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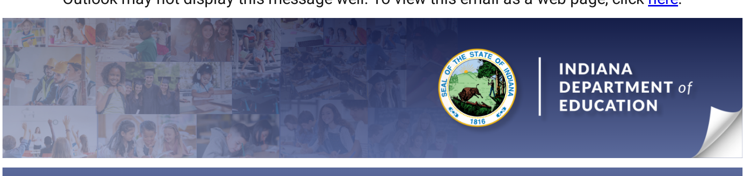
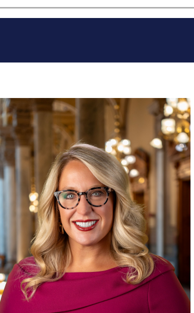


Dr. Jenner's Weekly Update

Weekly Newsletter from the Indiana Department of Education

September 26, 2025

A Message from Dr. Katie Jenner



Every summer in Indiana we launch a statewide search for the next Indiana Teacher of the Year, and each year we review an impressive slate of teachers who truly give their all to this profession, and most importantly, to their students. The Teacher of the Year process is just one way that we must continue to celebrate the impactful work of our educators and elevate the good work happening throughout Indiana.

In case you missed the news last week, the top three finalists for 2026 have officially been named! These educators are creating real impact for students, whether that's through their use of evidence-based instructional strategies, their commitment to lifelong learning, their mentorship of their fellow colleagues, or the partnerships they have built throughout their community. Today, I'd like to share a bit more about this year's finalists:

Martin Briggs is a fourth grade teacher at F.W. Crichfield Elementary School in the La Porte Community School Corporation, the corporation where he has taught for 47 years. His passion for education is evident through his involvement in leading teacher workshops in math and science, as well as presenting at state and national conventions. Briggs' educational philosophy is focused on ensuring that all students reach their highest academic potential by using best practices with data-driven instruction. He played a key role in the successful implementation of the ILEARN checkpoints at his school in 2024-2025 and helps students master content by encouraging hands-on experiences and collaborative problem-solving.

L.A. High is an eighth grade math teacher at Schmucker Middle School in the Penn-Harris-Madison School Corporation where he earned an Impact Award for achieving the highest growth in the corporation for eighth grade math, as measured across the fall 2024 ILEARN checkpoints to the spring 2025 ILEARN summative assessment. L.A. currently sponsors the Fellowship of Christian Athletes club, is an active member of the school safety team trained in Crisis Prevention Intervention, and has been chosen to present at professional development sessions for new middle school teachers in the corporation. In his time at both Grissom and Schmucker middle schools, he has been the lead organizer in fundraising efforts for Riley Hospital for Children. At the completion of this past school year, L.A. surpassed a total of $70,000 raised during his time in this role.

Megan Johnson is a fourth grade teacher at Central Elementary School in the Plainfield Community School Corporation. With 18 years of teaching experience in upper elementary classrooms, Megan has emerged as a key instructional leader dedicated to her students' growth and known for her joyful, relationship-centered approach to learning. Since 2022, she has led efforts in her building to implement evidence-based reading practices, supporting both students and colleagues in aligning instruction with the latest research in science of reading. She also recently completed 80 hours of professional development on science of reading and passed her Praxis exam to earn the new Early Literacy Endorsement.

Thank you, Martin, L.A., and Megan for your work both inside and outside of the classroom...and for representing us, as educators, so well! Stay tuned for an official 2026 Teacher of the Year announcement in October, and as always, thank you for all that you do for Indiana students!

Legislative Updates

NEW: Allowable Uses of the Teacher Appreciation Grant (TAG)
Following the release of TAG Guidance for the 2025-2026 school year, we received questions about whether the funds can be used to pay for FICA and TRF related costs. The Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) is committed to working with legislators during the 2026 legislative session to clarify that FICA and TRF remain allowable expenses from the TAG appropriation, prior to the distribution of TAG funds in April 2026.

As a reminder, each corporation and charter school must complete and submit this Jotform by Friday, October 3, to notify IDOE if they intend to participate or opt-out of TAG for the 2025-2026 school year. Please contact TAG@doe.in.gov with any questions.

REMINDER: 2025 Legislative Guidance
Following the close of each legislative session, IDOE immediately begins working to implement newly-enacted legislation impacting K-12 education, which includes compiling guidance for schools and educators. This guidance is a product of robust cross-agency collaboration and partnership with countless stakeholders. This is an iterative document that will continue to be updated and improved in collaboration with educators.

