

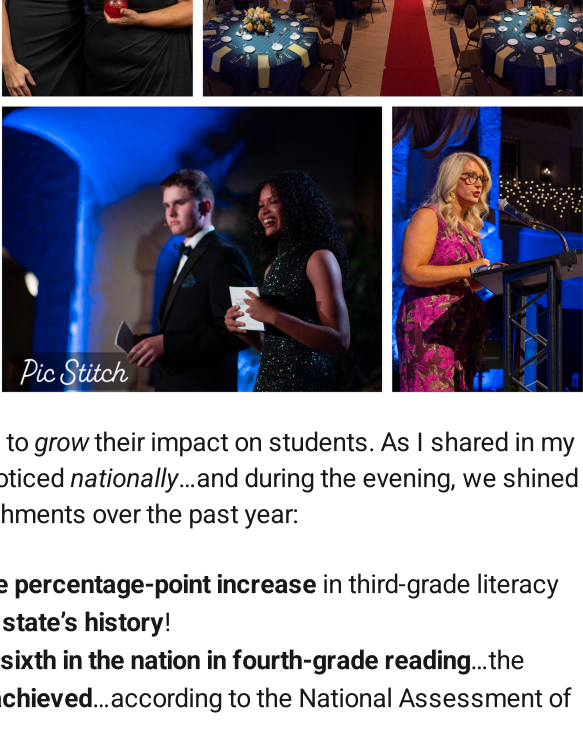
Dr. Jenner’s Weekly Update

Weekly Newsletter from the Indiana Department of Education

December 5, 2025

A Message from Dr. Katie Jenner

Right before heading into Thanksgiving break, hundreds of our state’s K-12 educators and school leaders gathered in Indianapolis for the fourth annual Educational Excellence Awards Gala! It’s absolutely one of my favorite nights of the year where we honor some of our top educators who are leading with bold, innovative strategies that drive student learning forward. It’s a fancy evening (we even have a red carpet!), where the goal is for all attendees...and most importantly our educators...to feel like a celebrity for the night.



This year, we awarded nearly \$270,000 to schools and educators across the state to celebrate their current impactful work, as well as support them in continuing to *grow* their impact on students. As I shared in my remarks at the Gala...that impact is being noticed *nationally*...and during the evening, we shined a spotlight on some of our biggest accomplishments over the past year.

- Statewide, we achieved a **nearly five percentage-point increase** in third-grade literacy rates – by far **the largest gain in our state’s history!**
- For the first time ever, Indiana ranks **sixth in the nation in fourth-grade reading...the highest ranking our state has ever achieved**...according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).
- Indiana has seen a more than **four percentage-point improvement** in chronic absenteeism rates.
- In 2024 (announced early January 2025), we celebrated our **highest graduation rate on record** with 90.23% of students graduating high school!
- Indiana received the **2025 Frank Newman Award for State Innovation** to honor our state’s *historic investments and advancements* in literacy, as well as the development of the Indiana Graduates Prepared to Succeed (GPS) dashboard.

The Gala recognized schools that are excelling in key areas such as literacy (science of reading), STEM, rethinking high school, community collaboration, and educator professional development. Additionally, the event recognized:

- Our 2025 Indiana Teacher of the Year, **Graciela Miranda**,
- Indiana’s 2024 Milken Educator Award recipients, **Katie Lanter** and **Ashley Johnson**,
- The first-ever Indiana Blue Ribbon Schools
 - Batesville High School**,
 - Brandywine Elementary School**,
 - Charles Elementary School**,
 - Creskide Middle School**,
 - East Side Elementary School**,
 - Immaculate Heart of Mary School**,
 - South Terrace Elementary**,
 - St. John the Evangelist School**,
 - St. Louis de Montfort School**,
 - St. Mary’s Catholic School**, and
 - St. Philip School**,
- As well as other dedicated educators from across the state!

Additional information regarding each of the awards is available [here](#), and I’d like to spotlight our recipients below! 2025 Indiana Educational Excellence Awards Gala school/district and teacher recipients include:

Hoosier Educational Excellence Award

Perry Central Community School Corporation

Excellence in Data-Driven Support Award

Penn High School, Penn-Harris-Madison School Corporation

Excellence in Early Literacy Award

Levan Scott Academy, Fort Wayne Community Schools

Excellence in STEM Award

Cold Spring School, Indianapolis Public Schools

Excellence in Professional Learning & Leadership Development Award

South Central Community School Corporation

Excellence in Family & Community Collaboration Award

Bremen High School, Bremen Public Schools

Enroll, Employ, Enlist Excellence Award

Eastern Hancock High School, Eastern Hancock Schools
Signature School
The Portage School of Leaders, Career Academy Network of Public Schools

