



# INDIANA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

TO: State Board of Education

FROM: John D. Snethen, General Counsel, State Board of Education

DATE: March 25, 2015

RE: Background information on Board Resolution with Respect to the ISTEP+

## Memorandum

### I. Overview—How the ISTEP+ can be shortened and made more cost effective

With respect to the ISTEP+ for 2015–16, the State Board of Education ("Board") asked staff at its March 12, 2015 business meeting to return to the April 1, 2015 business meeting with recommendations in two areas: (1) shortening the assessment, and (2) reducing the cost of the assessment. Generally the ISTEP+ can be shortened and its cost reduced if it is limited to those items required by state and federal law; the increase in length and cost are attributable to including items in the ISTEP+ that are not required by state or federal law.

The length and cost of the ISTEP+ can be addressed by the Board through its authorizing authority over the development and implementation of the ISTEP+. The Board's exercise of its authority is guided by three things: (1) the Board's 2006 long-term plan for reducing the length and cost of the ISTEP+; (2) the Board's adoption of the Education Roundtable's recommendation in the summer of 2014; and (3) the recommendations of experts hired by the Indiana Department of Administration to evaluate the length of the current ISTEP+.

### II. The Board learned earlier this year that the ISTEP+ had significantly lengthened

The 2015 ISTEP+ as developed and implemented was accompanied by an increase in testing time in two areas: (1) English Language/Arts, which tripled from the 2014 test, and (2) Math, which doubled. The increase in overall testing time happened because additional passages and extra multiple choice items were included in the Applied Skills portion of the assessment. The most dramatic increase in items happened in Grade 3 Reading.

The increase in the length of the assessment raised concern among Board members, not only about the length of the ISTEP+, but its cost for the 2015-16 assessment. The 2015-16 assessment RFP was released in September 2014 and was awarded to vendors in March 2015.



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### III. **The Board can authorize the development and implementation of a shortened, more cost-effective ISTEP+**

The Board is responsible for authorizing the development and implementation of the ISTEP+ and may establish assessments to supplement the ISTEP+. IC 20-32-5-4(a)(1), 20-32-5-21(d), 20-31-8-1. This gives the Board adequate legal authority to address concerns about the length and cost of the ISTEP+ to be developed and implemented for the 2015-16 school year.

### IV. **The Board mandated a shorter, more cost-effective ISTEP+ in 2006 when it adopted its long-term plan for the ISTEP+**

In accordance with the Board's responsibility to authorize the development and implementation of the ISTEP+, the legislature in 2006 required the Board and the Department of Education ("Department") to "review the current statewide testing program and develop a long term plan that is subject to the approval of the state board . . . ." HEA 1240 § 2(b) (2006).<sup>1</sup> Among the many objectives of HEA 1240, the Board and Department were required to develop a testing program that was "more concise, less time consuming, and less expensive to administer than the current tests while maintaining the current level of rigor of the tests. . . ." *Id.* at § 2(b)(3)(B).

The objectives of HEA 1240 were achieved with input from the public and testing companies, and by looking at other states. Specifically, the Board was required to solicit information from "educators, administrators, parents, and the public concerning the program," and from

testing companies concerning:

- (A) parameters and costs of tests;
- (B) steps to be taken to ensure the validity and reliability of the tests;
- (C) steps to move the longitudinal data from the current testing program to the new testing program; and
- (D) any other information the department or the state board considers useful in developing the testing program[.]<sup>2</sup>

The Board was also specifically required to "look at tests and testing practices in use by or in development by other states[.]"<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.in.gov/legislative/bills/2006/PDF/HE/HE1240.1.pdf](http://www.in.gov/legislative/bills/2006/PDF/HE/HE1240.1.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> HEA 1240 § 2(c)(1) & 2(c)(3).

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* at § 2(c)(2).



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After ten months of gathering input from stakeholders and investigating others states' testing programs, the Board in November 2006 approved the long-term plan for ISTEP+, titled "A Long-Term Assessment Plan for Indiana: Driving Student Learning" ("Long-Term Plan") and filed it with the State.<sup>4</sup>

The Long-Term Plan remains a legally-binding document that directs the Department to act as a "managing partner" with the external vendors, "subject to State Board oversight. . . ." (Long-Term Plan at 10). The Long-Term Plan includes the following five items relevant to reducing the length and expense of the ISTEP+:

1. Grades K-2 assessments do not include science or social studies.
2. Grade 9 is not assessed.
3. Individual student growth is measured once each school year, not twice.
4. Longitudinal data from the current testing program is to be moved to the new testing program, enabling the use of historical data for the student, school, and district.
5. Students below Grade 9 who have passed Algebra I should be allowed to bank their scores for graduation requirements.

