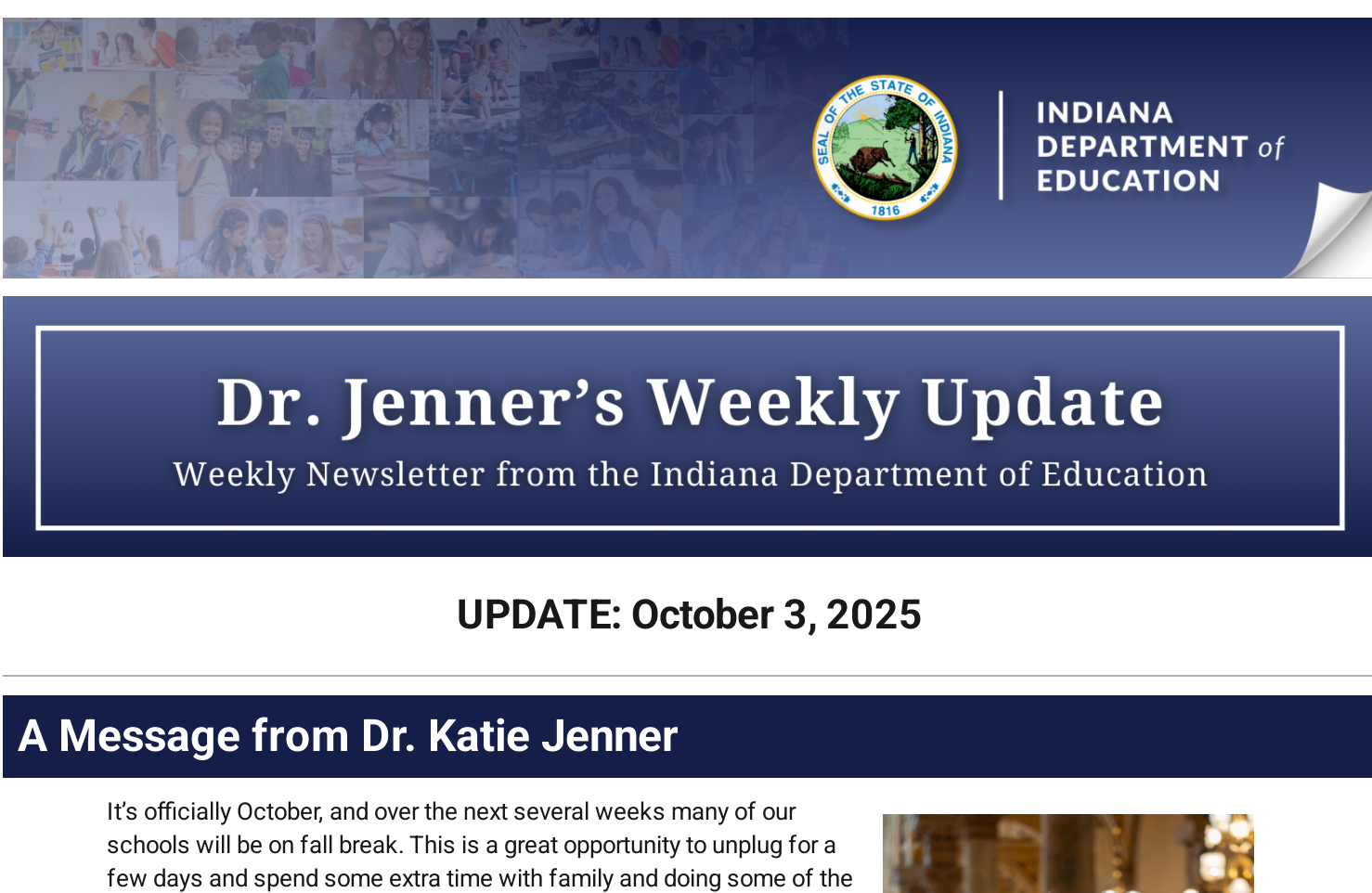


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UPDATE: October 3, 2025

A Message from Dr. Katie Jenner

It's officially October, and over the next several weeks many of our schools will be on fall break. This is a great opportunity to unplug for a few days and spend some extra time with family and doing some of the things that you love. I hope each of you take that time and return refreshed and ready to tackle the second half of the semester!

