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Dr. Jenner's Weekly Update

Weekly Newsletter from the Indiana Department of Education

October 23, 2026

A Message from Dr. Katie Jenner



October is always a busy time for Indiana's K-12 schools, with fall sports and competitions, first-semester midterms, fall break, and the chaos of Halloween rounding it out! October is also known as National Principals Month. In conjunction with the national celebration, Governor Braun recently proclaimed Oct 4-10 Principals Week in Indiana.

Indiana is home to over 2,300 schools, each with its own principal and sometimes multiple assistant principals. Many of Indiana's most innovative, impactful accomplishments are happening because principals are boldly leading the charge… empowering our teachers to try new approaches that expand opportunities for students. A *huge thank you* to all of our principals and the leadership they provide for every building, teammate, and student!

This week, at the October State Board of Education meeting, we highlighted the progress Indiana schools and communities are making to tackle chronic absenteeism. Only a few years ago, following the pandemic, more and more students were not attending school, causing chronic absenteeism to reach an all-time high nationally and here in Indiana. While Indiana fared better than many states, in 2022, more than 21% of Hoosier students were chronically absent…missing nearly three and half weeks or more of valuable instructional days.

Through the hard work of local educators and families, Indiana's chronic absenteeism rate has shown strong and sustained improvement every year since…and in 2026, following four consecutive years of improvement, our statewide chronic absenteeism rate has improved to 14.9%. (One of the rare topics in education where a decrease in a data point is a good thing!)



Behind this statewide number is the progress made at each individual school. In 2026, more than 75% of Indiana's corporations/schools improved their chronic absenteeism rate…the highest number to achieve improvements in a single year. Check out some other key takeaways from the 2026 data below.

- **All grade levels** saw improvements for the fourth consecutive year.
    - Rates of chronic absenteeism continue to be **highest in grades 9-12**, with 30% of students chronically absent their senior year.
    - This underscores the urgency behind Indiana's ongoing work to **rethink high school** and better connect students to their unique future.

- Chronic absenteeism improved for **nearly every race/ethnicity** for the fourth consecutive year. Black and Hispanic students continue to have the largest improvements.
    - **Black students** - Improved 8.7 percentage points since 2022
    - **Hispanic students** - Improved 7.7 percentage points since 2022

- Chronic absenteeism rates for **students receiving free/reduced price meals** and **EL students** have also improved for four consecutive years.
    - **Students receiving free/reduced price meals** - Improved 9.1 percentage points since 2022
    - **EL students** - Improved 6.6 percentage points since 2022

- Academic data show that students who consistently attend school are **significantly more likely** to:
    - **Read by the end of third grade: Over 90%** of students who regularly attended school passed IREAD in 2026, compared to 74.4% of students who were chronically absent.
    - **Master key ELA and math skills: Over 44%** of students who regularly attended school were proficient on ILEARN English/language arts in 2026, compared to 22.5% of students who were chronically absent, and **over 45%** of students who regularly attended school were proficient on ILEARN math in 2026, compared to 18.6% of students who were chronically absent.
    - **Be college-ready: Nearly 42%** of 2026 graduates who regularly attended school met the college-ready benchmark on the SAT, compared to 20.7% of graduates who were chronically absent.

The results are compelling: as regular school attendance increases across Indiana, these improvements translate into real academic gains for students. The more days a child is in school, the more opportunities they have to build the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed.

As we celebrate the strong progress we've made over the past four years, there is more that we can…and must…do in the future. By working together to continue improving attendance, we can build on our collective progress, and most importantly, improve outcomes for more Hoosier students.

As always, thank you for all that you do for Indiana students. Let's keep the momentum going!

Important Announcements

REMINDER: Public Comment Period Open for Amendment to Indiana's State Plan Under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

The Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) is preparing to submit an amendment to its State Plan under the Elementary and Secondary Education (ESEA) to the U.S. Department of Education to reflect flexibilities granted under Indiana's recently approved ESEA Flexibility Waiver for school accountability and school identification. This amendment incorporates Indiana's new state accountability model into our federal system to strengthen alignment across systems and promote Indiana's vision for Hoosier Graduates Prepared to Succeed. As required, IDOE is seeking public comment on the waiver request. Comments will be accepted through Jotform until Friday, November 6.

REMINDER: School Year 2026-2027 Teacher Appreciation Grant (TAG) Intent to Apply - DUE TODAY

Per Indiana Code 20-43-16, the Teacher Appreciation Grant (TAG) program is established to provide millions of dollars directly to schools and thousands of dollars to Indiana's educators to attract, reward, and retain teachers who significantly impact student outcomes. School corporations and charter schools that intend to apply for TAG for school year 2026-2027 must complete the Intent to Apply Jotform by 5 p.m. ET today, Friday, October 23. Additional guidance can be found here. Questions may be directed to TAG@doe.in.gov.

