

Title I FAQ's.

TITLE I

Helping Students in Need of Academic Support

What is Title I?

Title I is a federal entitlement program which grants funds to school districts to provide supplemental academic support to students who need extra help to bring their knowledge and skills up to grade level. The amount of Title I grant funds is set by the state and varies from year to year based on the total student enrollment and the number of students who qualify for the free and reduced cost lunch program.

Who qualifies for Title I academic support?

There are two criteria that are used to identify students who qualify for Title I services. First, the students must be identified as being “most at risk of failure” based on measures of their performance in reading, writing and mathematics. This means they are performing below grade level on the state MCAS test and other local measures of student performance. Secondly, they must qualify for the federal Free & Reduced Lunch program. However, when the number of students who qualify for the Free & Reduced Lunch program exceeds 50%, a school is given the option of using Title I funds to help all students in what is termed a “schoolwide” program.

How does the Title I program work in the Gill-Montague Regional School District?

Our program has always been focused on early intervention starting in kindergarten. We want to improve and maintain the academic performance of our youngest students who are at risk of failure in those elementary schools with the highest poverty levels. We do this in order to give these students the best chance of learning the basic skills they will need to succeed in the higher grades.

As mentioned above, when the poverty level of a school exceeds 50%, Title I funds may be used to provide Title I services to all students in the school. Both the Sheffield Elementary School and Hillcrest Elementary School qualify for “schoolwide” services. In those two schools, Title I funds are used to provide additional classroom teachers in order to reduce class sizes for all students. This approach allows the teachers to provide more individualized attention to any of the students needing academic support. It doesn't highlight the fact that certain students might be less capable than their peers. All students in our program qualify for help when they need it.

How can parents become involved in and support the Title I program?

The Title I program has a parent involvement policy which describes our commitment to, and procedures for actively promoting parent involvement. A copy of that and other Title I policies are available on our district's web site or in the offices of our Title I schools. Parents are encouraged to attend the various evening programs held at your child's school during the school year. Look for notice of them in your school newsletter. Also, each year in the spring, we do a parent survey to get input about the program and how it's working. The results of the survey are available from the school office.

What is the Title I School-Parent/Guardian Compact?

The Title I School-Parent/Guardian Compact is a voluntary agreement between the home and school. It goes home at the start of each school year and puts in writing the goals, expectations and shared responsibilities of teachers, parents and students as cooperating partners in the process of student learning. It offers parents an excellent

opportunity to discuss with their children the importance of education and of striving to do one's best. Please be sure to sign and return a copy of this important agreement.

Funds for Students in Private schools

Private schools in our region that enroll students who would otherwise attend Hillcrest or Sheffield, and who are "at risk" academically in reading, writing and/or math, also qualify to receive Title I funds. The parents of these students are eligible to attend the various programs for parents at our Title I schools. The teachers of those students are eligible to attend professional development programs designed for our Title I staff.

Special Opportunities for Students in Schools not meeting the AYP Criteria

For some years in the past the MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System) test scores for Sheffield Elementary School were, for some groups of students, below the level required to meet the state's criteria for AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress). For this reason, we are required to offer parents the opportunity to send their child to another school in the district that does meet the AYP criteria and has available seats. At the present time there is no such school in our district. If there were, we must give priority to the lowest achieving students from low income families. For more information about the school's AYP status, you can review our district and school profiles on the Department of Education web site, go to:<http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/profiles>.

At Sheffield we are also required to provide supplemental educational services (SES) to students who are not meeting academic expectations according to their MCAS results. Our district is an official SES provider and we offer SES services after school at Sheffield through the 21st Century Community Learning Center program. We make available to all students requesting it free tutoring and homework help four days a week at the school. Their tutors work closely with their classroom teachers to provide needed academic assistance, paying attention to each student's Individual Student Success Plan. We strongly encourage parents to have their children take advantage of this program if they need help with their school work. If a parent wishes to choose a different SES provider, the list of providers is available at<http://www.doe.mass.edu/ses/search.aspx>.

Status of Teachers & Paraprofessionals in our Title I Schools

No Child Left Behind legislation requires that any school in receipt of Title 1 funds must inform parents if their child is assigned a teacher for four or more consecutive weeks who is not yet "highly qualified" under the terms and criteria outlined in the legislation. According to the No Child Left Behind law, a "highly qualified" teacher is one who:

1. Has obtained a Bachelor's degree or higher;
2. Has obtained full State certification – in Massachusetts this means that the teacher has either a preliminary, initial, or professional teaching license; and
3. Has demonstrated competency in the core academic subject area(s) that he/she teaches. These criteria also require teachers to participate in high quality professional development programs every year.

As of this writing, all of your child's teachers have met the requirements to be "Highly Qualified". If you have any questions regarding a teacher's qualifications, or other aspects of the Title I program, please feel free to contact the school principal or the Director of Grants & Technology. For additional information about the federal highly qualified teacher requirements and Massachusetts policies related to them, please visit the Massachusetts Department of Education's website at<http://www.doe.mass.edu/nclb>.