Thinking About Preschool?

**Preschool and Title IA**

Early learning is a priority of Oregon Education Investment Board Oregon as part of the P-20 system. In the fall of 2015, Oregon will fund full-day kindergarten with state funds. Currently some districts use ESEA Title IA funds to supplement half-day kindergarten to create a full-day program. With general funds supporting full-day kindergarten in 2015-16, many districts have expressed interest in using Title IA funds for preschool. This document provides some of the most commonly asked questions about how Title IA funds can be used for preschool.

**Can districts use Title IA funds for preschool programs?** Yes. The decision to use district Title IA funds to support preschool is determined by the district based on the needs of its eligible students. Districts may only fund preschool in Title IA-funded school attendance areas (the geographic area from which the school draws its children).

**Do Title IA requirements apply to Title IA-funded preschool programs?** If Title IA funds are used in whole or in part to operate a preschool program, all Title IA requirements apply to the program.

**What achievement standards and curriculum requirements apply to Title IA preschool programs?** A Title IA preschool program is designed to prepare eligible children with the prerequisite skills and dispositions for learning that will enable them to benefit from later school experiences. An eligible preschool child is a child who is most at risk of failing to meet the State’s academic achievement standards. A Title IA preschool program that provides services to children from low-income families must ensure that those services comply, at a minimum, with the education performance standards in effect under the Head Start Act. Specific standards can be found at: [http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc](http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc).

**Are Title IA preschool teachers required to meet the same qualifications as K-12 Title IA teachers?** Only teachers working in a Title IA preschool program in a State that considers preschool to be part of public elementary education must meet the Title IA requirements for “highly qualified teachers.” In Oregon, preschool is not considered to be part of public elementary education; therefore teachers would not need to be highly qualified. However, preschool teachers should meet the highest professional standards for teaching young children, which ideally include having earned a baccalaureate degree and received comprehensive education about child development.

**What are the required qualifications for paraprofessionals working in a Title I preschool program?** In a Title IA preschool program in a targeted assistance school, a paraprofessional paid with Title IA funds —
- Must have earned a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent; and
- Must have (1) completed at least two years of study at an institution of higher education; (2) obtained an associate’s or higher degree; or (3) met a rigorous standard of quality and have demonstrated — through a formal State or local academic assessment — knowledge of, and the ability to assist in instructing, reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness.

In a Title IA preschool program in a school-wide program school, all paraprofessionals must meet the above requirements, regardless of how their salaries are funded.

It should be noted that a Title IA preschool program staffed entirely by paraprofessionals is not permitted.
**Who provides special education services in a Title IA preschool?** Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) provides individualized services for children ages 3 to the age of public school eligibility and their families. ECSE programs are facilitated through the Department of Education/Student Services Unit.

**Where can I find additional information and resources?**


- **Oregon Department of Education:** The ODE website offers Title 1-A resources for schools and districts at [http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/results/?id=95](http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/results/?id=95).

  The Title IA team at ODE can help answer questions and support districts considering funding preschool with Title IA funds. Please contact:
  - Districts A – D: Jesse Parsons ([jesse.parsons@state.or.us](mailto:jesse.parsons@state.or.us))
  - Districts E – Q: Melinda Bessner ([melinda.bessner@state.or.us](mailto:melinda.bessner@state.or.us))
  - Districts R – Z: Russ Sweet ([russ.sweet@state.or.us](mailto:russ.sweet@state.or.us))

- **Early Learning Division:** The Early Learning Division website offers a P-3 Toolkit that includes a wide range of resources related to strengthen and align preschool to third grade educational systems. The toolkit is located at [https://earlylearningcouncil.files.wordpress.com/2013/10/p3_toolkit_nov2014.pdf](https://earlylearningcouncil.files.wordpress.com/2013/10/p3_toolkit_nov2014.pdf)

- **Early Learning Hub** School districts are highly encouraged to partner with the Early Learning Hub that serves the district area. This collaboration can help Districts understand the availability of existing early childhood services and programs in the community to assure that the greatest number of children and families have access to services. To connect with the Early Learning Hub that serves your district contact Brett Walker at [brett.walker@ode.state.or.us](mailto:brett.walker@ode.state.or.us).