Schoolwide Programs

Authorized programs and targeted assistance schools under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

An Overview of Schoolwide Programs

A schoolwide program is a comprehensive reform strategy designed to upgrade the entire educational program in a Title I school; its primary goal is to ensure that all students, particularly those who are low-achieving, demonstrate proficient and advanced levels of achievement on State academic achievement standards.

In general, a Title I school may operate as a schoolwide program only if a minimum of 40 percent of the students in the school, or residing in the attendance area served by the school, are from low-income families. [Section 1114(a)(1) of Title I of ESEA].

Whereas Title I targeted assistance programs only provide educational services to identified individual students, schoolwide programs allow staff in schools with high concentrations of students from low-income families to redesign their entire educational program to serve all students. The emphasis in schoolwide program schools is on serving all students, improving all structures that support student learning, and combining all resources, as allowed, to achieve a common goal. Schoolwide programs maximize the impact of Title I. Adopting this strategy should result in an ongoing, comprehensive plan for school improvement that is owned by the entire school community and tailored to its unique needs.

Core Elements of Schoolwide Programs

The schoolwide approach is based on the premise that comprehensive reform strategies rather than separate, add-on services are most effective in raising academic achievement for the lowest achieving students in a school. A well-designed and implemented schoolwide program touches all aspects of the school’s operation and offers an appropriate option for high-poverty schools seeking to improve achievement for all students, particularly the lowest achieving. The three main core elements of a schoolwide program are (34 CFR 200.26):

A school operating a schoolwide program must conduct a comprehensive needs assessment that identifies the school’s strengths and challenges in key areas that affect student achievement [Section 1114(b)(1)(A) of Title I of ESEA].

The school must develop a comprehensive schoolwide plan that describes how it will achieve the goals it has identified as a result of its needs assessment [Section 1114(b)(1)(B-J) and 34 CFR 200.27 of Title I of ESEA]. The schoolwide plan must:

- Identify reform strategies, aligned with the needs assessment, that are research-based and provide opportunities for all children to meet the State’s proficient or advanced levels of academic achievement;
- Provide instruction by highly qualified teachers;
- Offer high-quality, ongoing professional development;
- Create strategies to attract highly qualified teachers;
- Create strategies to increase parental involvement;
- Develop plans to assist preschool students through the transition from early childhood programs to local elementary school programs;
- Identify measures to include teachers in decisions regarding the use of academic assessments;
- Conduct activities to ensure that students who experience difficulty attaining proficiency receive effective, timely, additional assistance; and
- Coordinate and integrate Federal, State and local services and programs.
Additionally, the school plan must document that it has met the intent and purposes of each program whose funds are consolidated if it chooses to consolidate funds from Title I, Part A, and other Federal education program funds and resources without maintaining separate fiscal accounting records by program, or meeting most statutory requirements of those programs 34 CFR 200.29(b)(1).

(See Federal Register: July 2, 2004 Volume 69, Number 127 (Outside Source) for information on the programs that can be consolidated in a schoolwide program and examples of how to meet the intent and purposes of such programs.)

- The school must evaluate annually the outcomes and the plan’s implementation to determine whether the academic achievement of all students, and particularly of low-achieving students, improved, whether the goals and objectives contained in the plan were achieved, and if the plan is still appropriate as written (34 CFR 200.26).

Establishing a Schoolwide Program

Schools electing to become a schoolwide program (SWP) school should follow the steps listed below:

1. The school district informs the school that it meets the criteria (at least 40 percent of the students come from families at the poverty level) to operate a SWP.
2. The school (i.e., staff and parents) makes the decision to become a Title I SWP school.
3. The school establishes a school planning team composed of representatives from all stakeholder groups: the principal, teachers, school site council (SSC), other staff who will carry out the SWP plan, parents and community members, an (in secondary schools) students. The SSC may serve as the school planning team.
4. The school planning team, in consultation with the district, selects a technical assistance provider. The technical assistance provider may be an expert from the district office, the county office of education, an external provider, or a representative from higher education.
5. The school planning team begins the process by conducting a comprehensive needs assessment.
6. The school planning team develops a comprehensive SWP plan based on the results of the comprehensive needs assessment. The plan is developed with the involvement and support of all stakeholder groups. The plan contains all the required components of a SWP and is approved by the SCC.
7. The local governing board reviews and approves the SWP plan. The date of local board approval is the start date for the SWP.
8. The district mails the one-page document titled Notice of Authorization of Schoolwide Program (DOC; 34KB; 1p.) to the Virginia Department of Education.

