		<p>(Child care, School Readiness, Early Childhood Health and Development Screening etc)?</p> <p>Who/How do you partner with to engage families (medical community, county, housing authorities, etc)?</p> <p>How do you use the power of the internet, social media and online learning tools to engage parents?</p>	<p>Early Childhood Health and Development Screening:</p>	<p><i>How have community resources been organized to address student/family need?</i></p>
<p>District Early Learning Organizational / Governance Structure:</p> <p><i>Who manages the program?</i></p>	<p>Low Income Programs:</p> <p>Number of Head Start and Early Head Start Programs:</p> <p>Number of Child Care Assistance Programs (CCAP):</p> <p>Other Child Care Subsidies:</p>	<p>Other PreK-3rd Grade Efforts:</p>		<p>Health Care Services: (physical, mental, dental, etc.)</p>	

	<p>Early Learning Collaborations: <i>Example: Are there any Head Start classrooms located in an elementary building?</i></p>				
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Data Collection

What educational data is being collected to measure impact of children attending high-quality early learning programs? Other types? (Demographic; Health and Mental Health; Economic; Housing; Crime; Family Issues)

- How are data being transferred once child leaves the pre-K setting and enters the elementary setting?
- How are teachers using data to make learning decisions?
- How is data being used to determine needed professional development for pre-K through grade 3 educators?
- How are parents being informed of the data collection and how it impacts their child?

Appendix B

Example of a survey about childrens' ELD experiences

- Did your child attend preschool last year (i.e., in the year before kindergarten)? If yes, please list the name of the preschool:
- Years in child care:
Name of child care center/provider:
- Years in preschool:
Name of preschool program:
- Has your child attended a child care center, Montessori or other prekindergarten option? YES NO
If yes:
Number of years:
Days per week:
Hours per day:
- In the year before Kindergarten, did your child usually spend 5 hours or more per week in a preschool or preschool classroom (such as in a school, Head Start, or child care center)? YES NO
If yes:
Name of preschool:

Example of a more specific question is below:

- During the year before kindergarten, my child attended (circle one):
 - Home-Based Child Care
 - Provider in my home
 - Provider in their home
 - A parent/relative
 - School District Program – list name:
District Preschool
 - Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE)
 - Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)
 - Other Program
 - Head Start
 - Child Care Center – list name: