

Leveraging Title I Schoolwide Programs

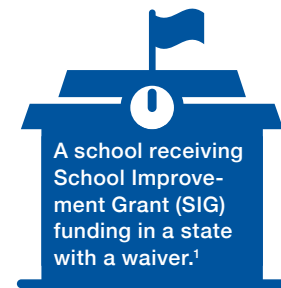
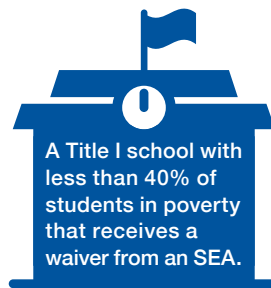
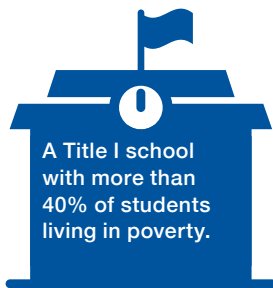
to Address Barriers to Academic Success

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is an opportunity for state and local education agencies to provide a more well-rounded education. ESSA promotes evidence-based strategies, such as integrated student supports (ISS) or wraparound services, that address the needs of students and their communities, helping students overcome barriers to success. When implemented with quality, ISS can contribute to academic progress and can improve outcomes at the school level.ⁱ However, funding these programs can be a challenge for some districts.

Recent guidanceⁱⁱ from the U.S. Department of Education (Department) identifies Title I schoolwide programs as a key tool for school improvement and an important source of funding for strategies that improve the academic achievement of all students in a school. This brief summarizes this guidance to identify opportunities to leverage Title I schoolwide programs for student-centered supports, such as ISS and wraparound services.

Title I Schoolwide Programs

According to the Department, a Title I schoolwide program should be used to build the capacity of a Title I school in support of a comprehensive reform strategy. Under ESSA, a school that meets the following conditions may operate a schoolwide program:^{iv}



Opportunities for Student-Centered Supports

- ▶ As the Department points out, the purpose of a schoolwide Title I program is to raise the achievement of the lowest-achieving students. Models of ISS or wraparound services that provide both universal (schoolwide) and targeted supports fit well within this framing. Through a **tiered system**,ⁱⁱⁱ these models deliver programs and supports that are relevant to all students and individualized supports to at-risk students.
- ▶ In a recent survey, **the vast majority** (87%) of educators reported that many of their students face nonacademic barriers to learning, often associated with poverty or trauma.^{iv} The Department specifically highlights uses of funds that can help address these barriers, including:
 - Counseling, school-based mental health programs, mentoring services, and other strategies to improve students' nonacademic skills.
 - School climate interventions (e.g., anti-bullying strategies, positive behavior interventions and supports).
 - Activities that have been shown to be effective at increasing family and community engagement in the school, including family literacy programs.
 - Two-generation approaches that consider the needs of both vulnerable children and parents in the design and delivery of services and programs to support improved economic, educational, health, safety, and other outcomes that address the issues of intergenerational poverty.^v
- ▶ According to the Department, required components of a Title I schoolwide program are: 1) a comprehensive needs assessment, (2) a comprehensive schoolwide plan, and (3) annual evaluation and revision of this plan. Evidence-based models of ISS build upon these components, helping a school to design student-centered reform. Providers work closely with school leaders to inform practice and align program offerings based on the data included in these plans. This alignment ensures that school leaders maximize their investment and address each of the unique academic and non-academic needs in a school.

Why a Schoolwide Program?



Serving all students.

A school operating a schoolwide program does not need to identify particular students as eligible to participate.



Consolidating Federal, State, and local funds.

A school operating a schoolwide program may consolidate Federal, State, and local education funds to better address the needs of students in the school.^{iv}

¹ This condition applies only to schools that receive SIG funds authorized before ESSA. After those funds are spent, this condition will not apply because SIG is eliminated under ESSA.

Misunderstandings about Title I Schoolwide Programs

In recent guidance, the Department included a helpful chart to address common misunderstandings about Title I schoolwide programs.^{vi} The following is a relevant selection:

Misunderstanding

Title I funds may be used only to support reading and math instruction.

Explanation of Law

Title I funds may be used in a schoolwide program to support academic areas that the school's needs assessment identifies as needing improvement.

Title I funds may be used only to provide remedial instruction.

The purpose of a schoolwide program is to upgrade the entire educational program in the school in order to raise the achievement of the lowest-achieving students. This does not need to be achieved through remedial instruction, however.

Title I funds may be used only to serve low-achieving students.

Title I funds may be used to upgrade the entire educational program in a schoolwide program school and, in doing so, all students may benefit from the use of Title I funds.

If a school does not consolidate funds through a schoolwide program, Title I funds may be used only to provide services in a pull-out setting.

Title I funds may be used to upgrade the entire educational program in a schoolwide program school and serve all students, even if the school does not consolidate Title I funds with its other funds.

Title I funds may be used only for instruction.

Title I funds may be used for activities and strategies designed to raise the achievement of low-achieving students identified by a schoolwide program school's comprehensive needs assessment and articulated in the school's comprehensive schoolwide plan. For example, Title I funds may be used to improve attendance, improve school climate, counteract and prevent bullying, provide counseling, mentoring, and school-based mental health programs, or provide positive behavioral interventions and supports.

Recommendations

For local education agencies:

- Consider how a Title I schoolwide program might be leveraged for a more comprehensive intervention in schools designated for improvement. For example, in qualifying schools, funds from different sources may be consolidated to better coordinate supports.
- Assess the benefits of a Title I schoolwide program in high-poverty schools. While many schools target services to the most in-need students, tiered supports can improve achievement at the school level.
- Consider whether a Title I schoolwide program can be used to improve additional metrics, such as school climate and chronic absenteeism, in addition to academic achievement.
- Consider braiding funds to supplement Title I schoolwide by leveraging other education or non-education sources, such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families or Medicaid.

For state education agencies:

- Communicate through guidance or in state ESSA plans the availability of schoolwide program under Title I, including allowable uses of funds like ISS.
- Emphasize the importance of ISS in addressing barriers to academic success and improving student achievement.

ⁱKristin Anderson Moore, *Making The Grade: Assessing the Evidence for Integrated Student Supports* (Child Trends, 2014), <http://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/2014-07ISS-Paper2.pdf>

ⁱⁱUS Department of Education, *Supporting School Reform by Leveraging Federal Funds in a Schoolwide Program* (2016), <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/essaswpguidance9192016.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱSee example: <https://www.communitiesinschools.org/our-work/our-unique-model/>

^{iv}Scholastic, *Teacher and Principle School Report* (2016), <http://www.scholastic.com/teacherprincipalreport/Scholastic-Teacher-and-Principal-School-Report.pdf>

^vDepartment, *Supporting School Reform by Leveraging Federal Funds in a Schoolwide Program*: 2-5.

^{vi}This chart contains select information. For the complete chart, please reference: Department, *Supporting School Reform by Leveraging Federal Funds in a Schoolwide Program*: 5-7.