Promising Educator Excellence Award

Mariah Tyler, Mississinewa Community Schools
Allie McGinn, Paramount Schools of Excellence

Dedicated Educator Excellence Award

Lindsey Hall, Mill Creek Community School Corporation
Michele Brandt, School Town of Munster

Lifetime Educator Excellence Award

Sandra Haney, New Palestine Community Schools
Meda Sullivan, Knox Community School Corporation

Digital Innovator Excellence Award

Ashley Anderson, Lawrenceburg Community School Corporation

Collaborative Educator Excellence Award

Jennifer Burnette, Hoosier College and Career Academy

Literacy Excellence Award

Denise Demeter, Elkhart Community Schools
Whitney Barnes, Southwestern Jefferson County Schools
Julie Rowen, Franklin Community Schools

STEM Excellence Award

Jennifer Colen, Madison Consolidated Schools
Joel Eichenauer, Manchester Community Schools

Congratulations to our 2025 recipients, and keep up the great work!

Thank you to our philanthropic sponsors who help make this event possible, and as always, thank you for the important work you lead daily for our communities, our state, and most importantly, our students!

Office of Accountability

NEW: Public Comment Continues on Future K-12 Accountability Rule

Public comment on the proposed K-12 accountability rule will continue through January 5, 2026. After identifying a technical issue with the notice of the second public comment period, this additional public comment period will ensure the information shared at the October State Board of Education meeting in response to stakeholder feedback is also included in the Indiana Register. The public is encouraged to provide feedback on the draft rule via [Jotform](#) and can also provide in-person comments at a public hearing on January 5, 2026. This public hearing will take place at 11 a.m. ET in the Indiana Government Center South, Conference Room D. Additional information about the current draft of the proposed future accountability model can be found [here](#). The final draft is anticipated to be adopted in January 2026.

NEW: Synchronous and Asynchronous Instructional Days

As some schools are impacted by winter weather, we wanted to remind you of the state statute regarding synchronous and asynchronous instructional days. Per statute, schools may have up to three asynchronous learning days each school year. Schools are not limited on the number of synchronous days. Districts are also able to make days up in person using their built in snow days. To the extent a district cannot make up a day via asynchronous instruction (i.e., power outage, etc.), please let us know and note that in the request. Contact the Indiana Department of Education’s (IDOE’s) [Office of School Accountability](#) with any questions.

Office of Assessment

NEW: 2025-2026 Cambridge International Math and Science Grant Application Due January 16, 2026

The [2025-2026 Cambridge International Math and Science Grant](#) is designed to support any school or corporation in increasing student enrollment and improving student scores in math and science Cambridge International courses. The grant implementation cycle begins July 1, 2025, and ends June 30, 2026. Applicable expenses made prior to completing the grant application can be reimbursed. Completed [grant applications](#) are due January 16, 2026. Contact IDOE’s [Office of Student Assessment](#) with any questions.

Office of Curriculum and Instruction, Digital Learning, and Kindergarten Readiness

NEW: STEM Certified Schools Quarterly Meeting

In November, IDOE’s STEM team met with leaders of schools that are in the process of becoming STEM-certified. The recording of the meeting can be found [here](#). A resource that was shared on STEM Integration can be found [here](#). All resources related to STEM Certified Schools can be found in the [STEM Certified Schools Toolkit](#) in the Indiana Learning Lab. Please contact stemcertification@doe.in.gov with any questions.

NEW: AI is CS - IDOE Partnering with Nextech and Code.org to Celebrate CSEd Week!

CSEd Week begins Monday, December 8. This year, IDOE is partnering with Nextech and Code.org to empower students through the [Hour of AI](#) and help educators use computer science (CS) as a home for AI literacy and education. Join us for workshops in the Indiana Learning Lab on [Wednesday, December 10](#), to learn about teaching AI fundamentals in CS class, or [Friday, December 12](#), to help students participate in the Presidential AI Challenge. For a full list of opportunities, review the [schedule of activities](#) or view the [recording of the kickoff meeting](#). Contact IDOE’s [Office of Curriculum and Instruction](#) with questions.

REMINDER: Tiered System of Supports Toolkit for K-8 Mathematics - Q&A Webinar

IDOE’s Office of Curriculum and Instruction will host a live webinar to provide a high-level overview of Indiana’s Tiered System of Supports for K-8 mathematics. This session will cover the legislation requiring schools to implement intervention plans, introduce the Tiered System of Supports Toolkit, and then open the floor for participant questions. The webinar will take place at 3 p.m. ET on Monday, December 8. Use this [link](#) to register. Contact IDOE’s [Office of Curriculum and Instruction](#) with any questions.