Office of Accountability

REMINDER: 2025 Graduation Rate Caps
Schools should be checking graduation rates on the EdData Graduation Report. The 'OFFICIAL' State Grad Rate is the state grad rate with the Alternate Diploma and waiver caps applied. This is the public facing state graduation rate and is the grad rate that is used in all state accountability measures. In the 2025 cohort, waivers are capped at 6% of grads and alternate diplomas are capped at 1% of the graduation cohort (or 1 student for schools with fewer than 100 students in their cohort). These caps are for graduation rate calculation purposes only. Contact IDOE's Office of Accountability with any questions.

REMINDER: 2025 Cohort Mandatory and Voluntary Graduation Rate Audit
All schools that are subject to the mandatory graduation rate audit of the 2025 cohort have been notified by email. If you did not receive an email and/or are unsure if your school was selected, please check the list of mandatory audit schools (Enrollment key: "AccountabilityCommunity"). Every high school should review their 2025 cohort. If there are students in the 2025 cohort with an incorrect (non-graduate) cohort status, please submit those students on the voluntary graduation rate audit template. All the 2025 cohort. The mandatory and voluntary graduation rate audit, and it is the final opportunity to request a change to the 2025 cohort. The mandatory and voluntary graduation rate audits will be open from Wednesday, October 1, through Friday, October 24. Contact IDOE's Office of Accountability with any questions.

Office of Assessment

NEW: Optional Fall 2025 PSAT/NMSQT Testing Window Opens Wednesday, October 1
Indiana's optional Fall 2025 PSAT/NMSQT testing window will be open from Wednesday, October 1, through Thursday, October 31. The State of Indiana is directly billed for grade 10 and 11 students attending accredited Indiana schools. Schools may offer testing to additional students (e.g., grade nine or homeschooled students), and those related expenses will be billed directly to the school. Find additional information regarding the PSAT/NMSQT in this memo. Contact the IDOE's Office of Student Assessment with participation and policy questions and College Board with any technical questions.

NEW: 2025-2026 Formative (Interim) Assessment Grant Distributions
Corporations and non-public schools can access this spreadsheet to confirm approved formative (interim) assessment grant distributions. Fields in blue have been automatically adjusted to ensure compliance with the 10% student population limit for grades three through eight. Funds were provided to schools via electronic deposit into Fund 3028 and were tagged with the memo line "FY26 Remediation Testing 3028-3198" to reflect current Indiana Code naming conventions. Schools do not need to take any additional action to receive funds. Contact IDOE's Office of Student Assessment with any questions.

NEW: Indiana Learning Lab Updates
The Assessment Hub on the Indiana Learning Lab has been updated to the Learning & Assessment Hub. Resources and collections found in the Learning & Assessment Hub have been updated and new supports will continue to be added. Access the Learning & Assessment hub here.

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

NEW: 2025-2026 STEM School Certification Guidelines Now Available
IDOE's Office of Curriculum and Instruction has released new guidance and rubrics for the 2025-2026 STEM School Certification process. IDOE will host an informational webinar in the Indiana Learning Lab at 3 p.m. ET on Tuesday, September 30. Use this link to register for the webinar. During this webinar, IDOE staff will discuss the changes, answer questions, and provide practical guidance on how schools will work through the process of becoming a STEM Certified School. Contact stemcertification@doe.in.gov with any questions.

REMINDER: Public Comment Window Closes Today! Indiana Academic Standards for World Language
Today is the last day to offer feedback for the draft Indiana Academic Standards for World Language (Classical-Modern, East Asian, and Heritage Language Learners). Use this Jotform to access all three sets of draft standards and the detailed instructions for participating in this process. Contact the Office of Curriculum and Instruction with questions.

Office of Educator Talent and the Literacy Center

REMINDER: Last Day to Complete Application for the 2025 Educational Excellence Awards
The fourth annual Indiana Educational Excellence Awards Gala will be held in Indianapolis on Friday, November 21. Financial awards will be granted to schools to celebrate their progress and achievement in supporting student excellence and growth. Schools who wish to be considered for an award should complete an application here by 5 p.m. ET today. Contact the Office of Educator Talent with any questions.