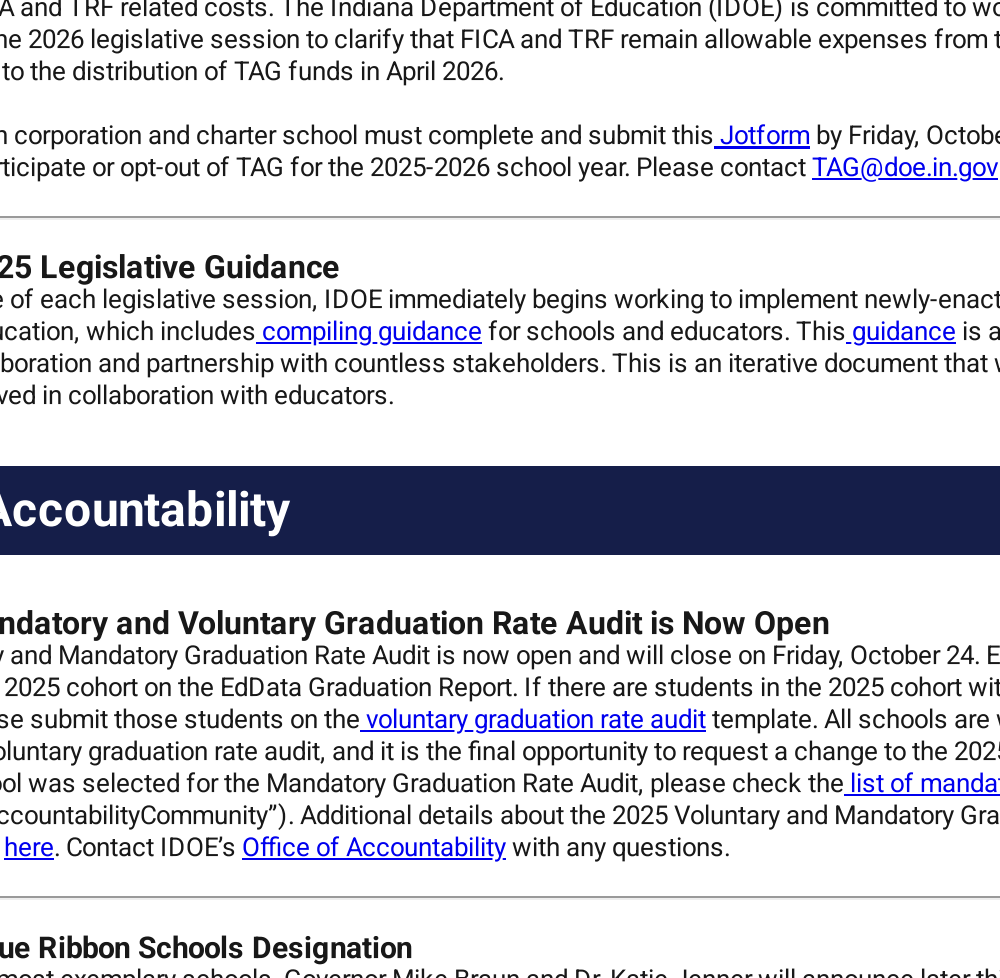
In last week's message, I mentioned that the official Indiana Teacher of the Year announcement was coming soon. It's an honor that not only celebrates the individual teacher, but also all of our educators who dedicate their lives to making it better for our students.

Earlier this week, we announced that out of more than 65,000 teachers statewide, **Mrs. Megan Johnson** is our 2026 Indiana Teacher of the Year! Mrs. Johnson currently teaches fourth grade at Central Elementary School in Plainfield and has 18 years of teaching experience in upper elementary classrooms.

