



# Arizona Comparability Handbook

## Determining Comparability of Title I Schools Compliance Guide

**Title I Department  
Arizona Department of Education  
1535 West Jefferson Street  
Phoenix, AZ 85007**

Last Revised: April 2022

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## COMPARABLE FUNDING FOR TITLE I SCHOOLS

### Purpose

Federal Title I Grant is intended to provide supplemental programs to disadvantaged students and to ensure that these awards are used for additional programs, and fiscal law requires that all Title I schools receive a “fair share” of State and Local education funds.

Non-compliance will cause a Local Education Agency (LEA) to become ineligible for receipt of Title I funds. Consequences also include a hold on grant funds as well as a requirement to return funds.

### Requirement

LEAs may receive Title I, Part A funds only if it uses State and Local funds to provide services in Title I schools that, taken as a whole, are at least comparable to the services provided in schools that are not receiving Title I funds. If an LEA serves all its schools with Title I funds, the LEA must use State and Local funds to provide services that, **taken as a whole compared with all sites**, are substantially comparable in each Title I school.

### Criteria Covered in This Guide

- **Writing and annually updating Policy & Procedures** for compliance with the comparability requirement.
- **Annually testing comparability** (if not exempt) of its schools in the fall and adjusting resource allocations to meet compliance, as necessary.
- **Annually documenting compliance.**
- **Reporting an Assurance of Comparability** to the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) by November 30<sup>th</sup> every two years.

### Important Dates for Comparability Criteria

All calculations and documentation should be completed early in the school year. The due date for submitting your calculation or submitting your exemption forms into EMAC (Educational Monitoring, Assistance, and Compliance) is November 30<sup>th</sup>. The due date for completing the Assurance of Comparability is also November 30<sup>th</sup>. **The Assurance of Comparability is found in EMAC. It is an online form that once it's filled out, is then submitted.** If your LEA is found to be non-comparable, reallocation of resources must be completed. **Reallocations must be completed by December 31<sup>st</sup>. If non-comparable Title I schools are not corrected in a timely manner to meet compliance, the State may withhold or require repayment of Title I funds.**

LEAs that do not have their Comparability submitted and accepted by January 31<sup>st</sup>, will be placed on programmatic hold on February 1<sup>st</sup>.

## REQUIRED CRITERIA

### Written Policy & Procedures

All LEAs receiving Title I funds, **regardless if they are exempt from calculating comparability**, must establish procedures in writing. Procedures will have sufficient detail to show a year-round effort to use comparable State and Local funds at all schools. Exempt LEAs and LEAs where any of their sites can be excluded still need to establish policies and procedures which include a timeline for submitting the Assurance of Comparability, the calculation of Comparability, retaining documentation, and reviewing the procedures.

For non-exempt LEAs the following should be explained in your Policy & Procedures:

- An annual timeline for demonstrating compliance.
- Identify the person responsible (including their position) for performing and documenting the calculations.
- Choose and describe which resource (staff, salaries, or expenses) will be compared to the student population to determine comparability.
- A remedy to make resource adjustments if schools are not comparable.

### Testing Comparability

#### *Supporting Documentation Guidelines*

ADE requires that student counts be the LEA's number of enrolled K-12 students on October 1<sup>st</sup>. A report of this data can be located in AzEds. The staffing and expense reports must be measured on or near the same date. All staffing reports used for calculations should only consider **Instructional Staff if the snapshot being used for each site is within the same context**. Any staffing positions counted must be represented at sites (if applicable) in the district. **Pre-K should be excluded from any student and staffing reports and calculations. Kindergarten students should be counted as whole students (1.0), even if they only attend half day.**

Instructional Staff can include more than just classroom teachers. For example, the following personnel may also be included in the count: other certified staff (principals, guidance counselors, speech therapists, school social workers, specialists, coaches, school psychologists, librarians, etc.), instructional paraprofessionals and instructional support clerical staff. The following personnel may not be included in staffing counts: cafeteria workers, custodians, nurses, playground aides, student teachers, volunteers, etc.

Total staffing counts must then subtract out all federally funded staff, (Title I, SPED, ELL, etc.) The net FTE should be all instructional staff paid out of state and local funds. Federally funded positions must be notated on the supporting documentation.

The same standards for comparability apply to both brick-and-mortar schools and virtual schools. There is no exception given to virtual schools.

For any expense reports used in calculations, all sources of State and Local funds must be included apart from:

- Any State or local funds used for supplemental purposes that meet the same intent and purpose as Title I.
- State and Local expenditures for language instruction educational programs.
- The excess costs of providing services to children with disabilities as determined by the LEA.