Conducting the Comprehensive Needs Assessment

A school wishing to operate a schoolwide program must undertake a specified yearlong planning process (unless the school district determines that less time is needed). A school that already operates a schoolwide program also can use this planning process to update or revise existing plans. An updated needs assessment, in particular, could help school staff identify where needs have changed in a school that has been operating a schoolwide program for a long period of time.

The planning process begins with the required comprehensive needs assessment. (Section 1114(b)(1)(A) of Title I of ESEA). The needs assessment is critical to developing a schoolwide program, as it reveals the priority areas on which the program will focus. The needs assessment guides the development of the comprehensive schoolwide plan and suggests benchmarks for its evaluation, and, as such, is closely linked to all aspects of schoolwide program implementation. The needs assessment is based on academic information about all students in the school, including economically disadvantaged students; students from major racial and ethnic groups; students with disabilities; limited English proficient students, and migrant students.

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Recommended steps that a school staff should take in conducting the required needs assessment include, but are not limited to: (1) establishing a schoolwide planning team; (2) clarifying the vision for reform; (3) creating the school profile; (4) identifying data sources; and (5) analyzing data.

For more information on conducting a comprehensive needs assessment, please reference the federal guidance document at Designing Schoolwide Programs (DOC; Outside Source) Non-regulatory guidance issued March 2006 by the U.S. Department of Education.

Creating the Comprehensive Plan

In the creation of a comprehensive plan, the schoolwide planning process moves from collecting and analyzing data and identifying needs to prioritizing those needs and developing a comprehensive plan to address them. Writing the plan is an extremely important step in this process, since a well-constructed plan provides a blueprint for all core operations in the schoolwide program. Done well, the plan brings focus and coherence to activities and helps ensure unity of purpose, alignment, and clear accountability.

A comprehensive plan must address all nine of the components defined in [Section 1114(b)(1)(B-J) of Title I of ESEA]. Each required component is described below, with an explanation of how each contributes to the creation of a successful schoolwide program.

1. **Schoolwide reform strategies:**
   Instructional strategies and initiatives in the comprehensive plan must be based on scientifically based research, strengthen the core academic program, increase the quality and quantity of learning time, and address the learning needs of all students in the school.

2. **Instruction by highly qualified teachers:**
   High poverty, low-performing schools are sometimes staffed with disproportionately high numbers of teachers who are not highly qualified. To address this disproportionality requires that all teachers of core academic subjects and instructional paraprofessionals (employees of a LEA who provide instructional support) in a schoolwide program school meet the qualifications required by section 1119. Student achievement increases in schools where teaching and learning have the highest priority, and students achieve at higher levels when taught by teachers who know their subject matter and are skilled in teaching it.

3. **High-quality and ongoing professional development:**
   Teachers and other staff in schoolwide program schools must be equipped to face the challenge of helping all students meet the State’s academic achievement standards. To do this, they must be familiar with the goals and objectives of the schoolwide plan, and receive the sustained, high-quality professional development required to implement them. The statute requires that professional development be extended, as appropriate, to those who partner with teachers to support student achievement, such as principals, paraprofessionals, and parents.

4. **Strategies to attract highly qualified teachers to high-need schools:**
   Although recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers is an on-going challenge in high poverty schools; low-performing students in these schools have a special need for excellent teachers. Therefore, the schoolwide plan must describe the strategies it will use to attract and retain highly qualified teachers.

5. **Strategies to increase parental involvement:**
   Research continues to demonstrate that successful schools have significant and sustained levels of parental involvement. Therefore, it is important that schoolwide plans contain strategies to involve parents, especially in helping their children do well in school. In addition, parents must be involved in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the schoolwide program.

6. **Plans for assisting preschool students in the successful transition from early childhood programs to local elementary schoolwide programs:**
   This component emphasizes the value of creating a coherent and seamless educational program for at-risk students. Early childhood programs, including Early Reading First and others, provide a foundation for later academic success, and effective schoolwide programs capitalize on this strong start.
7. **Measures to include teachers in decisions regarding the use of academic assessments:**
   In addition to State assessment results, teachers need current and ongoing assessment data that describe student achievement. These data often come from less formal assessments, such as observation, performance assessments, or end-of-course tests. The schoolwide program should provide teachers with professional development that increases their understanding of the appropriate uses of multiple assessment measures and how to use assessment results to improve instruction.

8. **Activities to ensure that students who experience difficulty attaining proficiency receive effective and timely additional assistance:**
   The schoolwide program school must identify students who need additional learning time to meet standards and provide them with timely, additional assistance that is tailored to their needs. This assistance must be available to all students in the school who need it.

9. **Coordination and integration of Federal, State, and local services and programs:**
   Schoolwide program schools are expected to use the flexibility available to them to integrate services and programs with the aim of upgrading the entire educational program and helping all students reach proficient and advanced levels of achievement. In addition to coordinating and integrating services, schoolwide program schools may combine most Federal, State and local funds to provide those services. Exercising this option maximizes the impact of the resources available to carry out the schoolwide program.

For more information on creating a comprehensive plan, please reference the federal guidance document at [Designing Schoolwide Programs](https://www2.ed.gov) (DOC; Outside Source)

Non-regulatory guidance issued March 2006 by the U.S. Department of Education.

### Planning and Implementing the Annual Evaluation/Review Process in an SWP School

The school must evaluate annually the outcomes and the plan’s implementation to determine whether the academic achievement of all students, and particularly of low-achieving students, improved, whether the goals and objectives contained in the plan were achieved, and if the plan is still appropriate as written (34 CFR 200.26). Program evaluations/reviews are usually organized and carried out according to the following steps:

1. **Identification of purpose and intended audiences** – The annual review of a schoolwide program includes determining the percentage of students who reach proficiency on the State’s annual assessments. Additionally, it examines the operation of the school: the implementation of instructional strategies, the participation of stakeholders, the degree of parental involvement, and other elements that support increased student achievement, as detailed in the schoolwide program plan. The intended audience for the annual review is all stakeholders, internal and external to the school. These stakeholders are persons with an investment in the school, many of whom were involved from the beginning in the development of the school’s mission and goals and in the program planning process. They have an interest in knowing whether or not those goals are being met, and want to know what will be done with the results of the annual review. These stakeholders include (1) those involved in day-to-day program operations, such as teaching, administrative and school support staff; (2) those served by the program, such as students, parents and community members; and (3) those in a position to make recommendations and/or decisions regarding the program, such as members of the school planning team, school administrators, and school district personnel.

2. **Identification of issues and development of review questions** – Program review begins at the same time that the schoolwide program is being designed. That is, while the school planning team is developing measurable goals and strategies, it should be considering how the success of those strategies would be determined. Planners should envision what progress toward long-term goals would “look like” at the end of the school year. Key review points should be related to each goal in the schoolwide plan. Questions can address the following:
o Inputs – For instance, what resources were identified in the schoolwide program and to what degree were they utilized?

o Activities – Did planned events such as professional development, parental involvement activities, schoolwide instructional units, take place as scheduled?

o Short-term impacts – What were the short-term results of implementing a particular strategy in the schoolwide plan? Was training provided for the targeted number of school staff? Did the training affect subsequent instructional decisions?

o Longer-term impacts – An annual schoolwide review can provide incremental information that tracks outcomes over time. For instance, a schoolwide program might begin a dropout prevention program for sixth graders with the goal of a reduced dropout rate when those students are in ninth grade.

o Once the target objectives have been clarified, reviewers create specific questions that the review will answer. The answers to some questions will be easily determined (e.g., gains in student scores on State assessments), but some will be more difficult to measure (e.g., a positive change in student attitude). Each potential evaluation question should be screened to ensure that it elicits information that is--

o Relevant to the schoolwide program’s goals and objectives;

o Important to a significant number of stakeholders;

o Of continuing relevance and interest; and

o Attainable, given time, resource, and staff constraints.

3. Identification of data collection instruments – Next, reviewers determine how data that answer each question will be collected. Evaluators will collect both quantitative (empirical and numerical, such as tallies and test scores) and qualitative (survey responses on attitudes, personal interviews, observations, journals), depending on the review question. Appendix VII provides one tool for data tracking and collection as well as an explanation of a few of the typical data collection instruments. Examples of data collection instruments include document reviews, tallies, questionnaires, interviews, surveys, observations, assessments, attitude inventories, and focus groups. It is the job of the reviewers to align each question with the appropriate data collection method.

4. Collection of data – When data collection instruments have been identified or created, reviewers are ready to gather information. Every stakeholder who will provide the reviewers with information should have a clear understanding of why the review is being conducted, the types of data being collected, and how the results will be used. Data collectors should consider the needs of subjects (e.g., need for anonymity, need for an interpreter) and should obtain any required clearance or permission that is necessary before soliciting information. Because any bias on the part of a data collector can compromise the credibility of the findings and overall results, data collectors should be carefully trained, and there should be consistency in instructions and data collection procedures so that results are reliable across survey groups. Information should be gathered from as many members of a sample group as possible to ensure that the results are statistically significant.