(Long-Term Plan at 3-4, 6.)

## **V. The Education Roundtable recommended against including Reading in the ISTEP+ out of concerns that it would lengthen the test**

In the summer of 2014, the Education Roundtable rejected adding additional reading items to ISTEP+, because it would increase the length of the test. Out of the discussion on this issue arose a consensus that IREAD3 would remain the means for assessing reading. Accordingly, the Board adopted the Education Roundtable's recommendation to exclude Reading from the ISTEP+. More specifically, the Board formally excluded additional reading items in the English Language Arts portion of the assessment for the purpose of providing a Reading-specific scale score, citing the concern that adding additional reading items would add length to the test and negatively affect of students' scores.

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<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.in.gov/legislative/igareports/agencyarchive/idoe.html>. See also <http://www.in.gov/legislative/igareports/agencyarchive/reports/IDOE08.pdf>.



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## VI. **Experts recommend shortening the ISTEP+ by reducing the number of Reading items, piloting, and using existing items to develop the new ISTEP+**

When the Board first learned of the length of the ISTEP+ in February 2015, Governor Pence directed the Indiana Department of Administration to contract with expert consultants in the area of psychometrics who were tasked to provide written recommendations to Indiana based on an analysis of the 2014-15 ISTEP+ test. The expert consultants, Edward Roeber and William Auty, issued their recommendations in a report titled “2015 ISTEP+ Review: Findings and Recommendations on Testing Time” (2/25/2015) (“Expert Report”).

Roeber and Auty emphasized that the goals should be to shorten the ISTEP+, saying that ISTEP+ should be developed with the fewest items possible and with a number of embedded field test items, each administered to small samples of students.” (Expert Report at 9.) They also said, “Based on the results of 2015 tests, IDOE should investigate the feasibility of shortening the ISTEP+ tests in 2016 and beyond.” (*Id.* at 8.) Auty added at the March 12, 2015 Business Meeting that the ISTEP+ should be shorter, especially for younger students.

The Expert Report made three specific observations/recommendations of particular importance in the following three areas: (1) reducing the number of reading items; (2) piloting the ISTEP+; and (3) using existing test items on the new ISTEP+:

1. Reduce the number of reading items: “IDOE should consider strategies to trim assessment times even further, looking especially at the ELA assessment, since this assessment is currently the longest assessment component. The number of reading passages, items and writing prompts should be carefully determined and a strong rationale for those numbers created. Since a separate reading score is not reported in Indiana, it may be the case that the number of reading passages and items used to report by ELA standard can be reduced.” (*Id.*)
2. Pilot test with a small number of students: “Pilot testing – the trial of items with a small number of students - is useful to assure that the items to be field tested are likely to work. This can reduce either the total number of items to be field tested, the number of field test items given to any one student, or both. It is better to determine that an item doesn't work in a small scale pilot than in a large statewide field test.” (*Id.* at 16.)
3. Use existing test items on the 2015-16 ISTEP+: “When an assessment program transitions to measuring a new or revised set of standards, it is customary to consider whether some or all of the items that already exist—previously used or not—might be used to measure at least parts of the new tests. Sometimes these existing items can continue to be used, while in other instances, the change in standards is such that the items are not aligned to the new standards and are of no use for the new assessment. It is advantageous to use such items because not only has the state already paid for their development, the items are of proven quality and should require less extensive field testing for use in future versions of the ISTEP+ instruments. We were puzzled by the apparent decision not to at least examine their suitability to measure the new Indiana standards.” (*Id.*)



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## VII. Recommendations

ISTEP+ can be shortened and the cost reduced by taking the following eleven actions:

