

What is a Title 1 School?

Most educators, parents and community members have heard the term Title 1 School. Being able to answer what is a title 1 school as established by the U.S. Department of Education, however, is more difficult. Title 1 is the nation's oldest and largest federally funded program, according to the U.S. Department of Education. Annually, it provides over \$7 billion to school systems across the country for students at risk of failure and living at or near poverty.

Originally, the idea of Title 1 was enacted in 1965 under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. This policy committed to closing the achievement gap between low-income students and other student. The policy was rewritten in 1994 to improve fundamental goals of helping at-risk students. With the implementation of [No Child Left Behind](#), schools must make adequate yearly progress on state testing and focus on best teaching practices in order to continue receiving funds.

What is the Purpose of Title 1 Funding?

According to the U.S. Department of Education the purpose of Title 1 funding, "is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high quality education and reach, at minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments."

The basic principles of Title 1 state that schools with large concentrations of low-income students will receive supplemental funds to assist in meeting student's educational goals. Low-income students are determined by the number of students enrolled in the free and reduced lunch program. For an entire school to qualify for Title 1 funds, at least 40% of students must enroll in the free and reduced lunch program.

Understanding and Working with Title 1 Students

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Title 1 funds assist schools in meeting the educational needs of students living near or at poverty levels. This series examines student motivation, creative lesson plans, difficulties teachers face with at-risk students and proper implementation and documentation.

Title 1 funds aim to bridge the gap between low-income students and other students. The U.S. Department of Education provides supplemental funding to local school districts to meet the needs of at-risk and low income students.



A Teacher's Job: Student Motivation

Every teacher faces the task of motivating students in their classroom. While some students enthusiastically walk into a classroom each day, others need motivation and inspiration to focus on school. Teachers in Title 1 schools encounter students facing life struggles many of us cannot even imagine. Encouraging these students to concentrate on school can be a daunting task for teachers.

Why Teachers Face Student Motivation Problems

Teachers in Title 1 schools face students with multiple distractions. Some of their students have part-time jobs to help families put food on the table; others act as a parent for younger brothers and sisters. Many times these students are faced with real world situations that other students take for granted. School takes a backseat to surviving for some Title 1 students.

Often these students feel it is impossible to break the chain of events. They witness their parents following the same path as their grandparents, and think they are destined for the same journey. Many of these students know someone in jail, have used food stamps for purchases or have gone to bed hungry. At times, teachers of Title 1 students act as more than just teachers. They become a confidant when they need someone to talk to, a cheerleader for their achievements and a mentor when mom or dad isn't available.

Ways to Motivate Students

Teaching in a Title 1 school can be one of the most daunting or rewarding tasks. As an educator, your heart goes out to a student that tells you, "I couldn't do my homework because we didn't have electricity." Reaching these students is essential to their success in the classroom. As a teacher in a Title 1 school, I spend a great deal of time getting to know my students and finding out their interests, problems and situations in life. Class discussions or writing assignments at the end of a class period provide perfect opportunities. Middle schoolers love to participate in controversial discussion topics. These discussions are often very revealing.

After I understood my students, I could incorporate their favorites into my lessons when possible. This told the students, I was really listening when they were talking. A pat on the back, a high five, a round of applause in class or a gold star sticker might sound cheesy, but for these students it's what they are missing at home. It's important the students find success early. Creating assignments that are manageable encourages confidence. Then, slowly increasing the difficulty as the year progresses provides the students with growing knowledge.

Another student motivation tactic I used was a prize box. I'd buy cheap prizes: plastic rings, puzzles, bouncy balls, sticky hands, candy and other small toys in bulk. I built up the importance of picking something from the prize box and reserved it for special or big achievements. I decorated a box with flashy gold paper and would call the students up to the front of the class to emphasize the importance of what they did. The students took pride in their achievements.

Finding ways to motivate Title 1 students can be a daunting task. Title 1 students face daily struggles just to survive. However, teachers must use student motivation techniques that help these students achieve success in the classroom.

Creating Effective Lesson Plans

Teachers focus lesson plans around state established guidelines to prepare students for state tests. It is essential teachers prepare creative, effective lesson plans that meet the needs of every student. These guidelines shouldn't inhibit the teacher. They should serve as a basis for the topics to be covered. As teachers begin to prepare lesson plans, they should consider a student's background knowledge. Often Title 1 students lack background knowledge to make connections between examples and their own lives. Teachers must work to build student's background knowledge, thus increasing their own experiences.

For Title 1 teachers to create effective lesson plans, they must connect with their students and determine what is important to these students. As a teacher in a predominately Hispanic Title 1 school, I thought it was important to read a variety of Hispanic authors. I picked stories that spoke positively about Hispanic culture and heritage, and presented the students with positive role models. Another activity my department utilized, inviting local slam poets to perform for the students, proved entertaining and effective. Many of the performers came from the same background and neighborhoods as they did.

Encourage Tutoring

An essential aspect to helping Title 1 students succeed is tutoring. I established certain days for tutoring, but more often than not a student would show up at my door on an off day asking for help. It became easier to inform students at the beginning of the week what days I would be available before and after school. While the students who didn't like to attend after school were enticed by snacks. I kept a drawer full of crackers, pretzels and fruit roll-ups only to be consumed if a student completed the work. This was a cost out of my pocket, but it was how I motivated some of my students to complete assignments. I'm sure for some it was also their dinner.

