



INDIANA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

To: Indiana State Board of Education
From: Brian Murphy, General Counsel, Assigned Hearing Officer
Date: March 8, 2016
RE: Central Christian Academy Grade Appeal 10-22016

Recommendation: Deny Central Christian Academy's grade appeal.

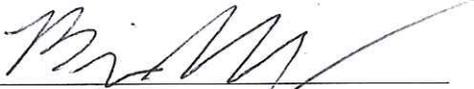
This matter concerns Central Christian Academy's (CCA) appeal of its 2014-2015 grade. CCA states that its appeal is based on the state-wide issues with ISTEP+ testing.

CCA claims that its assigned grade does not accurately reflect the school's performance and growth because of statewide ISTEP+ issues, including that the 2014-2015 test was more rigorous. CCA appeals its grade pursuant to 511 IAC 6.2-6-12 and IC 20-31-8-6.

CCA asserts its claim is bolstered by the fact that, beginning in January 2015, CCA has taken several steps to improve teacher skills and student academic performance, including: 1) contracting with Dr. Peggy Hinckley, who has prior experience in school turnaround, to implement her 8 Step Progress Check; 2) implementation of a rigorous teacher monitoring system, which has resulted in a higher level of accountability and teacher proficiency; 3) engaging in staff and teacher training to fully understand and apply ISTEP+ data; and 4) a curriculum review that will result in a curriculum that is better aligned with Indiana Academic Standards. As a result, CCA claims, its ISTEP+ school passing score dropped only by 2.5% points, which is significantly less than the statewide average; CCA argues that its improvement efforts show that, had it not been for the issues surrounding the 2014-2015 ISTEP+ test, it would have had a much better ISTEP+ 2014-2015 pass rate.

Regarding the assessment, the 2014-2015 ISTEP+ was required to be aligned to Indiana's 2014 College & Career Ready Academic Standards, and the test was required to have more rigorous question/item types than the prior ISTEP. Consequently, many, but not all, schools saw drops in performance on the test. In response, the Legislature passed Senate Enrolled Act 200 ("SEA 200"), which held schools harmless for 2014-2015. The law states that schools cannot receive a lower grade for 2014-2015 than received in the year before. SEA 200 applied to CCA.

The Legislature provided CCA, and all other applicable schools, with a remedy to the issue raised in this case, and therefore, I do not think the SBOE should change the grade assigned to CCA. While CCA is doing great work to improve its school, the SBOE should not act outside the statutorily prescribed remedy.



Brian Murphy, General Counsel
Indiana State Board of Education