### ***Exemptions and Exclusions***

An LEA may be exempt only from performing the comparability calculation if it is a single site LEA or the LEA only has one school per grade span. If two or more grades overlap in buildings, the LEA is not exempt and must perform the calculation.

If an LEA is a single site LEA or only has one school per grade span, the LEA is still required to have written policies and procedures which include a timeline. **The only document the LEA is exempt from is the actual calculation of Comparability.**

An LEA may exclude a school from the calculation if the school's October 1<sup>st</sup> enrollment in AzEds is less than 100 students. Schools that have fewer than 100 students enrolled based on this report are excluded from the comparability calculation. Any schools that are excluded based on enrollment, must be included in your policies and procedures.

A template can be found on EMAC with guidance on the exemption documentation required.

### ***Using the Worksheet for Calculations***

Arizona Department of Education will recognize the following methods of providing comparability that are permissible under the federal law and the February 2008 Federal Non-Regulatory Fiscal Requirements guidance.

The acceptable methods to compare schools include:

1. Pupil/Instructional Staff ratio at Title I schools
2. Pupil/Instructional Staff ratio at Title I to Non-Title I schools
3. Pupil/Instructional Staff ratio at Title I schools by grade span
  - a. Grade Spans must match the basic organization of the LEA and have school buildings with at least two overlapping grades
4. Pupil/Instructional Staff ratio Large/Small Schools – Title I & Non-Title I Schools
5. Pupil/Instructional Staff ratio at Title I schools by poverty level (high to low)
6. Pupil/Instructional Staff ratio at Title I schools by poverty level (high-poverty compared with each other and low-poverty compared with each other)
7. State and Local per pupil spending at Title I schools (all expenditures)
8. State and Local per pupil spending at Title I schools by grade span (all expenditures)
  - a. Grade Spans must match the basic organization of the LEA and have school buildings with at least two overlapping grades

**Only method two and four can be used if you are comparing Title I to Non-Title I schools: An LEA may not divide schools to exclude a site from a calculation. All sites must be included in a calculation unless it has 100 or fewer students.**

If an initial testing method identifies one or more Title I schools are not comparable, every testing method may be used until the LEA proves comparability. If no methodology can show comparability, the LEA should then reallocate resources to make it comparable. **Reallocation of resources must be completed by December 31<sup>st</sup>.**

### ***Adjusting Allocations to Non-Comparable Title I Schools***

Resource reallocation consists of reassigning State and Local funded instructional staff, or of transferring materials and supplies to other schools within the LEA. The LEA should follow its written comparability

procedures to correct any imbalance of resources in Title I schools. **Any corrections must be completed by December 31<sup>st</sup>.** If any non-comparable Title I schools are not corrected in a timely manner, the state may withhold or require repayment of Title I funds.

## **Documentation**

### ***Comparability Calculations***

Comparability calculations and supporting documentation must be uploaded into EMAC every other year. This is reported through EMAC which is monitored every other year. The biannual reporting schedule is:

- LEAs who are on an ODD monitoring Cycle (Cycle 1, 3, or 5) will report on **November 30<sup>th</sup> of odd** calendar years (2021, 2023, 2025, 2027,...).
- LEAs who are on an EVEN monitoring Cycle (Cycle 0, 2, 4, or 6) will report on **November 30<sup>th</sup> of even** calendar years (2022, 2024, 2026, 2028,...).

The following documentation is required to show annual compliance:

- Written comparability policy & procedures
- Student counts of the LEA's number of enrolled K-12 students on October 1<sup>st</sup>. A report of this data can be located in AzEds
- Supporting staff and/or expense records snapshot around the 40<sup>th</sup> day enrollment period:
  - School Districts: SDER; Charter Schools: an official count of staff FTE
  - An official count of federally funded positions (both school districts & charters)
  - AND/OR
  - Expense records that show the annual budgeted state & local funds per school site
- Calculation Worksheet: Choose the workbook that applies to your LEA
  - All Title I Schools
  - Both Title I and Non-Title I Schools
- Resource reallocation supporting documentation (if needed, template provided)

### ***Assurance of Comparability***

The Assurance of Comparability is required by all LEAs receiving Title I funds regardless of exemption status. It notifies the State that its schools are comparable **every year**. Reporting the assurance is only required every other year. The biannual reporting schedule is:

- LEAs who are on an EVEN monitoring Cycle (Cycle 0, 2, 4, or 6) will report on **November 30<sup>th</sup> of even** calendar years.
- LEAs who are on an ODD monitoring Cycle (Cycle 1, 3, or 5) will report on **November 30<sup>th</sup> of odd** calendar years.

***Calculating Comparability is an annual requirement. Every calendar year, the LEA will calculate comparability and every year the LEA will either report the calculations or the Assurance.***

If you have any questions, please contact your Title I Specialist.