Office of Accountability

REMINDER: 2026 Cohort Mandatory and Voluntary Graduation Rate Audit Closing Soon

The voluntary and mandatory graduation rate audit will close on Monday, October 26. Schools subject to the mandatory 2026 cohort graduation rate audit as a part of the normal review cycle have been notified by email. If you did not receive an email or are unsure if your school was selected, please check the list of mandatory audit schools . Every high school should review their 2026 cohort, regardless of whether the school was selected for the mandatory audit. If any student appears in the 2026 cohort with an incorrect (non-graduate) cohort status, please submit those students for review through the voluntary graduation rate audit template, located in the School Accountability & Accreditation Community in Moodle. All schools are welcome to participate in the voluntary graduation rate audit, which is the final opportunity to request a change to the 2026 cohort. Find more information in the 2026-2027 School Accountability Reference Guide. Contact IDOE's Office of School Accountability with any questions.

Office of Assessment

NEW: Register for Regional PSAT/NMSQT Data and SAT School Day Preparation Workshops

In collaboration with IDOE, College Board will host six regional workshops in early December. Each workshop includes a morning (PSAT/NMSQT) and afternoon (SAT School Day) session:

- 9 to 11 a.m. local time: Instructional leadership teams will work with their fall PSAT/NMSQT reports to pinpoint skill gaps, identify students ready for AP courses, and build a 90-day action plan.
- 1 to 3 p.m. local time: Test, Technology, and Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) coordinators will prepare for the spring 2027 SAT School Day administration.

To learn more and register, view the event flyer. Contact Kris McAloon at College Board with any questions.

NEW: Grades Three to Eight ILEARN Through-Year Mathematics Guidance - Additional Support Materials

Additional materials are now available to support educators, schools, and corporations implementing the ILEARN Through-Year Mathematics Guidance: Using Checkpoint Data to Identify and Support All Students (Grades Three-Eight). Applying the Data Triangulation Process is a two-page resource that provides a detailed walkthrough of how to apply the data triangulation process after each ILEARN Mathematics Checkpoint administration. The optional Grades Three-Eight Mathematics Data Triangulation Workbook is also available to further support the triangulation process, guide development of intervention goals and services, and assist with progress monitoring and parent communication. Contact IDOE's Office of Assessment with questions.

Career and Technical Education (CTE)

UPDATE: 2026-2027 Credentials of Value List

The 2026-2027 Credentials of Value list originally released in May has been updated and can be found here. The list now includes six credentials developed through the Indiana Career Apprenticeship Program (INCAP) initiative. The joint memo released in conjunction with the original release of the list has been updated with a brief note about these additions. Questions regarding credentials of value can be directed to COV@che.in.gov.

REMINDER: Industry Certification Reimbursement Payments

Schools will soon receive reimbursement payments for industry certification exams taken during the 2025-2026 school year. Payments are based on data reported in the InTERS system to the Commission for Higher Education by Tuesday, September 1. Details on the upcoming payment process and amounts each school will receive can be found here. Please contact CTE@che.in.gov with any questions.

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

NEW: 2026 Indiana Academic Standards for K-12 Mathematics Now Available

The Indiana State Board of Education (SBOE) approved updated K-12 Indiana Academic Standards (IAS) and Content Connectors (CCs) for K-12 Mathematics per the regularly scheduled standards revision cycle pursuant to Indiana Code 20-31-3-2. All updated IAS and CCs are now accessible on IDOE's Indiana Academic Standards webpage. IDOE extends special thanks to all educators who served as committee reviewers throughout this process, as well as all who participated in the public comment phase. Please contact IDOE's Office of Curriculum and Instruction with any questions.

NEW: 2026-2027 STEM Integration Grant

IDOE is pleased to announce the 55 recipients of the 2026-2027 STEM Integration Grant. This competitive grant opportunity supports schools and other eligible entities in providing opportunities to develop and implement STEM learning opportunities aligned with Indiana's Priorities for STEM Education and the Indiana Academic Standards for Integrated STEM. All 2026-2027 STEM Integration Grant recipients should attend the virtual kick-off meeting on Wednesday, October 28, from 1 to 2 p.m. ET to learn more about management of this grant. This meeting will be recorded for those unable to attend. Contact IDOE's Office of Curriculum and Instruction with any questions.