1. Pilot a test with a small number of students in Fall 2015 and any future years in which additional items will be needed. **Source:** Experts' recommendations.
2. Move the longitudinal and historic data from the current testing program to the new testing program, and ensure that existing items from the 2006 Indiana Academic Standards are reviewed for alignment and suitability for use on 2015-2016 and future assessments. **Source:** HEA 1240; 2006 Long-Term Plan; experts' recommendations.
3. Identify comprehensive test specifications and produce an assessment blueprint document as soon as possible, but no later than August 1, 2015, to immediately communicate to stakeholders. **Source:** Experts' recommendations.
4. Develop a valid summative assessment of English/Language Arts ("ELA"), Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies for the applicable grades with the fewest items necessary to preserve accountability. **Source:** HEA 1240; 2006 Long-Term Plan; Education Roundtable; experts' recommendations.
5. Do not develop, pilot, field test, or administer items beyond the minimum items necessary to provide a combined ELA score that is:
  - a. Aligned to the current year's standards;
  - b. Sufficient to be accepted under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 20 U.S.C. 7801 (25) or successor federal legislation; and
  - c. Provides valid and reliable accountability data. **Source:** HEA 1240; 2006 Long-Term Plan; Education Roundtable; experts' recommendations.
6. Do not develop or implement a Grade 9 summative or formative test, but instead administer the minimum number of test items at Grade 9 for one year for the limited purpose of creating a valid and reliable vertical scale. **Source:** HEA 1240; 2006 Long-Term Plan.
7. Limit the development of formative assessments of Grades K-2 to ELA and Mathematics only. **Source:** HEA 1240; 2006 Long-Term Plan.
8. Exclude Social Studies from the formative assessment for Grade 10. **Source:** HEA 1240; 2006 Long-Term Plan.
9. Limit Grade 11 and Grade 12 testing to what is required under HEA 1005 (2013). **Source:** Experts' recommendations.
10. Shorten the Grades 3–4 assessment in accordance with the Experts' Recommendations. **Source:** Auty's recommendations to the Board at the March 12, 2015 Business Meeting.



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11. Do not require students below Grade 9 who have taken and passed Algebra I to take the GQE, but instead allow them to bank their scores. **Source:** HEA 1240; 2006 Long-Term Plan.

## VIII. Conclusion

A shorter and more cost-effective ISTEP+ can be developed without sacrificing validity or reliability, primarily by including only the minimum number of items required by state and federal law.



# INDIANA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

**April 1, 2015**

## **Indiana State Board of Education Resolution Regarding Indiana's 2015-16 Assessment**

*Whereas*, The State Board “shall authorize the development and implementation of the ISTEP program,” Ind. Code § 20-32-5-4(a)(1).

*Resolved*, That the State Board conditions its authorization of the development and implementation of the 2015-2016 statewide assessment program on the following requirements:

1. The vendor contract shall require a pilot test be implemented in Fall 2015 and any future years in which additional items will be needed, and the pilot design be consistent with the recommendations in the “2015 ISTEP+ Review: Findings and Recommendations on Testing Time,” by Edward Roeber and William Auty (2/25/2015) (“Experts’ Recommendations”), to the extent practicable;
2. In developing the 2015–2016 statewide assessment program, the vendor shall be required to move the longitudinal and historic data from the current testing program to the new testing program, and shall ensure that existing items from the prior Indiana Academic Standards shall be reviewed for alignment and suitability for use on 2015-2016 and future assessments;
3. The vendor contract shall provide for the identification of comprehensive test specifications and assessment blueprint document as soon as possible, but no later than August 1, 2015, which the Department of Education (“Department”) shall then immediately communicate to stakeholders;
4. The vendor contract shall require a valid summative assessment of English/Language Arts (“ELA”), Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies be developed for the applicable grades with the fewest items necessary to preserve accountability;
5. The Department and the vendor shall not develop, pilot, field test, or administer items beyond the minimum items necessary to provide a combined ELA score that is:
  - a. Aligned to the current year’s standards;
  - b. Sufficient to be accepted under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 20 U.S.C. 7801 (25) or successor federal legislation; and
  - c. Provides valid and reliable accountability data; and
6. The vendor contract shall not provide for the implementation of Grade 9 summative or formative testing, but shall provide for the minimum implementation of test items at Grade 9 for one year for the limited purpose of developing a valid and reliable vertical scale;
7. The vendor contract shall require development of a formative assessment of Grades K-2 covering ELA and Mathematics only;



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8. The vendor contract shall not require development of a formative assessment of Grade 10 that includes Social Studies;
9. There shall not be a vendor contract for Grade 11 or Grade 12 testing beyond what is required under HEA 1005 (2013);
10. The vendor contract shall require that the Grade 3 and Grade 4 assessments be shortened in accordance with the Experts' Recommendations;
11. Students below Grade 9 who have taken and passed Algebra I shall have met their graduation requirement for Mathematics, but nevertheless shall be required to take the grade level assessment for accountability purposes.

ADOPTED April 1, 2015