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INDIANA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Dr. Jenner's Weekly Update

Weekly Newsletter from the Indiana Department of Education

January 16, 2026

A Message from Dr. Katie Jenner

To kick off the new year, we took a look back at just a few of the [highlights of 2025](#). The beginning of a new year is also prime time to consider our priorities and set goals for the year ahead.

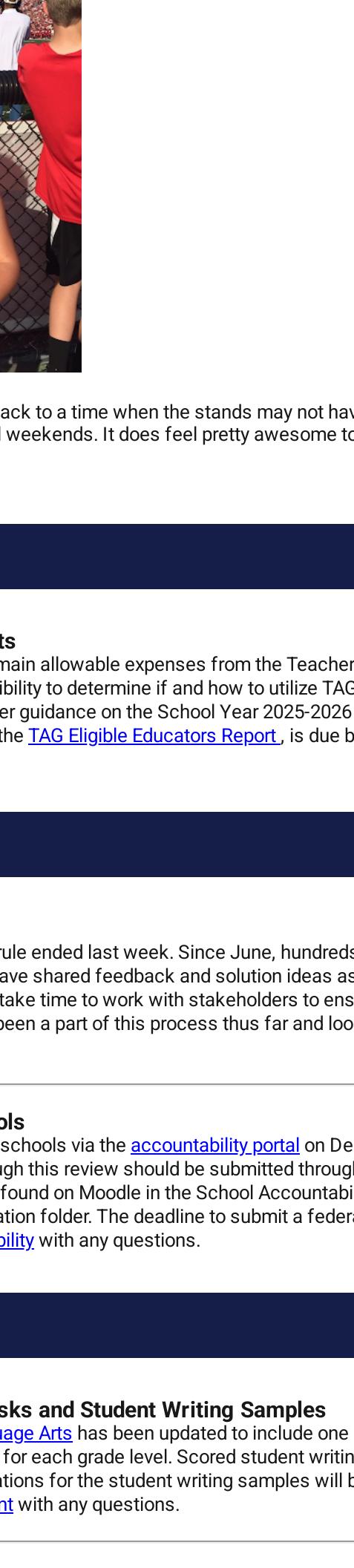
Thanks to your local leadership, Indiana has real momentum as we start the new year...and together, we're driving real progress. Our shared work continues to focus on preparing every Hoosier student with the knowledge, skills, and real-world experiences they need to be successful, regardless of their next steps after high school. This means continuing to elevate the five characteristics of an [Indiana Graduate Prepared to Succeed](#), which have guided our shared work since 2021, including...

- Academic mastery;
- Career and postsecondary readiness (credentials and experience);
- Communication and collaboration;
- Work ethic; and
- Civic, financial, and digital literacy.

As we look ahead to 2026, here are just a few of the priorities we're tackling together, which directly align to these five key characteristics that Hoosiers value most:

- **Accelerating Literacy** – We've seen significant growth, including an unprecedented nearly 5 percentage point jump in third grade literacy in 2025, as well as rising to sixth in the nation in fourth grade reading. We will build on this in 2026 by continuing to expand training in science of reading practices and implementing a new outcomes-based model for middle school literacy—where vendors are only paid when students make real gains. [Newly announced investments to support our work](#):
 - \$10 million from Lilly Endowment to allow more schools serving students in kindergarten through fifth grade the opportunity to participate in the impactful Indiana literacy Cadre
 - \$5 million from Lilly Endowment to support evidence-based reading interventions for students in grades six through eight
 - [Just announced](#): Approximately \$10 million from the U.S. Department of Education to expand high-impact literacy tutoring in partnership with the University of Notre Dame
- **Strengthening STEM Pathways** – Through high-quality STEM education, students are developing the knowledge and skills necessary for success in life and in our most high-demand careers, including preparing students for the ever-evolving technology and artificial intelligence impacts. [Newly announced investments to support our shared work](#):
 - \$1 million from Lilly Endowment to support the implementation of a statewide STEM Landscape Analysis across both K-12 and higher education. This landscape analysis will help us to better understand current STEM assets and opportunities, identify best practices for STEM education from around the country and world, as well as develop recommendations for improving STEM education in Indiana.
- **Expanding Student Tutoring Support** – Research has shown the value of small group, intentional tutoring to support students in achieving their goals. [Indiana Learns](#), families can continue to access \$1,000 tutoring grants for students who need extra help. We're also expanding free or low-cost summer learning opportunities through the [Indiana Summer Learning Labs](#). [Newly announced investments to support our shared work](#):
 - \$5 million from Lilly Endowment to support continued investment in Indiana Learns, providing microgrants for individualized, high-quality reading and math tutoring and enrichment, regardless of a family's ability to pay
 - \$15 million from Lilly Endowment to strategically scale and strengthen the statewide infrastructure of the Summer Learning Labs over the next two years
- **Enhancing Career Coaching** – Whether a student has goals of attending college, going straight into a career, or joining our nation's military, it is key that they are supported in exploring various opportunities, aligning their goals, and building a plan to get there. [Newly announced investments to support our shared work](#):
 - \$500,000 from Lilly Endowment to support an evaluation of career advising in the state and the design of next-generation tools and strategies to help students identify and explore a variety of careers.
- **Connecting Students to What's Next** – This year will be the first graduating cohort with students having the opportunity to earn the new Indiana diploma and readiness seals. As we push closer to statewide implementation, we're continuing – with urgency – to increase connections between schools and employers to expand work-based learning and apprenticeships and ensure the skills students gain align with credentials that hold real value in today's economy.
 - Through Indiana iLab, employers across the state continue to partner with educators to build Indiana's [new career apprenticeship pathway](#). This will allow students to meet graduation requirements while gaining meaningful real-world experience.

