

## **Executive Summary: FY 27 Title I Schoolwide Program Waiver Request**

This summary outlines a formal request for the Board of Education's approval to pursue a waiver from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to convert the Title I programs at Highland Elementary and Monroe Center Grade School from targeted assistance to schoolwide programs. This strategic shift is designed to better serve all students and enhance academic outcomes across both school communities.

### **The Opportunity**

Both Highland Elementary and Monroe Center Elementary Schools currently receive federal Title I funding, but due to their respective low-income percentages being below the 40% threshold, they are restricted to operating a targeted assistance program. This means that funds can only be used to support students identified as low-income, limiting the flexibility and comprehensive nature of our educational support programs.

A schoolwide program, as defined by ISBE, allows for the use of Title I funds to improve the entire educational program of a school. This approach benefits all students, not just those who are low-income, by integrating resources and strategies into a cohesive, school-wide plan. This eliminates the need for identifying specific target students, which can inadvertently create stigmatization and fragmentation within the school community.

### **The Justification**

We are requesting this waiver in accordance with ISBE's Eligibility Exception, which permits a school to receive a waiver if a schoolwide program "will best serve the needs of the students...by improving academic achievement and other factors."

By implementing a schoolwide program, our schools will be able to:

- **Create a Cohesive Learning Environment:** Funds can be used to support school-wide initiatives, such as professional development for all teachers, the implementation of innovative curricula, and the integration of technology for all grade levels.
- **Provide Flexible and Responsive Support:** Resources can be deployed where they are most needed at any given time, ensuring that struggling students receive timely interventions, regardless of their family's income status.
- **Foster a Stronger Community:** A schoolwide model promotes a collaborative culture where all students and staff work together towards common academic goals, rather than segregating support.

This change is not just about expanding the use of funds; it is about adopting a more effective and data-driven approach to education. We believe this waiver is critical to fulfilling our commitment to improving academic achievement for every child at Highland and Monroe Center.

**Recommendation**

I recommend the Board of Education consider the approval to proceed with the formal application to ISBE for a Title I schoolwide program waiver for Highland and Monroe Center Elementary Schools.