

Guiding Principles

Background/Context

In April 1965, President Johnson signed into law a promise that the United States would embrace its children living in poverty and provide them the education that would allow them to have access to the American dream. The number of children living in poverty in the United States is growing to more than 1 in 5. These children frequently start school already behind their peers. They have had fewer opportunities to experience academic language and develop broad vocabularies; being behind when they start only becomes more profound as the academic years progress and become more demanding. Title I was created to help these children to succeed.

Purpose of Title I—Title I is an education program that works for children who are living in communities with large portions of families living in poverty. Many of these children are low-achieving. The federal government provides resources, in the form of supplemental support, to states and local districts to ensure that every child has access to a quality education—so that they are able to meet career- and college-ready standards. Formula grants, which provide money for at-risk students based on need, are vital to ensuring that the educational needs of all students are met.

Funding Levels—Currently, Title I funds are allocated based primarily on the number of 5-to-17-year-old children living in poverty. It is important that allocations continue to be based on poverty. Poverty is the greatest common denominator for most struggling student groups. Given the increase in poverty for many communities nationwide, funding must be increased substantially to meet the need. Current funding is inadequate to sufficiently raise achievement and close persistent gaps. We strongly recommend that this program continue, and that it be funded at the highest possible level.

Tools for Improvement

Standards—The implementation of college- and career-ready standards is demanding. Creating the links from skills such as reading and mathematics to the other core subjects will require changes and a re-allocation of resources. Specifically, this means that funds for professional development of teachers and administrators will need to be included in federal education programs for schools supporting Title I-eligible students.

Academic Elements—Improving instruction is an ongoing part of any successful program. States and local districts should be able to craft professional development programs that reflect the needs of particular schools—which focus on job-embedded opportunities at the appropriate level. To maximize the impact of federal funding, funding should support a range of viable options for instructional or support services.

Assessment—Data for decision-making is critical. Assessment and accountability requirements need to be balanced with how much testing information is currently being collected and the overall impact on instructional time for students. Assessment systems should inform instruction by having data available to teachers, administrators, and others in a timely manner.

Program Coordination and Collaboration—It is more important than ever that the many programs that serve our nation's most vulnerable students work together to maximize personnel, instructional resources, and funding. Many of the children we serve don't have food or a place to sleep or study. We must find a way to ensure that children come to school ready to learn, without being distracted by concerns about basic needs like food or shelter. Title I should not work in isolation. There must be greater connections to special education and early childhood, as well as other programs and groups that support English learners, Native Americans, homeless, migrant, immigrant, children in foster care, and other groups with special needs. Federal requirements need to be implemented with congruency in data collection, definitions, eligibility criteria, etc.

- Early Childhood—Programs such as Head Start and others need to have links to education programs like Title I and other federal programs to ensure that the transitions are smooth and the programs are effectively coordinated in the best interests of the child.
- Middle and High School—The gains made in the elementary years can be significantly impeded without instructional support at the middle and high school levels. Being able to read on grade level by the 4th grade does not by itself mitigate the ongoing effects of poverty. Aligning to the career- and college-ready standards, such as being able to read and write more complex text, will require that supports for basic learning be expanded to include greater demands (and skills) at the middle and high school.
- English Learners (EL)— Many English learners also receive services under Title I. Title I dollars are a financial resource to provide purposeful supports to those English learners, eligible for Title I, in order to meet the general provisions under this program of improving the academic achievement of the disadvantaged. Such can be accomplished while maintaining the intent and purpose of Title I, Part A (and avoiding supplanting of other federal programs, such as Title III), that supplements services to English learners and immigrant students. The Association

supports coordination with the National Council of State Title III Directors (NCSTIID).

- Students with Disabilities—Many students with disabilities are part of Title I. Developing systems that ensure universal design for learning should be promoted and encouraged. In addition, we support a tiered approach to instruction that coordinates resources for each child. The Association supports coordination with the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE).
- Native American Education—Many of the children who are served through the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) are also served by or eligible for Title I. It only makes sense for the National Title I Association to join forces with BIE and the National Indian Education Association (NIEA) in support of the children for whom we are mutually responsible.

Promising Practices—Instructional materials and programs should be developed and shared, which are based on proven principles and reflective of the varying conditions in which each school functions and children learn. This would include nationally supported research on teaching and learning as well as research and practice on program administration, external supports, and classroom management and instruction.

Federal, State, and Local Roles

State and local funding for high poverty students should be maintained so that Title I funding can continue to provide supplemental support—one of the foundational principles of Title I. To be sure, States need flexibility for implementing initiatives, but need to be accountable for outcomes such as accelerating achievement and closing subgroup gaps. School reform is expensive and time-consuming; funding for programs that last two or three years is insufficient for long-term success. Under law, States must use federal funds to supplement, not supplant, federal grant dollars.

The federal role in education is important—critically important in setting overarching goals and focusing the nation’s attention on our most vulnerable children. Understandably, federal funding has limits and yet the federal government can maximize its efforts by collaborating with states as they implement reforms and improvements with local districts and schools. The federal role is essential and one that must be continued.

At all levels—local, state, and federal—students must be at the center of decision-making.