Mrs. Johnson has made it her mission to not only improve outcomes for the students in her classroom but to support her colleagues in doing the same for their students. You can hear the passion in her voice when she talks about the importance of preparing students for life beyond the classroom. She does this, first and foremost, by helping students master foundational literacy skills using the tools she proactively gained through her research and training in science of reading. She also encourages project-based learning as a way to help students hone their creativity, communication, collaboration, and critical thinking skills to help solve real-world problems.

Tuesday's celebration at Central Elementary School was really special for everyone involved. From her family near and far (a few flew in from Texas to be part of the surprise...a couple are actually teachers too!), to her current students...to the high school students who were once in her class and were there covering the celebration for their school newspaper...everyone was beaming with pride to see someone who has made such an impact on their lives celebrated in a BIG way. **It is clear: Mrs. Johnson is truly meant to be an educator.**

Check out the video of the surprise announcement below to hear more about Mrs. Johnson's impact.



Again, congratulations, Mrs. Johnson, and thank you for representing Indiana nationally!

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

NEW: 2025 Mandatory and Voluntary Graduation Rate Audit is Now Open

The 2025 Voluntary and Mandatory Graduation Rate Audit is now open and will close on Friday, October 24. Every high school should review their 2025 cohort on the EdData Graduation Report. If there are students in the 2025 cohort with an incorrect cohort status, please submit those students on the [voluntary graduation rate audit](#) template. All schools are welcome to participate in the voluntary graduation rate audit, and it is the final opportunity to request a change to the 2025 cohort. If you are unsure if your school was selected for the Mandatory Graduation Rate Audit, please check the [list of mandatory audit schools](#) (Enrollment key: "AccountabilityCommunity"). Additional details about the 2025 Voluntary and Mandatory Graduation Rate Audit can be found [here](#). Contact IDOE's [Office of Accountability](#) with any questions.

NEW: Indiana Blue Ribbon Schools Designation

To honor Indiana's most exemplary schools, Governor Mike Braun and Dr. Katie Jenner will announce later this month the honorees of the newly-established Indiana Blue Ribbon Schools designation. The schools will also be honored at this year's 4th annual Educational Excellence Awards Gala on Friday, November 21.

Office of Assessment

REMINDER: Optional Fall 2025 PSAT/NMSQT Testing Window Now Open

Indiana's optional Fall 2025 PSAT/NMSQT testing window is now open through Friday, October 31. The state of Indiana is directly billed for participating students who attend accredited Indiana schools in grades 10 and 11. 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. Additional information regarding the PSAT/NMSQT is outlined in this [memo](#). Contact the [Office of Student Assessment](#) with participation and policy questions and [College Board](#) with any technical questions.

REMINDER: Indiana Learning Lab Learning & Assessment Hub 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 be added once they are available. Contact the [Office of Student Assessment](#) with any questions.

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

NEW: Artificial Intelligence (AI) Platforms in Indiana Schools Series - On Demand

Eight sessions highlighting AI Platforms being used in Indiana schools are [now available on demand](#) in the Indiana Learning Lab. Each featured platform was selected by at least one corporation during recent grant opportunities and met IDOE's vendor requirements. Contact IDOE's [Digital Learning Team](#) with any questions.

REMINDER: 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. On Tuesday, September 30, IDOE's STEM Certification team hosted an informational webinar in the Indiana Learning Lab which can be viewed using this [link](#). Contact stemcertification@doe.in.gov with any questions.

Office of Educator Talent and the Literacy Center

NEW: Monthly Data Interpretation Office Hours - Acadience Reading Preferred Universal Screener

Acadience Learning, Inc. will host monthly office hours this fall to support school leaders and educators as they interpret the data from the state's preferred screener. Office hours will begin at 10:30 a.m. ET and are scheduled for Wednesday, October 15, Wednesday, November 19, and Wednesday, December 10. Click [here](#) to join. Learn more by visiting the Indiana Acadience webpage [here](#). Contact IDOE's [Literacy Center](#) with any questions.