5. Analysis and interpretation of results – After the data are collected and checked for accuracy, they should be analyzed and interpreted. The initial analysis may raise new questions and/or uncover findings that were not anticipated, and in this case a second analysis may be appropriate. For example, an analysis of assessment data might reveal that students, in the aggregate, have higher performance in reading/language arts than they do in mathematics. A second level analysis might ask why that is so and consider the possibility that there is a relationship between scores and times of day that reading and mathematics are taught or differences in how they are taught.

Overall, the information that emerges from the data analysis should clearly describe the progress the school has made in implementing its program and increasing student achievement and indicate areas where revisions or additional work is needed. Data gathered in response to each research question should be addressed separately; it should yield detailed findings that clearly indicate whether or not a key strategy or action in the schoolwide plan was implemented as planned. For example, reviewers might determine that participation in professional development for teachers resulted in more effective use of data to improve student achievement. Or, reviewers might conclude that although the schoolwide program
school identified a strategy as important, insufficient time or resources were devoted to accomplishing it.

6. **Reporting** – The report should be clearly and concisely written and available to all stakeholders. The report typically includes background information, the evaluation questions, a description of evaluation procedures, an explanation of how the data were analyzed, findings, and a conclusion with recommendations.

The schoolwide review team, along with the outside reviewer if one is being used, should present the results to staff in the school, parents and other community members. The evaluation will provide a roadmap for the future progress of the schoolwide program, so it is very important that the presentation and any accompanying materials be clear, understandable, and avoid the use of technical jargon. The presenters should be prepared to answer any questions posed by stakeholders.

The first cycle of continuous improvement is completed when the school uses the results of the review to more effectively implement its schoolwide program and to improve student achievement. Once the findings have been widely disseminated and input has been received, the schoolwide team identifies which recommendations will be incorporated into the existing school plan. Some suggested steps for carrying out this process follow:

- Review the strategies and action steps originally proposed in the schoolwide plan.
- Use the findings and recommendations to identify the parts of the schoolwide plan that have been implemented ineffectively or not at all.
- Solicit the input of all stakeholders in identifying more effective strategies to achieve identified goals.
- Identify any additional training that is needed to improve implementation.
- Determine if additional resources are needed to implement the revised improvement plan and, if so, how they will be obtained.
- Re-establish responsibilities and timelines for implementing the revised plan.
- Communicate to all stakeholders what has been incorporated into the revised plan.
- Review the implementation review design that was used and make changes as appropriate to reflect plan modifications in preparation for the following year’s evaluation.

The purpose of the annual review of the schoolwide program is to ensure that the program described in the schoolwide plan is implemented as designed and that its implementation has a positive effect on student achievement. Thus, the results of the annual review should not be perceived as a sign that the school should start over again with a new plan. Instead, the school should revise its existing plan to incorporate the revisions and reflect a revitalization of the school’s commitment to implementing a schoolwide program that helps all students achieve at high levels.

**For more information on planning and implementing the annual evaluation, please reference the federal guidance document at** [Designing Schoolwide Programs](http://example.com/designing-schoolwide-programs) *(DOC; Outside Source)*

Non-regulatory guidance issued March 2006 by the U.S. Department of Education.
Links and Other Resources

The following link provides the form to be submitted to the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) in order to notify the VDOE that the local school board has approved your comprehensive SWP plan:

Notice of Authorization of a Schoolwide Program (DOC; 35KB; 1pp.)
PDF (19KB; 1pp.)

The following links provide general information regarding the SWP:

Making Sense of Schoolwide Programs (Revised 04-Nov-09; PDF; 103 KB; 47 pp.)
This presentation reflects the benefits of the schoolwide program for Title I schools.

FAQ
Answers questions about Title I schoolwide programs.

Designing Schoolwide Programs (DOC; Outside Source)
Non-regulatory guidance issued March 2006 by the U.S. Department of Education.

Title I Fiscal Guidance (DOC; Outside Source)
Non-regulatory guidance issued February 2008 by the U.S. Department of Education.

United States Department of Education, 7/02/04 (PDF; Outside Source)
Guidance regarding fund consolidation and statutory exemptions.

Other Resources

Title I SWP Authorization Under ESEA
Explains new ESEA requirements for schools that were designated Title I schoolwide programs before ESEA was enacted.

Information Regarding Title I, Part A, Targeted Assistance Schools
Provides background information about the use of funds and program services in Title I schools with targeted assistance status.

Notice of Authorization of Targeted Assistance Status (Revised 04-Nov-09; DOC; 24 KB; 1pp)
Appropriate authorization form for schools to change from a Title I schoolwide program to targeted assistance status.
PDF (Posted 04-Nov-09; PDF; 21KB; 1pp)