

Changes to Title I Funding in the 2025-2026 School Year

Albuquerque Public Schools is currently building the budget for the upcoming school year, and one significant change will be how Title I funds are distributed. The change is being driven by the school district's concerted effort to improve student outcomes.

The APS leadership team recognizes change can be unsettling and not everyone will be happy with how it plays out.

After studying the issue for months and running numerous models on how best to distribute school-based Title I funds, the leadership team strongly believes this new system will do the most good for the most students. What follows is a look at Title I funds and what's changing.

What are Title I funds?

Title I funds are allocated by the federal government to help students from low-income families close the achievement gap. It's the largest federal assistance program for U.S. schools and is part of the Every Student Succeeds Act.

How much money are we talking about?

For the 2024-2025 school year, APS received about \$37 million in Title I funds allocated to district-wide initiatives for all Title I schools as well as to individual school sites (charter and non-charter schools) with a 50% or higher poverty rate.

What's changing?

APS is changing the threshold for schools to qualify for school-based Title I funds. In the 2025-2026 school year, schools with a 60 percent or higher poverty rate will receive site-based Title I funds. Because fewer schools will be receiving Title I funds, those that do qualify will receive \$777 per student, significantly more than Title I schools currently receive per student.

The only Title I funds not being allocated to schools are those for required set-asides, including money earmarked for private schools and for programs like McKinney-Vento, which helps students experiencing homelessness, and grant administration. All other funds will be allocated to schools with a 60% or higher poverty rate. This is different than in prior years since the overwhelming majority of Title I funds APS is receiving will be allocated directly to school sites.

Will this affect APS charter schools?

Yes. APS Charter schools will need to have poverty rates of 60 percent or higher to receive site-based Title I funds.

What do schools use their Title I funding for?

Charter schools have the autonomy to spend their Title I funds as they see fit. Non-charter APS schools that have been identified as priority or emerging on the performance framework will need to allocate their Title I funds toward the six Promising Practices: Community School

Coordinator, Transformational Coach, Student Success Systems Coordinator, Genius Hour, High Quality Professional Development and High Dosage Tutoring.

How many APS schools currently receiving site-based Title I money will lose the funding based on the change?

Under current school poverty rates, 18 schools (charter and non-charter) would not receive site-based Title I funding next school year. Specifically, 110 have a poverty rate of 60 percent or higher.

What are the numbers excluding charter schools?

Excluding charter schools, 15 APS schools would not receive site-based Title I funding next school year.

So how many schools will qualify for Title I funding beginning July 1?

Including charters, 110 schools will qualify for Title I funds. Excluding charters, the number is 92.

Why is APS making this change?

The changes are driven by a desire for more equitable resource allocation guided by Guardrail 2 of the Board of Education's Goals and Guardrails and in alignment with the strategic plan. APS leaders are confident this approach will have a bigger impact. Specifically, APS believes that by channeling more Title I funding to schools with higher poverty rates, those schools will be able to make meaningful investments that move the needle on their students' academic performance.

Will the Board of Education be asked to approve this change to how Title I funds are allocated, or is it a done deal?

This will be part of the overall budget, and the board will have final approval.

Will schools that lose their school-based Title I funds not get any federal funding next school year?

All APS schools receive federal funds. Those funds pay for such things as nurses, counselors and health assistants at every school.

Given what's happening at the federal level with cuts to the U.S. Department of Education, what would happen if the federal government were to eliminate Title I and other funds it currently provides to schools?

That scenario appears unlikely because federal funding for schools is allocated based on formulas contained in the federal budget. If those funds were to disappear, APS would have to go back to the drawing board on its budget. Federal funds pay for hundreds of positions at schools.