
INTERIM STUDY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION



**Indiana Legislative Services Agency
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INTERIM STUDY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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FINAL REPORT

Interim Study Committee on Education

I. LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL DIRECTIVE

The Committee was charged with studying the following topics:

- (A) School testing and reporting requirements and their impact on school corporations; statewide testing requirement, data collection and reports required by the state; data collection and reports required by the federal government. (Source: HB 1576, as Introduced).
- (B) The following topics concerning special education for developmentally delayed children:
 - (1) The categories of special education for which funding is provided for preschool, kindergarten, and elementary students.
 - (2) The number of children in preschool who are identified as developmentally delayed, and the amount and sources of funding for the identified children.
 - (3) The number of children identified in preschool as developmentally delayed who are placed in a different special education category or categories in kindergarten and grade 1.
 - (4) The estimated cost of providing services to special education services to students in kindergarten and grade 1 who were identified as developmentally delayed in preschool, using both state and federal funds. (Source: HEA 1001-2015).
- (C) Whether the ISTEP program should be replaced with an alternative statewide assessment and issues related to the development of acceptable tests from which a school may select to meet state requirements. (Source: SEA 566-2015; SB 470, as printed February 20, 2015).

In addition, the Committee studied issues relating to teacher shortages in Indiana.

II.SUMMARY OF WORK PROGRAM

The Committee met five times during the 2015 interim, on August 11, 2015, September 8, 2015, September 29, 2015, October 19, 2015, and October 26, 2015.

At the first meeting, held on August 11, 2015, the Committee heard testimony concerning special education for developmentally delayed children.

At the second meeting, held on September 8, 2015, the Committee heard testimony concerning whether the ISTEP program should be replaced with an alternative statewide assessment and issues related to the development of acceptable tests from which a school may select to meet state requirements. In addition, the Committee received information concerning potential new high school graduation requirements.

At the third meeting, held on September 29, 2015, the Committee heard testimony concerning school testing and reporting requirements and their impact on school corporations, statewide testing requirements, and data collection and reports required by the state and the federal government.

At the fourth meeting, held on October 19, 2015, the Committee heard testimony concerning teacher shortages in Indiana.

At the fifth meeting, held on October 26, 2015, the Committee adopted recommendations and adopted the final report.

III. SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY

Early Childhood Interventions for Developmental Delays

The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act sets the permissible age range for a state's early childhood interventions for developmental delays from age three through age nine. States have set a variety of ages as the age range; Indiana defines the age range for early childhood developmental delay interventions as age three through age five. In Indiana, a child will not qualify for early childhood services for developmental delays upon reaching age five. Therefore, a child often loses necessary continuous services upon starting kindergarten because of different criteria than those used for developmental delay interventions being used in ascertaining the need for special education services. Successful interventions for developmental delays may lessen or do away with the need for special education services. Several practitioners in the area of early childhood and special education services requested that Indiana consider raising the upper age limit for developmental delay interventions.

Proposed New High School Graduation Requirements: College and Career Readiness

The Indiana Career Council Pathways Taskforce, organized through the Department of Workforce Development, has made recommendations to the State Board of Education (State Board) concerning new requirements to receive a high school diploma. Currently, Indiana has four types of diplomas that a student may earn. Under the recommendations, there would be two: a College and Career Ready diploma with a requirement of at least 44 credits, and a Workforce Ready diploma with a requirement of at least 40 credits.

The ISTEP program; Alternatives

The Committee heard testimony concerning the current state of the ISTEP program and suggested alternatives. The Indiana Department of Education (DOE) reported on the development of the spring 2015 assessment, which was based on the standards adopted in 2014, and on the change in test vendors, from CTB-McGraw Hill for the 2015 assessment to Pearson Education for the 2016 assessment. Several individuals pointed out shortcomings they perceive in the ISTEP assessments, and spoke of the need for a different type of assessment.

A variety of alternatives to ISTEP were suggested, including the Northwest Evaluation Association's MAP blended assessment, the SAT exam, the Stanford test, and the Iowa test. In addition, the use of radio frequency technology to administer assessments, for which Internet access is not required, was discussed.

Standardized Testing in General

The two general types of assessments given regularly at the classroom level are formative assessments, which are designed to ascertain whether students are engaged in on-going learning and which provide timely feedback to teachers; and benchmark assessments, which are generally given three or four times a year and provide data on student progress to teachers and schools. Summative assessments are then given to see if students are meeting standards and are often used for school and teacher accountability. Summative assessments, such as ISTEP, also provide data on school performance for public information. Thus, each type of assessment is designed and given for different purposes. Federal law requires states to give summative assessments in mathematics, language arts, and science, or risk losing federal funds. Indiana law also requires assessments in social studies.