NEW: Student Thinking in Middle School Mathematics

IDOE will welcome expert educator Ella Herreth on Wednesday, November 4, from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. ET for the last of a three part webinar series designed to support middle school math educators and school leaders. This session will highlight high-impact instructional routines and explore how educators and leaders can use these practices to increase student engagement, strengthen mathematical discourse, support deeper learning, and promote schoolwide instructional improvement. Register through the Indiana Learning Lab. Contact IDOE's Office of Curriculum and Instruction with any questions.

REMINDER: K-12 Mathematics Educators Needed for High-Quality Curricular Materials (HQCM) Review Committees

IDOE's Office of Curriculum and Instruction is recruiting interested K-12 mathematics educators for committees that will review core curricular materials submitted by curriculum providers and aligned with the 2026 Indiana Academic Standards for K-12 Mathematics. Interested educators should complete and submit this form by 11:45 p.m. ET today, Friday, October 23, to be considered for this collaborative opportunity. IDOE will review all applications and notify selected participants in late October. A live virtual training will be provided for all confirmed educator reviewers. Curricular materials approved during this review cycle will be recommended for inclusion on IDOE's HQCM Advisory List for K-12 STEM for use beginning with the 2027-2028 school year. Contact IDOE's Office of Curriculum and Instruction with any questions.

REMINDER: *From Coding to Computational Thinking* - Professional Development Session

Computer programming and algorithms are core domains of the kindergarten to grade eight Indiana Academic Standards for Computer Science (CS), as well as the widely taught Next Level Program of Studies course 4565: *Computing Foundations for a Digital Age*. Join IDOE's CS Specialist on Wednesday, October 28, at 3 p.m. ET to receive guidance on making programming relevant in the age of artificial intelligence (AI) and obtain resources that allow educators to tailor programming instruction to student needs and highlight essential concepts. A recording of the session will be available in the Teach CS and AI with IDOE" series collection following the workshop. Register for the workshop here and reach out to IDOE's Curriculum and Instruction team with any questions.

REMINDER: The Top Five Indiana Learning Lab Features Every New Teacher Should Know Video

Start your teaching journey with confidence by exploring the Indiana Learning Lab's most helpful tools and resources. This quick video highlights five essential features that make finding what you need fast and easy! Contact IDOE's Digital Learning Team with any questions.

REMINDER: Tiered System of Supports Live Series - Data Triangulation and Using Individual Math Plan to Support Tiered Intervention

IDOE's Office of Curriculum and Instruction will host a live webinar to support educators and administrators in using the Data Triangulation Process with ILEARN Mathematics Checkpoint data to gain a comprehensive understanding of student needs. Supporting guidance will be shared on using the Individual Math Plan to support tiered intervention.The session will also include time for participant questions. The webinar for grades three to eight will take place on Monday, October 26 at 3 p.m. ET. Use this Microsoft Teams event link to register. Contact IDOE's Office of Curriculum and Instruction with any questions.

REMINDER: *Foundations of Mathematics Kindergarten to Grade Two* - Learning Lab Course

The second course in the *Making the Shift: Elevating Mathematics Instruction* professional development series, *Foundations of Mathematics: Kindergarten-Grade Two* , has officially launched in the Indiana Learning Lab. This course builds on the learning theory introduced in How Students Learn Mathematics and provides a deep dive into the essential content and developmental progressions that shape mathematics learning in early grades. Educators and leaders will explore how foundational numeracy skills develop over time, examine key concepts within the kindergarten to grade two continuum, and learn how evidence-based practices support young learners' mathematical growth. Sign up for the course on the Indiana Learning Lab. Contact IDOE's Office of Curriculum and Instruction with any questions.

REMINDER: Math Language Routines for Everyone

A newly recorded webinar, Math Language Routines for Everyone, is now available in the Indiana Learning Lab. This session explores strategies for engaging all learners in mathematical discourse, emphasizing the use of precise mathematical vocabulary and offering approaches that help students reflect on their understanding of both content and terminology. Contact IDOE's Office of Curriculum and Instruction with any questions.

Office of Educational Options and Quality

NEW: New Federal Scholarship Tax Credit for Hoosiers - SGO Application LIVE

Governor Mike Braun is encouraging both current and prospective Indiana Scholarship Granting Organizations (SGOs) to take advantage of the new Federal Scholarship Tax Credit by applying now to become an approved SGO. Beginning in 2027, Hoosiers who make charitable donations to approved SGOs can collect up to $1,700 in federal tax savings for investments made in K-12 scholarships, in addition to any state tax credits they may receive. Before this new federal tax credit takes effect, now is the time to apply to become an approved SGO. Application guidance and a link to apply can be found on IDOE's SGO webpage. Contact IDOE's Choice Programs Team with any questions.