REMINDER: Last Day to Complete Teacher Nominations Applications for the 2025 Educational Excellence Awards!
In preparation for the fourth annual Educational Excellence Awards Gala in Indianapolis on Friday, November 21, IDOE is now accepting award nominations for outstanding teachers! Stakeholders are invited to nominate an excellent educator via this form by 5 p.m. ET today. Winners will be invited by IDOE to attend the awards gala to celebrate their achievement and dedication to serving Hoosier students. All certified Indiana teachers are eligible. Contact the Office of Educator Talent with any questions.

Office of Information Technology

NEW: October is Cybersecurity Awareness Month
Now is a great time to begin preparing for Cybersecurity Awareness Month, which occurs each October. Here is a resource with links to free toolkits you can use to plan activities to improve the cybersecurity awareness and posture of your staff members. Remember that schools are eligible for a no-cost cybersecurity assessment from a joint team from Purdue and Indiana University. Schools will receive an actionable report that can be shared with school leaders and school board members. MS-ISAC also opens the no-cost Nationwide Cybersecurity Review (NCSR). This confidential cybersecurity self assessment allows schools to monitor growth each year and provides nationally-aggregated statistics to inform future investment in cybersecurity.

REMINDER: PowerSchool Releases Key Reports to Guide Data Remediation for Special Education and ILP Data
PowerSchool and IDOE have collaborated on a set of reports now available to all schools to help focus efforts on data clean-up. These reports will help data and special education teams ensure Special Education Program records are flowing daily to IDOE. The reports are:

- IEP Start and End Dates Need Update
- No Special Education Program Record

For the "No Special Education Program Record" report, any student records in red text need to be addressed before those records can flow to Data Exchange. Thank you to all who have already started to use these reports. Note: There are specialized versions of these reports to help schools ensure records for fourth grade students are complete and flow to Data Exchange prior to the October 1 count day. This is important as valid Good Cause Exemptions (GCEs) for students in special education rely on the student having a special education record. If there are general questions about this approach contact Specialeducation@doe.in.gov

REMINDER: Support for Accurate October Data Certification
The October Certification Dashboard is now available to all schools to help schools to show trends in year to year data. School users can access this report in EdData. It is critical for school leaders and data teams to review these reports since they help detect anomalies which can only be evaluated at the local level. Data trends are available for Pupil Enrollment, Graduation (fall graduates for 2024-2025), Membership, Multilingual Learners, Course Outcomes (summer 2025) Staff Employment, and school calendars. This approach is part of the overall effort to review data prior to certification and avoid post-certification corrections. Contact help.doe.in.gov with any questions.

Office of School Finance

NEW: Count Day is Wednesday, October 1
School personnel should be checking their data daily to ensure there are no issues heading into count day. Remember: students who do not have valid membership records when certification ends on Friday, October 10, will not generate tuition support funding. Please work with your SIS vendors and the data reporting help desk if you have issues.

NEW: Potential Federal Government Shutdown
In the event of a federal government shutdown, IDOE will continue the normal operations of programs funded by federal grants, as the majority of IDOE's federal funding is already authorized for the 2025-2026 school year. If a federal government shutdown occurs, and the shutdown lasts for an extended period, IDOE will re-evaluate the situation, along with our state-level partners, and will notify schools accordingly.

Office of School Support & Transformation

REMINDER: School Improvement Plans
House Enrolled Act (HEA) 1002-2025, passed during the 2025 legislative session, repealed IC 20-31-5, eliminating the requirement for Indiana schools to submit state-level School Improvement Plans (SIPs) beginning with the 2025-2026 school year. Submission is still required for schools federally designated under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA):

- Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) schools must upload their CNA/SIP via the Link Portal under the School Improvement tile.
- Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) and Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI) schools must submit SIPs to their local education agency (LEA). Uploading to the Link Portal is optional.

The submission window will close on Friday, October 3. For templates and additional details, see the full memo here. Contact IDOE's Office of School Support and Transformation with any questions.

Offices of Special Education, English Learning and Migrant Education

NEW: Multilingual Learner Report and EL Counts Captured on October 1
The Multilingual Learner Report in Data Exchange (DEX-LM) collects information on students with a home language other than English, determines the enrollment count of identified English learner students, and generates funding for schools via the federal Title III grant and the state Non-English Speaking Program (NESP). Any students with errors or exclusions will not be certified and included in the finalized Multilingual Learner Report. To review students not currently certified, navigate to the Validate tab in Data Exchange and click on the "Multilingual Learners" hyperlink. This report details each error or exclusion by STN and can be exported for further organization. If there is any discrepancy between the information shown in the Data Exchange Validation portal and your Student Information System (SIS), please contact your SIS vendor directly or submit a help ticket.