Teachers and administrators expressed frustration concerning the amount of time that testing and test preparation take. However, testimony was also presented that less than two percent of student time is used in

taking standardized assessments, and that different types of assessments provide different types of information on student performance. Many of the tests given are decided upon at the school corporation level; thus, it was suggested that the discussion on the amount of time standardized testing takes be moved to the local, rather than the state, level. In addition, competency-based learning, in which students demonstrate mastery by writing papers, completing projects, and tests, and in which students learn at their own paces, was suggested as a possible alternative to standardized testing.

Teacher Shortages

Both the Commission for Higher Education (CHE) and DOE have been studying issues related to teacher shortages. A CHE study has found that enrollment in traditional teacher preparation programs has declined by 37% over the last ten years. Teachers in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) classes and special education are in particularly short supply. DOE has convened the Indiana Blue Ribbon Commission on the Recruitment and Retention of Excellent Educators, which looked into the causes of individuals not going into the teaching profession or leaving the profession. The Commission is developing strategies to recruit and retain teachers, and will make its recommendations at the end of the year.

In addition, Indiana has a shortage of teachers who are qualified (as defined by the Higher Learning Commission, an accrediting body to which Indiana belongs) to teach dual credit classes in high schools. Currently, only 29% of teachers who are teaching dual credit courses meet the new requirement of either a master's degree in the subject area being taught or any master's degree with at least 18 credit hours in the subject area being taught. Each teacher teaching a dual credit course must meet the requirements by September 1, 2017; no grandfathering will be allowed.

While several experts presented data that showed that numerically, there is no shortage of teachers, the Committee heard testimony from administrators concerning the difficulties they are having in filling empty positions and in retaining teachers. Numerous teachers spoke or submitted written testimony concerning the stress of their jobs, which many feel has been increased by statutory changes concerning standardized testing and accountability, salary schedules, and the role of unions in contract negotiation. They perceive morale as being low and the perception of teaching as a profession being poor, contributing to teachers leaving the profession and encouraging others not to enter the profession.

IV. COMMITTEE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee adopted the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1 - Increase the age until which a student may qualify for the disability category of developmentally delayed for purposes of providing special education services. Passed by consent.

Recommendation 2 - A statewide survey of public schools should be conducted to provide the General Assembly information regarding the amount of time students are required by grade to participate in statewide or school corporation wide testing. Passed by consent.

Recommendation 3 - The State Board of Education should require ISTEP test results to be submitted to the State Board by July 1 so that schools have adequate time to evaluate the ISTEP test results in a manner which would allow parents and educators to better utilize the test results. Passed, 11-0.

Recommendation 4 - The introduction of legislation which encourages or provides incentives for the establishment of viable mentorship or induction programs to support new teachers. Passed by consent.

Recommendation 5 - The introduction of legislation which would provide for further review for increased salary flexibility in teacher shortage areas per school corporation. Passed, 8-3.

Recommendation 6 - The introduction of legislation to provide incentives for STEM grant programs to focus resources directly on the most critical teacher shortage areas. Passed by consent.

Recommendation 7 - The State Board of Education, in consultation with the Department of Education, should establish a communication plan so that parents and educators are aware that ISTEP essay questions are annually released to the public. The Committee further recommends that the best ISTEP essay responses be shared to highlight the accomplishments of Indiana students. Passed by consent.

Recommendation 8 - Further study should be conducted related to the feasibility of releasing all ISTEP test questions to enhance transparency regarding student expectations pertaining to the test. Passed by consent.

Recommendation 9 - The establishment of a comprehensive annual summary of school corporation teacher needs by subject area and geographic location so that appropriate policy decisions can be made to increase teacher supply in teacher shortage areas. Passed by consent.

Recommendation 10 - A study of providing incentives and flexibility to transition to teaching programs should be conducted. Passed by consent.

Recommendation 11 - The introduction of legislation that would require a significant amount of new money appropriated to schools to be directed to educator salaries, specifically to educators with one to ten years of experience. Passed by consent.

Recommendation 12 - The General Assembly consider the feasibility of expanding Indiana teacher loan forgiveness programs or providing additional incentives for teachers teaching in a content shortage area or locality shortage area. Passed by consent.

Recommendation 13 - The General Assembly and the State Board of Education should consider the feasibility of policies which remove barriers pertaining to teacher licensure to encourage more reciprocity with other states. Passed by consent.

Recommendation 14 - The General Assembly should review teacher benefits to determine if increasing teacher salaries and the transition to a defined contribution retirement plan would improve teacher retention. Passed, 9-2.

Recommendation 15 - The General Assembly shall consider the feasibility of recommendations made by the Dual Credit Advisory Commission. Passed by consent.

Recommendation 16 - The General Assembly shall consider the feasibility of recommendations made by the Indiana Department of Education Teacher Shortage Commission. Passed by consent.

Recommendation 17 - Teacher professional development shall consider additional funding and incentives, including for the pursuit of masters degrees with at least 18 hours in the content area in which a teacher teaches. Passed, 10-1.

The Committee approved this final report in a roll call vote of 11 to 0.

WITNESS LIST

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Susan Becker, Indiana Stem
Caitlin Bell, Hoosiers for Quality Education
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