



INDIANA
DEPARTMENT of
EDUCATION

Mike Braun, Governor
Katie Jenner, Secretary of Education

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Leveraging Outcomes-Based Contracting to Drive Adolescent Reading Improvements

INDIANAPOLIS – Following recent data showing an unprecedented nearly five percentage point gain in third grade literacy in 2025, Indiana is now expanding its focus to help struggling students in sixth through eighth grades improve their reading skills.

“Through the collective work of educators, parents and families, and communities, we have been able to positively move the needle in many academic indicators statewide – from third grade literacy, to chronic absenteeism, to graduation rates – just to name a few,” said Dr. Katie Jenner, Indiana Secretary of Education. “We must keep our foot on the gas pedal across the board in areas where we are seeing success, and also, urgently work together to overcome challenges in areas where we are not moving as quickly, including adolescent literacy.”

Based on Lexile data from the 2025 ILEARN summative assessment, 31% of students in sixth through eighth grades were not reading at grade level. In the current nationwide landscape, there is not a proven statewide, scalable model for supporting literacy in the middle school grade span. Indiana is seeking to maximize results for students by launching a pilot opportunity for schools using a contracting model that is gaining popularity in education, known as outcomes-based contracting.

“When it comes to adolescent literacy, there’s no other state in the country that we can copy and paste, like we did with early literacy,” said Dr. Jenner. “In Indiana, we want to work with the highest-quality, most effective vendors— those who are really helping to move the needle for students and showing a return on investment, rather than us writing a check for millions of dollars and it still being status quo. We have to keep the urgency— supporting our teachers, engaging our parents, and continuing to grow our partnerships that allow us to strategically and continuously improve for students.”

By using an outcomes-based contracting model, the state will be able to contract with vendors for specific student outcomes and compel accountability for achieving them. Priorities for vetting approved vendors will include programs that:

- demonstrate alignment to science of reading,
- are evidence-based, and
- are listed in the National Center for Intensive Intervention or the What Works Clearinghouse.

Ultimately, this model will safeguard taxpayer dollars by ensuring vendors only get paid when there are real results for students.

The Indiana Department of Education will share additional information regarding this opt-in opportunity for schools once a review is complete and specific, qualified vendors specializing in reading interventions for students in sixth through eighth grades have been identified.

To learn more, click [here](#).

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