

DIRECTIONS: Please provide a summary, **not to exceed one page**, of this excerpt of federal information about Title I funds. The summary should be written for state legislators who want to have a general idea about the relationship between Title I funding and the local decision process.

Each year, as Title I funds are allocated to districts and schools, education officials must decide how to use these funds to improve academic achievement throughout the school (in the case of schools with Title I schoolwide programs (SWP)) or for targeted students (in the case of schools with targeted assistance programs (TAP)). The statutory language notes that Title I plans and programs for both types of schools must strengthen the core academic program of the school and encourages the participation of numerous staff and stakeholders at the school level in making Title I decisions, although the requirements for SWPs are more explicit. Although Title I services are supposed to be part of the overall planning process, SWP schools are required to base their plans on a comprehensive needs assessment. In addition, TAP programs are encouraged to involve parents to the extent possible in program planning and evaluation, but SWP programs must provide evidence of whole staff and parent involvement, particularly in the development of the needs assessment and comprehensive plan.

An eligible school operating a schoolwide program shall develop a comprehensive plan... developed with the involvement of parents and other members of the community to be served and individuals who will carry out such plan, including teachers, principals, other school leaders, paraprofessionals present in the school, administrators (including administrators of programs described in other parts of this title), the local educational agency, to the extent feasible, tribes and tribal organizations present in the community, and, if appropriate, specialized instructional support personnel, technical assistance providers, school staff, if the plan relates to a secondary school, students, and other individuals determined by the school. (ESEA, section 1114(b)(2))

Although the district shares responsibilities in support of Title I schools, the law makes it clear that school-level staff members are expected to play a role in assessing the needs of their students and planning for the appropriate use of Title I funds. School leaders and personnel may be in the best position to identify the specific academic needs of students and groups of students not yet achieving state academic standards, understand the subjects and skills for which teaching and learning need to be improved, and determine the extent to which students' needs are being met under the current Title I-funded interventions and services. They can use these data to consider whether changes to their current Title I program offerings need to be made for the upcoming school year. School leaders and staff, as well as parents, families, and community stakeholders, may be in the best position to help ensure that Title I interventions are connected to and consistent with the needs of the students and the school's broader approach to school improvement and its improvement goals.

Principals' abilities to make changes to Title I resource allocations and to connect Title I programming, whether leading an SWP school or a TAP school, may be (at least partially) based on their own knowledge of Title I requirements, the technical support they receive from their districts, and the extent to which they incorporate a needs-assessment into their Title I planning and decision-making process. It is important to examine the degree to which principals understand the Title I program and use a

dated decision-making approach to planning, as well as the level of technical support districts provide to their Title I schools.

Needs Assessments

When asked about the needs-assessment processes at their schools, the surveyed SWP and TAP school principals differed significantly in their responses. As may be anticipated given Title I statutory requirements, principals of TAP schools were more likely than SWP school principals to report that their schools do not conduct a formal needs assessment to inform Title I planning (11 percent vs. 4 percent). At the same time, notable percentages of principals of both types of schools indicated that they were either unaware of or uninvolved in any sort of needs assessment to inform Title I planning (35 percent of TAP principals and 21 percent of SWP principals).

Nearly three quarters (73 percent) of SWP principals reported that school administrators were involved in conducting the needs assessment to inform Title I decision making, compared with 44 percent of TAP principals. Similarly, SWP principals were more likely than TAP principals to report the involvement of teachers (38 percent vs. 26 percent) and instructional coaches (41 percent vs. 18 percent) in this process. In contrast, 69 percent of TAP school principals reported that district administrators were involved in this process, compared with 40 percent of SWP principals (see Exhibit 24).

Exhibit 24. Involvement of various stakeholders in conducting the Title I needs assessment in schoolwide and targeted assistance programs, as reported by principals, 2016–17

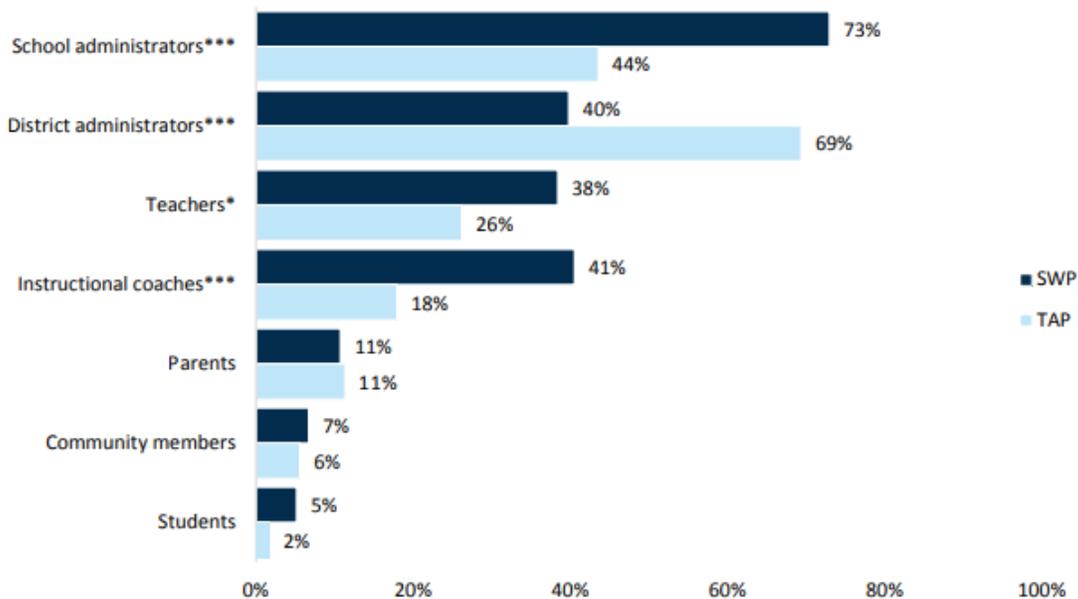


Exhibit reads: Among SWP schools, 73 percent reported that school administrators were involved in conducting the needs assessment for Title I planning purposes.

Notes: Asterisks indicate a statistically significant difference between SWP and TAP schools: * $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$.
Source: Principal survey, item C.9 ($n = 570$ SWP and 349 TAP schools).

The case study schools provide examples of how the needs assessment processes play out at the local level. For example, the principal of an SWP middle school described how their Title I needs assessment brings together the members of their school site council to reassess the school’s priority areas and how

to adjust use of Title I resources for the coming school year. As this principal explained, “with us just having the seventh and eighth grades, there’s been times where we got back [to school] and said, ‘Wow, the new students that we’re serving, we’re seeing some different needs.’ Throughout the next [planning] cycle, we need to update or revisit the priorities that we set.”

Similarly, the principal of one SWP case study school described their planning process as “laser-focused on data.” This principal explained that the district’s superintendent had put new policies and procedures in place to ensure schools’ Title I decisions were grounded in robust needs-assessment data. The district held annual meetings with school leaders to review their school-level data, develop school-level milestone goals for student performance, and identify the specific needs of their students. According to the principal, the district was emphasizing to principals that “you have to have data to justify why you’re spending the [Title I] money on this. ... [It’s] not just, ‘let’s try this program.’ Everything is data-driven.”