Again, this is just a *brief* highlight of our priorities ahead in 2026. As always, thank you for all that you do for our students. Let's keep our foot on the gas pedal in 2026!



Legislative Guidance

REMINDER: School Year 2025-2026 Teacher Appreciation Grants

Proposed House Bill 1266 includes clarifying language that FICA and TRF remain allowable expenses from the Teacher Appreciation Grant (TAG) appropriation. Each school corporation has the flexibility to determine if and how to utilize TAG distributions for FICA and TRF expenses associated with the stipends. Further guidance on the School Year 2025-2026 Teacher Appreciation Grant (TAG) can be found [here](#). The TAG Application, including the [TAG Eligible Educators Report](#), is due by Friday, January 30. Questions may be directed to [TAG@doe.in.gov](#).

Office of Accountability

NEW: School Accountability Rule Update

The most recent public comment period on the future school accountability rule ended last week. Since June, hundreds of Hoosiers, including educators, parents/families, and community members have shared feedback and solution ideas as part of this collaborative process. The Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) will take time to work with stakeholders to ensure we have the best possible model for Indiana. We appreciate everyone who has been a part of this process thus far and look forward to continuing to work together!

REMINDER: 2025 Federal Accountability Now Available to all Schools

2025 Federal accountability was released in an embargoed form to all public schools via the [accountability portal](#) on December 19, 2025, which started the review period. Any issues that are identified through this review should be submitted through a data audit. Information regarding submitting a federal accountability audit can be found on Moodle in the School Accountability & Accreditation Community in the Federal Accountability System/Audit Information folder. The deadline to submit a federal accountability audit is Friday, January 23. Contact IDOE's [Office of Accountability](#) with any questions.

Office of Assessment

NEW: ILEARN English/Language Arts Released Performance Tasks and Student Writing Samples

DOE's collection of [Released ILEARN Performance Tasks for English/Language Arts](#) has been updated to include one example each for writing performance (persuasive/argumentative, informative, and narrative) for each grade level. Scored student writing samples for each performance task have also been updated. Scoring annotations for the student writing samples will be updated by the end of February. Contact IDOE's [Office of Student Assessment](#) with any questions.

NEW: ILEARN Educator Hand Scoring Applications Open Now

Educators interested in scoring written student responses for the ILEARN 3-8 Spring 2026 administration can apply to be hand scorers through Tuesday, March 17, by submitting the [application](#). This is a paid opportunity. Educators will use rubrics and criteria to score student ILEARN responses with the hand scoring vendor, Data Recognition Corporation (DRC), and staffing partner, BCFwd. Refer to the [Indiana Educator Scoring Opportunity Flyer](#) and [Indiana Educator Scoring Opportunity FAQ](#) for more information. For any additional questions, please contact the [Indiana Assessment Help Desk](#).

NEW: ILEARN Checkpoint School Leader Toolkit and Data Videos Now Available

The ILEARN Checkpoint [School Leader Toolkit](#) and [data video series](#) are now available on the [Indiana Learning Lab](#) within the [Learning & Assessment Hub](#). This toolkit is designed to support school leaders in preparing for, administering, and responding to the ILEARN checkpoints. The ILEARN Checkpoint data video series includes guidance about the available data points, a demonstration of how users can view and extract data, answers to commonly asked questions, and sample Individual Student Reports (ISRs). Contact IDOE's [Office of Student Assessment](#) with any questions.

REMINDER: 2026 Advanced Placement (AP) Exam Fee Reduction Policy

The 2026 AP Exam Fee Reduction Policy is now posted on [APCentral](#). Review the policy and identify students who are eligible for the [AP Exam fee reduction](#). Fee reduction status is indicated only once per student, not for each exam. It is recommended to begin this process now. Visit [AP Exam Fee Reduction](#) or refer to the [2025-26 AP Coordinator's Manual Part 1](#), for details about the AP Fee Reduction Policy (pages 27-30) and how to indicate student fee reduction status in AP Registration and Ordering (page 96). Contact IDOE's [Office of Student Assessment](#) with any questions.

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

NEW: Nominations Open for the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program

The U.S. Presidential Scholars Program recognizes and honors outstanding high school seniors and encourage high attainment among all students. This [memo](#) outlines the required qualifications and nomination process, as well as contains links for the general, career, and technical education (CTE), and arts applications. Nominations must be submitted by 11:45 p.m. ET on Sunday, January 25, to be considered. Contact IDOE's [Office of Curriculum and Instruction](#) with any questions.