REMINDER: FY2026 IDEA, Part B Applications
The FY 2026 Part B Applications and Instructions have been posted on Moodle in the FY 2026 Grant Information folder. Applications for 611 and 619 are due to the grant management system on or before the following dates:

- 611: Friday, October 3, 2025
- 619: Friday, October 3, 2025
- Mandatory CCEIS: Saturday, October 25, 2025

A checklist has been inserted into each application to assist with completion and to assist LEAs in avoiding common mistakes.

New charter schools for 2025-2026 will be eligible for Part B funding in January 2026 and will be contacted by our office with instructions at that time.

All questions and concerns should be directed to your LEA's assigned fiscal specialist. A list of the LEA fiscal specialist assignments has been placed in the Office of Special Education Moodle Community> Fiscal> Part B Grants for Special Education> LEA Assigned Specialists.

REMINDER: FY24 IDEA Part B 611 & 619 Reimbursement Requests Required Back Up
IDOE is required to obtain all supporting documentation for reimbursement requests beyond the end date of the grant award (i.e., federal award ending 09/30 requires reimbursement request received from 10/01 - 12/15 on the closing grant), have supporting documentation accompanying the reimbursement request to ensure that all activities and related expenses took place within the associated period of availability for the federal project being charged.

Document(s) supporting the reimbursement request to ensure grantees are accounting for the total amount requested and that expenses were properly encumbered by 9/30 must be submitted.

Acceptable documentation may include:

- Paid dates
- Receipts or invoices showing as payment
- Purchase order or encumbrance dates (handwritten is not acceptable)
- Ledger or computer document showing dates and expenses (Excel is not acceptable)
- Amounts total the reimbursement request reviewed

Contact IDOE's Office of Special Education with questions.

REMINDER: Encumber All FY 2024 Part B Grant Funds by Tuesday, September 30
All FY 2024 Part B funds must be encumbered by Tuesday, September 30. The FY 2024 Part B grant reimbursement requests must be submitted to specialedpartb@doe.in.gov by Monday, December 15 with supporting documentation. IDEA Part B monitoring reports are now past due, please submit ASAP. All Part B grant forms and related guidance are available under Part B Grants for Special Education in the Office of Special Education Moodle Community's Fiscal section. Contact IDOE's Office of Special Education at partbgrants@doe.in.gov with any questions.

Office of Title Grants and Support

NEW: October 1 Counts
Valid and reliable data reported and certified via Data Exchange (DEX), is a critical component of determining accurate Title I, II, and IV allocations. Poverty counts for your LEA included during the October 1 ADM count is necessary to ensure federal funding allocations are complete and accurate. Only certified counts available in DEX will be utilized to calculate final allocations for the above federal Title grants.

To avoid inaccuracies in the certified count information, please review any potential errors or discrepancies in DEX. If any discrepancies are found, please work with your LEA's DEX Data Manager on corrections prior to the October 1 ADM count.

NEW: FFY25 Title II Applications
FFY25 Title II applications are due on Friday, October 31. Applications can be submitted using this link. Please contact TitleII@doe.in.gov with any questions.

NEW: FFY25 Title IV Applications
FFY25 Title IV applications are due on Friday, October 31. Applications can be submitted using this link. Please contact TitleIV@doe.in.gov with any questions.

REMINDER: Ed-Flex Waiver
Due to the delay in receiving Title IV allocation amounts, the Ed-Flex waiver application for waiver #4 is now due Saturday, September 30 for the FFY25 Title IV budget application. As noted in the Ed-Flex FAQ, applications for waiver use in cohort 2 are required annually, or per federal fiscal year (FFY) for Title IV budget applications.

For questions regarding waiver #4, please contact TitleIV@doe.in.gov.

Indiana Commission for Higher Education

NEW: 2026-2027 FAFSA Now Open
The 2026-2027 FAFSA form is officially open for students and their parents at studentaid.gov. Students are encouraged to file the FAFSA by Indiana's state deadline of April 15, 2026. The Commission for Higher Education's Outreach Coordinators are available for assistance by visiting LearnMoreIndiana.org/contact. More information about the FAFSA and resources for students and educators can be found at LearnMoreIndiana.org/FAFSA.

