

A BIG WIN FOR INDIANA STUDENTS



Indiana Academic Standards

In 2014, Indiana's on-time high school graduation rate was 90%—one of the highest in the nation. Unfortunately, there was another story to be told. On the previous Nation's Report Card, also known as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), less than half of 4th and 8th grade students demonstrated proficiency in reading and math. This lack of mastery of essential skills continued to impede Indiana students throughout high school and as they progressed to postsecondary learning. In 2013, 33% of freshmen entering Indiana public higher education institutions had to take a remedial course because they lacked the skills needed for college-level work. To address this discrepancy, the State Board of Education adopted the Common Core State Standards in English language arts (ELA) and math in 2010.

Indiana's Proficiency Performance on the Nation's Report Card

Year	4th Math	4th Reading	8th Math	8th Reading
2011	44%	33%	34%	32%
2013	47%	43%	36%	36%

In early 2014, the Common Core standards were replaced with the Indiana Academic Standards, which combined the strengths of the previous state standards with those found in the Common Core. These rigorous, high-quality standards have been validated as college and career ready by the Indiana Commission for Higher Education, the Indiana Department of Education, and the State Board of Education.

With the adoption of the Indiana Academic Standards, Indiana is one step closer to ensuring that students will have the opportunity to reach their full potential. By 2020, 58% of jobs in the state will require a postsecondary credential. However, only 36% of adults in Indiana currently have such a credential, resulting in a 22% skills gap. Higher standards are essential to helping close this gap.



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Better Standards Deserve Better Assessments

The next phase of this work is to implement an updated test aligned to the standards that is meaningful to students, teachers, and parents in determining which skills a student has or has not yet mastered. The state needs a test that can measure the critical thinking and problem solving skills that our students need to succeed. Aligned assessments present an opportunity to move beyond tests that simply measure rote memorization skills to ones that mirror the higher standards and provide teachers with valuable information on how effectively they are teaching and students are learning.

Putting high-quality assessments in place needs to be part of a larger system of accountability that supports student achievement and holds schools accountable for successfully teaching the content outlined in the standards. At the heart of accountability is the need to ensure that all students across Indiana receive the same high-quality education. Meaningful tests serve as school-wide academic checkups that can identify struggling students and schools in need of extra support and interventions. In addition, aligned assessments can identify high-achieving students who require support to maintain their academic engagement and provide them with the resources necessary to continue to excel.

In 2014, the Indiana Statewide Testing for Education Progress (ISTEP) assessments were revised to align with the updated Indiana Academic Standards. Students in grades 3–8 will take these updated assessments, known as the ISTEP+, beginning in spring 2015 in ELA and math. High school students will take updated end-of-course tests in Algebra 1, Biology 1, and English 10. These assessments go beyond traditional multiple choice questions and require students to apply critical thinking, analytical, and problem solving skills and explain their answers. These computer-based tests include technology-enhanced items, which allow

students to illustrate their answers through a variety of methods, including answering open-ended questions and constructing visual representations of mathematical concepts, such as graphs and linear equations. In March 2015, before testing began, the ISTEP+ was modified to decrease the length of the test by three hours at all grade levels, which was done by altering the pilot questions.

That same month, the Indiana Department of Administration announced the selection of Pearson Education to develop aligned assessments that will be implemented beginning in 2016. This decision is awaiting approval by the State Board of Education. There is pending legislation in the State Senate that threatens the selection of Pearson and makes the future of the ISTEP+ uncertain.

During this transition, it is important to advocate for key criteria that will make the state assessments a strong measuring stick of how Indiana students are doing on the path to college and careers at the state and national levels. As advocates, we need to ensure that our state tests accurately measure college and career readiness and have these characteristics to serve as a useful tool to benefit students.

A High-Quality Assessment

- Is developed with input from academic and testing experts, as well as teachers.
- Is field tested and reviewed before full implementation.
- Assesses a wide range of real-world skills using a variety of question formats.
- Includes formative or interim assessments that act as academic checkups to ensure that students are keeping pace.
- Provides detailed and timely feedback that sends an early warning signal to teachers if students are not on track so interventions can be put in place.
- Is comparable across states.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the difference between standards and curriculum?

- Standards are a set of guidelines for what students are expected to know and be able to do at specific points in their education. Standards provide the foundation for key components of the education system, including curricula, instructional materials, teacher training, and assessments.
- A curriculum is the course of study covering the standards. It is set by local school districts and includes the lesson plans, programs, and textbooks that teachers use to teach the content and skills outlined in the standards.

2. Will test scores impact schools and districts?

- School-wide test results will be used as one measure for school accountability. Just as we use tests as academic checkups for individual students, they are also checkups for our schools. We need to identify schools in need of extra support so that interventions can be put in place to ensure that all students across a district and in the state will receive a high-quality education.

3. Will the new test replace the old state test?

- Yes. The ISTEP+ replaces the ISTEP in ELA and math.

4. Will test scores impact teachers?

- Test scores are one factor used in teacher performance evaluations.

5. How will test scores impact students?

- Students must meet minimum scores on the English 10 and Algebra 1 ISTEP+ tests to graduate high school. There are no testing requirements for promotion from one grade to the next.

6. How were teachers involved in the test development process?

- Indiana teachers worked alongside content specialists to select reading passages and create the blueprints and specifications for the ISTEP+ tests. They also reviewed test items for content and bias.



The Indiana Academic Standards:

- Focus on what students will need to learn in order to be ready for college and careers

Better assessments:

- Give us an honest, objective report of how our students are doing.
- Ensure all students are held to the same expectations.
- Identify struggling students so they can get the help they need.
- Identify high-achieving students to provide them with the resources necessary to continue to excel.

7. How were teachers involved in the standards setting process?

- Indiana teachers were involved in the development and review process of the Indiana Academic Standards.

8. What kind of data is collected? Is it released?

- Under the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Indiana is required to collect data on school performance. Aggregate data collected includes student test scores and information such as attendance, support services, and academic growth. *The state will not release any personally identifiable student information.* Only individuals who interact with students on a daily basis, such as teachers and parents, are allowed to see student-specific information.
- Federal law protects the privacy of student information and education records through the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The only information that will be publicly available will contain aggregate data for schools, districts, and subgroups.

9. Do students need to be computer literate?

- Students need to be computer literate. Schools that cannot meet the technology requirements may apply for a waiver to administer paper and pencil versions of the test.
- There is pending legislation that would allow schools to administer tests using alternative methods of technology that do not require internet connection.
- While it may take time to ensure that every school has the hardware necessary and meets the technology requirements, this is a smart investment. Technology is not going away. Ensuring that all students have equal access to technology is critical to preparing students for a 21st century competitive workforce.

10. Where can I go for more information?

- www.doe.in.gov/assessment
- www.BusinessForCore.org