NEW: Free Recruitment & Hiring Resources Through IDOE/Nimble Partnership

IDOE is excited to continue our partnership with Nimble to provide Indiana schools with free access to Nimble's applicant tracking system and access to post on the statewide job board, used by more than 100,000 job seekers annually. We have also expanded the engagement to further support schools in their teacher recruitment efforts. New in 2026, all schools will have access to a premium recruiting service that delivers high-quality candidates looking for teaching positions in your area. To learn more, [register for an informational webinar](#) on Tuesday, October 28 at 3 p.m. ET. You can also [schedule a call](#) with our partners at Nimble or contact the [Office of Educator Talent](#) with any questions.

Office of Information Technology

REMINDER: 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 offers 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: Support for Accurate October Data Certification

The October Certification Dashboard is now available to all 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 and Community Nutrition

Notification from the U.S. Department of Agriculture

IDOE received the following [notice](#) on Wednesday, October 1, from USDA. We will continue to share additional information as we receive it from USDA.

Office of School Finance

NEW: Certification Deadline is Friday, October 10

School personnel should be checking their data regularly in preparation for sign-off next week. 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 need assistance.

Office of Student Pathways and Opportunities

UPDATE: Alternative Education New Program Proposal Submissions for the 2026-2027 School Year

The submission window for Alternative Education New Program Proposals for operation in the 2026-2027 school year that do not have a currently approved alternative education program is now open through March 31, 2026. The proposal link can be found [here](#), under Documents and Resources. Currently approved alternative education programs that wish to establish a new alternative education program should consult with the IDOE's Alternative Education Team for guidance. Contact the IDOE's [Alternative Education Team](#) with any questions.

Office of School Support & Transformation

REMINDER: School Improvement Plans

Today is the final day for schools federally designated under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to submit the following:

- Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) schools must upload their CNA/SIP via the Link Portal under the School Improvement title.
- 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.

For questions 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

REMINDER: Multilingual Learner Data Exchange (DEX-LM) Counts Captured on October 1

The Multilingual Learner Report in Learn Report (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. The certification window is open through Friday, October 10 at 4 p.m. ET, allowing LEAs to submit additional data and address errors and exclusions. Schools can run their validations manually in DEX through Monday, October 6. Beginning Tuesday, October 7, a new validation can only be processed by making a request to IDOE. 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: Certificate of Multilingual Proficiency (CoMP) Informational Meeting

Indiana's Certificate of Multilingual Proficiency (CoMP) benefits secondary multilingual students by validating their fluency across multiple languages. To learn more, join the IDOE English Learner team for an informational webinar on Tuesday, October 7, from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. ET. Participation, implementation, and guidance updates will be discussed. No registration is required, and the access link can be found on the [Indiana EL Professional Development Opportunities Calendar](#). More information can be found on the [IDOE CoMP webpage](#). Contact IDOE's [Office of English Learning and Migrant Education](#) with any questions.

REMINDER: Monthly New English Learner Director PLC on Tuesday, October 14

New directors of English learner programs are invited to join IDOE in an ongoing Professional Learning Community (PLC) during the 2025-2026 school year. This is a place to network with other stakeholders, access timely program information, and bring questions. The first session of the year will be held on Tuesday, October 14 at 9:30 AM ET. The meeting link and information can be found on the [EL PD Opportunities Calendar](#). Please contact IDOE's [Office of English Learning and Migrant Education](#) with questions.

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 posted 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.

Office of Title Grants and Support

NEW: October Coffee Chat

Join the Title Grants and Support team on Thursday, October 30, at 10 a.m. ET for the October Coffee Chat. October's topic will cover best practices in completing Final Expenditure Reports (FER). Please join us via Microsoft Teams [here](#), and forward this link to necessary stakeholders within your district. Please contact TitleI@doe.in.gov with any questions.

REMINDER: October 1 Count Certification

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 no later than Friday, October 7. If any discrepancies are found, please work with your LEA's DEX Data Manager on corrections.

REMINDER: 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.