News From Our Partners

NEW FROM THE READING LEAGUE INDIANA: Science of Reading Experts Explain Series
Join IDOE and the Reading League Indiana from noon to 1 p.m. ET on Tuesday, October 14, for the next live Experts Explain series with Dr. Erica Lembke. Dr. Lembke will present Assessments for Writing. This session will present the use of Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM) for screening and progress monitoring in writing. Administration and scoring will be introduced, along with a diagnostic tool to aid in decision making when instructional changes are needed. All sessions will be recorded and shared in the Indiana Learning Lab. Access registration details here. Contact IDOE's Literacy Center with any questions.

NEW FROM THE INDIANA CTO COUNCIL and IAPSS: The Candice Dodson EdTech Trailblazer Award Open for Nominations
The Indiana CTO Council is partnering with IAPSS to present the Candice Dodson EdTech Trailblazer Award, sponsored by CDW. Now through Monday, November 10, nominate a superintendent or assistant superintendent who has championed innovation and empowered others through technology. The award will be presented at the IAPSS Annual Meeting in December. Click here to submit a nomination.

NEW FROM THE INDIANA SUPREME COURT: Attending Oral Arguments
Indiana Supreme Court oral arguments are open to the public, streamed live, and archived for later viewing. Arguments are typically held in the historic courtroom at the statehouse. For most arguments, each side has 20 minutes, and the justices ask questions during that time. See a visitor's guide for attending OAs for more information including a calendar of upcoming arguments and a form to submit requesting attendance.

NEW FROM THE HOOSIER EDUCATIONAL COMPUTER COORDINATORS (HECC): Annual Conference and Awards
The 2025 HECC Conference is coming to Indianapolis on Wednesday, November 5, through Friday, November 7. Every attendee who registers and attends multiple days of the conference will receive a free Skylight Calendar. Registration can be completed here.

Award nominations are also now open.

- HECC 2025 Technology Coordinator of the Year award - recognizes one individual in K-12 education who demonstrates a strong commitment to technology leadership and enhancing learning for students and staff. Nominations are open through Friday, October 10, and must be submitted by a co-worker or supervisor of the technology leader within the district. Click here to submit a nomination.
- #KerriOn Award - in honor of Kerri Rombach, a long-time member of the HECC community, the #KerriOn Award recognizes those in school IT who have provided excellent service, support, and selfless contribution to their peers. Nominees should exemplify those same characteristics that were so consistently demonstrated by Kerri. Nominations will be accepted through Friday, October 10, 2025. Click here to submit a nomination.

NEW FROM WABASH VALLEY EDUCATION CENTER: Annual Multilingual Conference
Join the Wabash Valley Education Center (WVEC) for two days filled with best practices in Multilingual Instruction. WVEC's Annual Multilingual Conference will be held on Wednesday, November 5, and Thursday, November 6, in West Lafayette. The conference will include learning and support from Sally Barnes and Tan Huyhn, as well as breakout sessions.Click here for additional details and registration. Questions can be directed to Jennifer Fry at Jennifer.fry@esc5.k12.in.us.

REMINDER FROM ASCEND INDIANA: Survey on Student-Led Businesses
Ascend Indiana, in partnership with IDOE, is collecting information on student-led businesses (School-Based Enterprises and Workplace Simulations) across the state. Share your experience in this five- to seven-minute survey to help map programs and strengthen career-connected learning for Indiana students.

REMINDER: AP-TIP Hosting Annual Online Fall Conference Week of October 27
This year's event will focus on The Art & Science of Engagement. Jennifer Fredricks, PhD will lead the Keynote session on Monday, October 27 from 7 to 8:30 p.m. ET. Content sessions will take place from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. ET beginning Tuesday, October 28 through Thursday, October 30 with a one-hour break for lunch each day.

- English: Tuesday, October 28
- Math: Wednesday, October 29
- Science: Thursday, October 30

Visit the University of Notre Dame's Center for STEM Education's website for the daily conference agendas (coming soon) and to register beginning today, Friday, September 26. Contact Stephanie Kuscera with any questions.

Weekly Updates

View previous weekly updates from Dr. Katie Jenner here.

Stay Informed

Did you miss a message? View previous weekly emails here.

Dr. Jenner's Weekly Update from the Indiana Department of Education is distributed every Friday morning.

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