NEW: Federal Scholarship Tax Credit Informational Session for Schools

IDOE will host an informational session for schools on Friday, November 6, at 10 a.m. ET to provide an overview of the new Federal Scholarship Tax Credit program and explain how schools can leverage this opportunity to support Hoosier students. This session will walk participants through program requirements, potential benefits, and next steps for engagement. Please use the registration link to sign up and pre-submit questions. For more information, visit IDOE's Scholarship Granting Organization webpage. Registration will remain open through Tuesday, November 3. Contact IDOE's Choice Programs Team with any questions.

NEW: Career Scholarship Account (CSA) Second Fall Payment Disbursement

To ensure payment is included in the second CSA disbursement, please upload all invoices to your designated Google Drive folder by end of day today, Friday, October 23. Invoices received after this date will be processed and included in the third disbursement. Before submitting, please verify that invoices are complete, accurate, and include all required supporting documentation to avoid payment delays. For invoice requirements, funding timelines, and payment schedules, visit the CSA webpage.

NEW: Education Scholarship Account (ESA) Second Fall Payment Disbursement

The next tuition funding disbursement for schools participating in the Indiana Education Scholarship Account (INESA) program is scheduled for Tuesday, October 27. ESA funds will be distributed based on each student's payment election selected during the application process. Funds will either be paid directly to the participating private school or deposited into the student's ClassWallet account.

REMINDER: Choice Schools Contact Form

Please ensure all contact information is up to date in Data Exchange (DEX), as this is where Choice specialists pull contact information for your school. If there is someone in addition to the contacts reported in DEX who you would like to receive all messages, or messages with specific content, you may add them via this form. The form also is posted in the Non-Public School Community in Moodle.

REMINDER: Choice Scholarship Fall Payments

Payment letters will be published to the Choice school's Google folder with an Excel file breakdown of their payment installments. Any discrepancies must be reported to IDOE's Office of Educational Options and Quality at choiceschool@doe.in.gov within two weeks from the date of the letter.

Office of Educator Talent and Literacy

NEW: 2027 Educational Excellence Awards Gala - SAVE THE DATE

Save the date for the 2027 Educational Excellence Awards Gala on September 17, 2027! Educators from across the state will gather in Indianapolis for the sixth annual Educational Excellence Awards Gala to celebrate our schools and the educators whose passion and dedication shape students' lives every single day. Learn more about the gala on the Educational Excellence Awards webpage.

REMINDER: Keys to Literacy No Cost Professional Development for Early Literacy Endorsement Registration Open

IDOE's Early Literacy Endorsement Professional Development is available to current, eligible Indiana educators who hold a valid professional educator license and teach in a content area that involves literacy instruction for PK-5 students. Eligible licensed Indiana educators may participate, at no cost, in Keys to Literacy. Space is limited, so registration is open to first time enrollees. Contact IDOE's Literacy Center with any questions.

REMINDER: Early Literacy Professional Development Approval and Praxis Voucher Request

Educators who need to submit a request to verify completion of an approved 80 hours can continue to follow the process outlined here. Educators requesting a one-time Praxis voucher can follow the same process, based on availability. Educators must schedule their exam within six months of receiving their voucher. Once the professional development has been approved, IDOE will issue a confirmation letter that will be used by the educator to complete the early literacy endorsement application in LVIS. An FAQ with additional information regarding the early literacy endorsement can be found here, and we will continue to include additional questions and answers as they arise. Contact IDOE's Literacy Center with any questions.

REMINDER: Preferred Reading Screener Office Hours Recording and Upcoming Sessions

Those unable to attend the recent September Office Hours for Acadience Kindergarten-Grade Six Reading can now access the Beginning-of-Year presentation slides and recording.

The final session of the Acadience Kindergarten-Grade Six Reading: Data-Driven Literacy Instruction series, "Data and Mid-Year Readiness," will be held on Wednesday, December 9, from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. ET. Register for the live session. Contact IDOE's Literacy Center with any questions.

Office of School Finance

REMINDER: Membership Conflict Petition Process

Please read this memo regarding the membership conflict petition process. Friday, November 6, is the deadline for a school corporation or charter school to file a petition. Contact IDOE's Office of School Finance with any questions.

Office of Special Education, English Learning, and Migrant Education

NEW: Updated Spread the Word on Early Childhood Transition

The updated document, Spread the Word: Preparation for Transition from First Steps, now includes instructions related to transition conferences in Special Programs. Local education agencies (LEAs) must document their attendance and participation in transition conferences. Following the October release, there will be a grace period for LEAs to train their staff on proper documentation. Annual fall monitoring will begin in fall 2027 and will include transition conferences beginning in January 2027. Questions about the upcoming requirements can be sent to specialeducation@doe.in.gov. LEAs may also join an optional virtual office hour on Wednesday, October 28, from 3 to 4 p.m. ET.