REMINDER: Middle School Advanced Mathematics Course Auto-Enrollment Guidance

Beginning with the 2026-2027 school year, Indiana law requires middle schools to automatically enroll eligible students into advanced mathematics courses. This [memo](#) provides detailed information and guidance to school and corporation leaders on student identification, auto-enrollment implementation, and family communication. Contact IDOE’s [Office of Curriculum and Instruction](#) with any questions.

Office of Educator Talent and the Literacy Center

NEW: Science of Reading Experts Explain Series

Join IDOE and The Reading League Indiana from noon to 1 p.m. ET on Tuesday, December 16, for the next live Experts Explain series with Dr. Shawn Datchuk. Dr. Datchuk will present *Sentence Writing Fluency*. In this session, participants will learn evidence-based techniques to improve sentence writing to automaticity, including capitalization, punctuation, and syntax. All sessions will be recorded and shared in the Indiana Learning Lab. See registration details [here](#). Contact IDOE’s [Literacy Center](#) with any questions.

Office of Information Technology

NEW: Special Education Data Certification

The final data clean-up for the December Special Education Student count is upon us. Thanks to all who have worked collaboratively with us to achieve a complete count using the new IEP platform, which shares special education program records directly with IDOE. We have surpassed the certified count of students we had last year and continue to work with schools to resolve any lingering issues. We plan to open up the certification on Wednesday, December 10, and it will remain open through Friday, December 19. During this time, chief financial officers and superintendents will need to certify their special education data with digital signatures. If there are questions about data certification, please direct them to help.doe.in.gov.

Office of School Finance

NEW: Count Day Reminder

Please see [this memo](#) regarding fall and spring count days for the 2026-2027 school year. As a reminder, students who are enrolled and expected to be in attendance are eligible to be counted on count day and thus count for ADM. School corporations and charter schools are expected to plan to conduct school on count days, so that there is a reasonable expectation that the students will be in attendance. Questions can be directed to schoolfinance@doe.in.gov.

REMINDER: Indirect Costs Training

IDOE’s Office of School Finance will host an indirect costs training on Tuesday, December 9, at 9 a.m. ET. The training will go over the fundamentals of indirect costs, including purpose, applying, proper use of your indirect cost rate, and monitoring. The training will also include revised guidance regarding the reimbursement process. We recommend any staff members who work with indirect cost within a school corporation attend. Register for the training [here](#). Questions can be sent to icr@doe.in.gov.

Office of Title Grants and Support

NEW: Technical Assistance Survey 2026

IDOE’s Title Grants and Support team is dedicated to providing high-quality technical assistance to help schools across Indiana maximize support for students. As we approach the new year, we want to hear directly from schools about the various technical assistance opportunities and topics that would be most impactful. Please provide your feedback by completing this [survey](#) by Monday, December 15.

Indiana Commission for Higher Education

NEW: Application for Indiana Teaching Scholarship Now Open

The [Indiana Commission for Higher Education](#) is currently accepting applications for the [Next Generation Hoosier Scholarship](#), which provides up to \$40,000 in financial aid to aspiring teachers. High-achieving high school and college students who plan to teach in Indiana for at least five years can receive up to \$10,000 per year of college (up to \$40,000 total) from the scholarship. Students must apply by February 28, 2026, via [ScholarTrack.IN.gov](#). The Commission will notify applicants of their scholarship status via email in April 2026. Visit [Learn More Indiana](#) for more information and follow #NextTeacher on social media to stay updated on scholarship announcements. Questions can be directed to NextTeacher@che.in.gov.

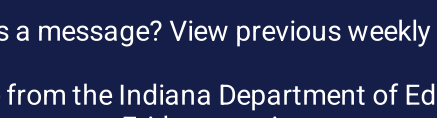
News From Our Partners

NEW FROM WABASH VALLEY EDUCATION CENTER (WVEC): Save the Date - Third Annual Early Learning Conference

Join us for a day filled with best practices for our youngest learners! WVEC’s third annual Early Learning Conference will be held on Tuesday, December 9, in West Lafayette. Start with a powerhouse day of learning from Hilary Statum, followed by interactive sessions with Melissa Gill and Adam Peterson! There will be something to take away for everyone pre-K to first grade. Click [here](#) for additional details and registration. Contact [Melissa Gill](#) with any questions.

NEW FROM CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY: NSF AI Institute for Societal Decision Making

Carnegie Mellon University is hosting a five-day interdisciplinary virtual workshop for high school educators to explore the core principles of AI and machine learning, alongside leading experts in the field. Educators will leave this workshop with a set of teacher-tested units and assignments, ready to be implemented into their existing curriculum. Use [this link](#) for more information and to apply. Contact the [NSF AI Institute](#) with any questions.



Weekly Updates

View previous weekly updates from Dr. Katie Jenner [here](#).

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