Office of Education Technology

UPDATE: Special Education Data Certification Wrap Up

Indiana's data certification for the 2025-2026 school year has been completed. The Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) has now issued the final data certification for the 2025-2026 school year. This is the final step in the process of certifying data for the 2025-2026 school year.

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REMINDER: Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) Indiana Learning & Migrant Education

Indiana's [Office of Indiana Learning & Migrant Education](#) will host the next virtual EL Meeting Wednesday, March 14, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. ET. This meeting is intended for Indiana K-12 EL staff, including Administrators and Professionals and Devil's Advocate.

NEW: 2026 Indiana Academic Standards for World Language Now Available

The Indiana State Board of Education (SBOE) approved updated K-12 Indiana Academic Standards for World Language (Classical Modern, East Asian, Heritage Language, American Sign Language, and K-12 American Sign Language) per the regularly scheduled standards revision cycle pursuant to Indiana Code 20-31-3-2. All updated standards are now accessible on [IDOE's Indiana Academic Standards webpage](#). IDOE extends special thanks to all educators who served as committee reviewers and the Indiana School for the Deaf for their partnership throughout this process, as well as everyone who participated in the public comment process. Contact IDOE's [Office of Curriculum and Instruction](#) with any questions.

NEW: Guidance for Schools Seeking Approval to Offer Nonstandard Courses

In response to educator feedback, this new [guidance](#) document explains IDOE's Nonstandard Course Waiver Request (NCWR) process. This guidance also helps clarify the available flexibility for schools offering IDOE-approved courses and navigating the new high school diploma landscape. Contact IDOE's [Office of Curriculum and Instruction](#) with any questions.

Office of School and Community Nutrition

NEW: School Absentee Rate

As a reminder, the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) requires all public schools to report the percentage of students absent from school for the entire year. This data is used to calculate the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) School Absentee Rate. The Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) will use this data to calculate the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) School Absentee Rate.

NEW: Register for Middle School Advanced Mathematics Auto-Enrollment Office Hours

IDOE will host office hours from noon to 1 p.m. ET on Thursday, January 29, for counselors and administrators serving students in grades six through eight. This live session will include a brief overview of the legislation related to middle school advanced mathematics auto-enrollment and the latest guidance, followed by time for Q&A. Use this [link](#) to register. Contact IDOE's [Office of Curriculum and Instruction](#) with any questions.

NEW: Middle School Advanced Mathematics Course Auto-Enrollment FAQ Updates

The [frequently asked questions](#) document released in the November 21, 2025, [memo](#) relates to middle school advanced mathematics auto-enrollment has been updated. The updated document includes specific guidance on student placement, educator licensing, course structure, high school credit policies, and key timelines for upcoming support and resources. Contact IDOE's [Office of Curriculum and Instruction](#) with any questions.

REMINDER: Advancing K-12 Mathematics for Indiana Students Overview

IDOE's Office of Curriculum and Instruction and Office of Student Assessment continue to collaborate with educators, administrators, higher education partners, and other stakeholders to advance evidence-based mathematics instruction and improve student learning at all grade levels. To keep schools and corporations informed, this [two-page overview](#) highlights current and upcoming mathematics initiatives, legislative updates, and available supports designed to ensure every student develops strong mathematical proficiency and achieves success. Contact IDOE's [Office of Curriculum and Instruction](#) with any questions.

REMINDER: Participants Needed for Indiana's K-12 Social Studies Standards Revision Committees

Indiana's [Office of Indiana Learning & Migrant Education](#) will host the next virtual Social Studies Standards Revision Committee meeting on Friday, January 26, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. ET. This meeting is intended for Indiana K-12 Social Studies Standards Revision Committees. IDOE will review and submit this [form](#) and select participants to represent on several criteria (e.g., teaching, content expertise, current role, student population served) with the help of the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) and Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) staff.

REMINDER: PRIME Math Course Informational Webinar to Teach the Postsecondary Ready Investigative Mathematics Experience (PRIME) Math course for 2025-2026

PRIME Math Course for 2025-2026 is now available on the [Indiana Learning Lab](#). This informational webinar will provide an overview of the PRIME Math course for 2025-2026. The PRIME Math course is designed to prepare students for college-level mathematics courses. The PRIME Math course is a research-based, inquiry-based, and problem-solving mathematics course that emphasizes mathematical reasoning and problem solving. The PRIME Math course is aligned with the Indiana Academic Standards for Mathematics and the Indiana College and Career Readiness Standards for Mathematics. The PRIME Math course is designed to prepare students for college-level mathematics courses. The PRIME Math course is a research-based, inquiry-based, and problem-solving mathematics course that emphasizes mathematical reasoning and problem solving. The PRIME Math course is aligned with the Indiana Academic Standards for Mathematics and the Indiana College and Career Readiness Standards for Mathematics. 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