REMINDER: Virtual WIDA Workshop - Exploring WIDA ACCESS for Kindergarten on Thursday, November 12

IDOE's English Learning and Multilingual Education team is hosting a virtual workshop, facilitated by WIDA, titled *Exploring WIDA ACCESS for Kindergarten*. This workshop will support educators in understanding the WIDA ACCESS for Kindergarten assessment by reviewing its new and updated features. The supplementary Canvas component to this live webinar will provide helpful links,

documents, and resources to support test administration. The session will occur Thursday, November 12, from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m. ET. Registration via Jotform is required and limited to three individuals per district. For more information, view the Indiana EL Professional Development (PD) Opportunities Calendar. Contact IDOE's Office of English Learning and Multilingual Education with questions.

REMINDER: Virtual Transition to Kindergarten Summit

Please join us on Wednesday, November 4, from 1 to 2:30 p.m. ET for our annual Virtual Transition to Kindergarten Summit, presented in collaboration with the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration's Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning and the Head Start State Collaboration Office. You'll hear from nationally renowned expert Laura Bornfreund and a panel of Hoosier educators who will share insights, strategies, and promising practices to support strong kindergarten transitions across Indiana. Before attending, we invite you to complete IDOE's Kindergarten Model and Self-Assessment to maximize your experience. Learn more and register to attend on the Transition Summit Flyer. Contact IDOE's Office of Assessment with questions or for more information.

REMINDER: Virtual English Learner (EL) Leadership Meeting

IDOE's Office of English Learning and Multilingual Education will host a virtual EL Leadership Meeting on Thursday, October 29, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. ET. This meeting is intended for Indiana K-12 EL leaders and administrators. The first two hours will include updates and interactive content on timely EL topics. The final hour will be reserved as an open Q&A session for attendees who wish to remain online for additional support. This session will be held in Microsoft Teams, and registration is required to receive the meeting link. For more information and the link to register, view the Indiana EL PD Opportunities Calendar. Contact IDOE's Office of English Learning and Multilingual Education with any questions.

Office of Title Grants and Support

REMINDER: Learning Lab Technical Assistance (TA) Collection

Recent coffee chat and quarterly meeting recordings are now available through the Indiana Learning Lab's Federal Programs: Coffee Chats and Quarterly Meetings Collection. Please contact TitleI@doe.in.gov with any questions.

REMINDER: October Coffee Chat

Join IDOE's Title Grants and Support team for the October Coffee Chat at 10 a.m. ET on Thursday, October 29, for an informative session regarding grant closeout processes. The session will be recorded and shared in the Indiana Learning Lab. Please ensure attendees register here as there will not be a regular meeting link. Contact TitleI@doe.in.gov with any questions.

News from Our Partners

NEW FROM PURDUE UNIVERSITY: 2027 Indiana STEM Education Conference

Join fellow STEM educators at Purdue University on January 14, 2027, for a full day of learning, strategies, effective STEM lessons, and connection. Enjoy an engaging keynote from award-winning science educator Rick Crosslin, choose from more than 60 breakout sessions, and earn professional growth points with lunch and refreshments included. Register by Wednesday, December 10, to get the early registration rate. Learn more about the Indiana STEM Education Conference and register here. Contact Dr. Bill Walker with any questions.

NEW FROM INDIANA CONNECTED EDUCATORS: Coach Con

Indiana Connected Educators will host their annual Coach Con on Monday, December 7, at the Center Grove Innovation Center in Greenwood. This free event invites innovators from across the state to network, share ideas, collaborate with peers, and attend sessions that are curated by attendees. Please complete the Coach Con registration form to register and contact the Indiana Connected Educators Board with any questions.

NEW FROM KEEP INDIANA LEARNING (A DEPARTMENT OF CIESC): KINLCon is Back

Keep Indiana Learning invites K-12 educators and school leaders to save the date for KINLCon which will take place June 9-10, 2027, at Plainfield High School. The Central Indiana Educational Service Center's (CIESC) flagship summer conference is ideal for school leadership teams, instructional coaches, and classroom teachers, offering cross-disciplinary, high-impact sessions and networking opportunities centered on evidence-based instructional practices. Formal registration will open later this year. Join the early-interest notification list today to receive priority event updates and

upcoming call-for-proposal details directly in your inbox. Contact Keep Indiana Learning with any questions.

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Weekly Updates

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