REMINDER: 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: 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 the shutdown lasts for an extended period, IDOE will re-evaluate the situation, along with our state-level partners, and will notify schools accordingly.

Indiana Commission for Higher Education

REMINDER: 2026-2027 FAFSA Now Open

The 2026-2027 FAFSA form is officially open for students and their parents at [studentaid.gov](#). This is the earliest launch in FAFSA history. 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](#). The [2026-2027 FAFSA opt-out waiver](#) can be found on CHE's website.

News From Our Partners

NEW FROM VAPE FREE INDIANA: New Vape Waste Resource for Schools

The Indiana Vape Waste Group is excited to share a new resource for schools to help address vape (e-cigarette) waste on school grounds. This resource is for school operations staff and will help guide schools in safer handling, storage, and disposal of vape waste. There is also a short survey for Indiana middle and high schools to better understand school needs on this topic. Please complete the survey by Friday, October 24. The resource and survey can be accessed [here](#). If you have any questions, please contact the Indiana Department of Health, Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Division at VapeFreeIndiana@health.in.gov.

NEW FROM THE INDIANA STATE MUSEUM: Night at the Boo Bash

Night at the Boo Bash returns on Friday, October 10. Fred the Mastodon and his friends are hosting their annual Halloween party at the museum and you're invited! Bring your family and friends and dress in your most creative costume for a chance to win a grand prize. Gear up for a spooky-tacular night of dancing, candy, and fun activities for all ages like light play, a scream booth, and a special spooky science show with mad scientist, Connie Fusion! For more information, click [here](#).

NEW FROM THE EAST CENTRAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICE CENTER (ECESC): Low-Cost Elementary Math Cohort Professional Learning Series

Elevate math learning in your classroom! The East Central Educational Service Center (ECESC) is excited to launch the Elementary Math Instruction Cohort, a three-session professional learning series designed specifically for elementary educators. This unique opportunity will equip you with practical strategies to foster a positive math culture, enhance student engagement, and drive academic success. Don't miss the chance for your staff to be part of this impactful experience. Learn more [here](#).

REMINDER 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 Lembeke. Dr. Lembeke 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.

REMINDER FROM THE INDIANA CTO COUNCIL and IAPSS: The Candice Dodson EdTech Trailblazer Award Open for Nominations

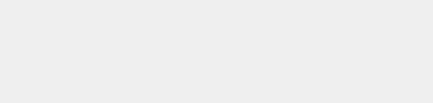
The Indiana CTO Council is honored to partner with IAPSS to present the Candice Dodson EdTech Trailblazer Award, sponsored by CDW. We're inviting you to nominate a Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent who has championed innovation and empowered others through technology. Nominations are open until November 10, 2025, and the award will be presented at the IAPSS Annual Meeting in December. [Nominate Here!](#)

REMINDER FROM THE HOOSIER EDUCATIONAL COMPUTER COORDINATORS (HECC): Awards Now Open for Nominations/2025 Conference

Each year, the Hoosier Educational Computer Coordinators (HECC) organization recognizes one individual in K-12 education who demonstrates a strong commitment to technology leadership and enhancing learning for students and staff. We encourage you to nominate your school's or district's technology leader for the HECC 2025 Technology Coordinator of the Year award. Nominations will be accepted until 5:00 PM on October 10, 2025. Please note that nominations must be submitted by a co-worker or supervisor of the technology leader within the district. [Nominate Here!](#)

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. If chosen, your nominee will be recognized at the annual HECC conference in November and given a certificate along with a special award. Nominations will be accepted until 5:00 PM EST on October 10, 2025. [Nominate Here!](#)

The [2025 HECC Conference](#) is coming to Indianapolis on November 5-7, 2025! We're excited to welcome educators, technology leaders, and innovators from across the state and beyond for three incredible days of learning, networking, and inspiration. This year, every attendee who registers and attends 2-3 days of the conference will present a free Skylight Calendar—a smart digital display that keeps you and your team organized. Secure your spot today: [Register Here](#)



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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