

BUREAU OF *Federal* EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Early Learning Title I, Part A

Contact

Bureau of Federal Educational Programs (BFEP)

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Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Early Learning Requirement

ESSA requires all local educational agencies (LEAs) receiving Title I funds to support early learning initiatives and undertake activities that increase coordination with early childhood education programs. ESSA emphatically states that the coordination of Early Learning activities must be conducted by the LEA even if they elect not to use Title I resources to fund early learning activities

Why implement Title I Early Learning programs?

Title I early learning programs are intended to assist children most at risk of failing to meet the State's challenging academic standards based on multiple, educationally related, objective criteria. Title I funds can be used to create or enhance existing preschool programs to prepare children to enter elementary school with the social, emotional, language, cognitive, and early reading skills they need to succeed. Providing high-quality early childhood experiences helps to ensure that children in Title I schools and programs have the foundation to meet challenging state academic achievement standards and experience success throughout elementary and secondary school.

Based on non-regulatory guidance that has been released by the United States Department of Education, a National Center for Education Statistics longitudinal study shows that children from low-income families who attended center-based preschool programs in the year before kindergarten earned higher scores at the beginning of kindergarten on math, reading, cognitive flexibility, and for approaches to learning than their peers who did not participate in an early learning program the year before starting kindergarten.

Resources:

[Text of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965](#) (as reauthorized by the ESSA) (PDF; Updated 28-Jan-2020)

Last update: December 2020

Eligible Children

A preschool-age child is one who is below the grade level at which the LEA provides a free public elementary education. For the purpose of Title I, children from birth to the age that the LEA provides free public elementary education. Certain children are deemed automatically eligible to participate in a Title I preschool program, including:

- Children who participated in Head Start, received services supported by the Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grants program within Literacy Education for All, Results for the Nation (LEARN) (formerly known as Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program), or attended a Title I preschool program at any time in the prior two years;
- Children who received services under Title I, Part C (migrant education) in the prior two years;
- Preschool-aged children experiencing homelessness; and
- Children who are in a local institution or attending a community day program for neglected or delinquent children and youth (ESEA section 1115(c)(2)).