Below are a few ideas for conducting tutoring sessions:

- * Quickly review the previous day(s) material
- * Answer student questions and provide examples
- * Encourage students to work in partners to complete the assignment
- * Assist students who need extra help
- * Question students over the material to review (I often did this as a game.)

The primary job of a teacher is to create exciting, effective lesson plans. Title 1 teachers and students must connect for effective learning to occur. Teachers must be available for tutoring as these sessions can lead to big gains in the classroom.



Student Struggles

Often, Title 1 students lack the financial means to achieve success in the classroom. They don't have the basic supplies or necessities to survive, much less successfully attend school. They come from single parent homes, where mom or dad works multiple jobs to support the family. Or both parents work long hours to provide the basic necessities for the family to survive. This leaves the oldest child with the responsibility of acting as the parent, providing dinner, helping with homework and ensuring everyone gets to bed.

Students struggle in these situations and face temptations since mom or dad is not around to supervise. It's easy for kids to fall in with the wrong crowd and become involved with gangs, drugs, sex and alcohol. Once a student becomes involved with one or more of these activities, the chance of that student dropping out of school becomes higher. These are not the only factors that influence dropout rates. Some students start skipping school because no one monitors their attendance. Others must help their family out financially by obtaining a job. Title 1 students face an upward struggle.

Teacher Struggles

Teachers in Title 1 schools work with students struggling to survive. Teachers must understand the student's situation and work with that student to meet their needs and achieve success. Often, teachers in Title 1 schools come across students involved in gangs, parents working multiple jobs and students at-risk of dropping out of school. It's not uncommon to find students who are homeless, hungry or have children of their own. Yet, it is a teacher's responsibility to meet their student's needs. At times this task can seem overwhelming to some teachers, but knowing your students and what is going on in their lives helps accomplish this task.

Bridging the Gap

So how can Title 1 teachers meet student's needs? Well, these teachers certainly don't work by conventional means. Title 1 teachers must do what is best for their students, even if it seems a little unorthodox. Teachers must stay attuned to absences, skipping classes, student struggles and new friends. All of these could be signs of trouble ahead. Below are a few suggestions for meeting Title 1 student's needs:

- Hold parent-teacher conferences wherever and whenever the parent can meet. This may mean during a break from their job or calling from your home phone at 10: 00 p.m.
- Provide after school tutorial sessions with snacks. Teachers stay after school to work, open up your classroom for students to work and stay out of trouble. Offer snacks as an incentive to get students to come and complete their work. this may be their dinner. Talk with your principal or local businesses about donations for snacks.
- Provide students with your cell phone number or school e-mail address. Most teachers think this is a big no-no. However, Title 1 students are different. Explain to the students these are only to be used in case of an emergency and layout the guidelines. I've known several Title 1 teachers who gave out this information and students never abused this privilege. In talking with some of the students, they felt a comfort knowing someone was there for them.

Title 1 students face daily struggles other students will never understand. These students struggle to survive, find food and stay out of trouble. However, teachers must meet these student's needs and help them succeed in the classroom. At times, unconventional methods reach these students.

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Student Documentation

Student documentation can be one of the most tedious tasks a teacher faces, but also one of the most necessary. While most documentation for how Title 1 funding is spent falls on administrator's shoulders, teachers should document how they meet student's needs. Below are a few handy ideas for documenting Title 1 student's needs:

- Maintain a parent contact log. Phone calls, e-mails and parent-teacher conferences should be recorded on the log, along with date, time and brief description. It's also a good idea to contact parents halfway through a grading period if students are failing. This gives students the opportunity to bring up their grades and make parents aware of the situation.
- Make copies of papers, tests and journals that provide insight into a student's situation. If a teacher suspects serious harm to a student, it should be reported to the administration and the proper authorities immediately. These copies serve as a document if a teacher has suspicion of cheating, or if a student is consistently making the same mistakes in their work.
- Record students attending tutorial sessions. This allows teachers insight as to which students are working to achieve more. It also serves as proof a student was in your room on a certain day and at a certain time.
- For struggling Title 1 students, teachers should document the type of outreach they make to meet students' needs. Teachers should record accommodations, extra efforts, correction offered or anything intended to help the students.
- Document any unusual or strange behavior or comments. The student may be having a bad day, or it could be the start down the wrong path. Teachers should document tardies, absences, detentions and suspensions. These can play a vital role in later interventions.

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Student Intervention

When teachers document students proceeding down the wrong path, sometimes an intervention is needed. A teacher will collaborate with other teachers to determine if a pattern of behavior is developing. Then, a few options are available. Teachers can meet with the student to discuss the issues and troubles facing the student, develop a plan of action that will meet the student's needs and encourage the student to work on changing their current path. Teachers can also call in the student's parents to discuss the matter. Then, the teachers and parents can stage an intervention. A key to staging an intervention is student documentation. Teachers must provide the parents and students with documentation that a student's actions are taking them down the wrong path.

A key to a successful intervention is consistency by both parents and teachers. During most interventions, a plan of action that meets student's needs is developed and agreed upon by all parties. If parents and teachers consistently enforce the plan of action, a student can be successful in turning things around. However, if there is not consistency by one party, the plan of action may not work. It is important to continuously support a student and encourage them to work hard to attain success.

Teachers working with Title 1 student must document how they meet student's needs. While, this can seem like a laborious task at times, it can prove valuable in the long run. Student documentation leads to interventions and establishing plans of action for students get back on the path to success.