



INDIANA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

INDIANA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

October 28, 2015
9:00 a.m. (EDT)

Indiana Statehouse
Room 223
200 West Washington Street
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Board Members Present: Superintendent Glenda Ritz (Chair), Dr. Vince Bertram, Dr. Byron Ernest, Dr. David Freitas, Mr. Gordon Hendry, Mr. Edward Melton (by phone), Ms. Cari Whicker, and Dr. Steven Yager.

Board Members Absent: Mrs. Sarah O'Brien (Vice Chair), Ms. Lee Ann Kwiatkowski, and Mr. B.J. Watts.

I. CALL TO ORDER

- Superintendent Ritz called the meeting to order, the pledge of allegiance was recited, and roll was called. The roll reflected a quorum present with Mrs. Sarah O'Brien (Vice Chair), Ms. Lee Ann Kwiatkowski, and Mr. B.J. Watts absent.

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- Superintendent Ritz asked to move the high school diploma discussion issue ahead of the action item setting ISTEP+ cut scores. The Board approved the revised agenda by assent.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- None

IV. STATEMENT OF THE CHAIR

- Superintendent Ritz stated she looked forward to working with the Governor and Legislative leaders to take advantage of federal flexibility for Indiana's school accountability and teacher evaluation systems for the 2014-15 school year.

V. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS AND REPORTS

- None

VI. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT (public comments on specific agenda items are taken at the time each item is before the Board)

- Larry Vaughn, citizen, offered comments about minority children and education.

VII. BEST PRACTICES – INNOVATIONS IN EDUCATION – STUDENT SUCCESSES

- None

VIII. CONSENT AGENDA

- None

IX. ADJUDICATIONS

- None

XI. DISCUSSION AND REPORTS (*taken out of order*)**A. High School Diplomas to be implemented for 2018-2019 School Year**

- Jason Bearce, Associate Commissioner with the Commission for Higher Education and Jenny Berry, Director of College and Career Readiness at the Department of Education, made a [presentation](#) to the Board on proposed changes to Indiana's high school diploma requirements for matriculating freshmen beginning in the 2018-19 school year.
- Superintendent Ritz informed the Board that she and fellow Co-Chair, Commissioner Teresa Lubbers, are reconvening the Core 40 Subcommittee of the Indiana Career Council, that originally developed the diploma proposals, on Friday to discuss testimony heard during the meeting and take necessary action.

- Mr. Hendry thanked members of the public who contacted him concerning the diploma proposals. He questioned the requirement of two credits in physical education, but no requirement for any credits in world language or fine arts. Ms. Berry responded that world language is encouraged for any student seeking a four-year degree.
- Dr. Bertram inquired about whether the physical education requirement is a reaction to the state's obesity rate. Mr. Bearce said the requirement does not likely reduce the state's obesity rate but sends a message to young people about the importance of physical activity. He also said that many subject areas are important, but diploma requirements must balance what is important and what is required in order to maintain student flexibility. Dr. Bertram continued by asking if requirements were tempered by staff availability at schools. Mr. Bearce said that teacher availability did play a role in the recommendations. Dr. Bertram asked how the new math requirements would impact students who take advanced math courses in middle school. Ms. Berry responded that students would still be encouraged to take advanced math in middle school but would still be required to take math during each of their four years in high school.
- Dr. Yager, a former physical education teacher, mentioned that today's physical education courses "are not your father's P.E. class." He urged caution in just adding credits rather than focusing on content and rigor. He mentioned the many concerns voiced about these diploma proposals regarding special education and fine arts. He also urged the Board to consider the fact that these new requirements would force schools to hire more math teachers.
- Dr. Freitas stated his support for the inclusion of character education in these new requirements. He mentioned that 18 states require character education in their curriculum and 18 other states encourage it. Mr. Bearce said character education is a key component of preparing for college/career class. Dr. Freitas encouraged the Board to take a leadership position on character education and not leave it to chance whether it is included in other course descriptions or not.
- Dr. Bertram asked if a special education student who receives a certificate of completion can check the box on a job application that they have a high school diploma. Ms. Berry said they could not.

- Commissioner Lubbers told the Board the process to develop these proposals was very inclusive and open. The committee attempted to weigh many of the concerns that have been and will be raised. She said the committee took very seriously the need to balance what is required knowledge and student flexibility.

The Board took a short recess.

- Superintendent Ritz opened the floor to those who signed up to make public comment on the diploma proposals.
- Kevin Gerrity, President of the Indiana Music Education Association, spoke to the Board about the need to include Fine Arts as a requirement for the College and Career Ready Diploma. He also spoke to the need to decouple Fine Arts from cultural education stating that music can be tied to nearly all academic areas. He mentioned two studies that linked arts to improved overall academic performance and cognitive learning.
- Beatrice Joyce, parent of a Kindergarten student with Down syndrome, told the Board she hopes her daughter will be able to earn a diploma and receive the skills to function as an independent adult. She urged the Board to take into consideration the needs of special needs students when developing new diploma requirements and keeping the option of a general diploma.
- Chris Himsel, Superintendent of Northwest Allen County Schools, voiced his concern about contradictions between the information provided concerning the diplomas and information received from the Department of Education. He questioned the impact of college and career sequences on Fine Arts and special education students. He also raised concerns about students who begin high school on a college and career sequence but later change their interest to another sequence. He encouraged the Board to rename the Certificate of Completion.
- Dr. Bertram asked Superintendent Ritz if she thought the college and career sequences would be broadly defined. Superintendent Ritz responded they would be broadly defined to provide for student flexibility. Mr. Himsel said these

definitions lie at the heart of the contradictions he is receiving and educators want to see the details of these sequences as the process continues to develop.

- Chris Boots, parent, employer, and member of a South Madison school board, spoke to the importance of character education and Fine Arts. Dr. Bertram asked if South Madison Schools required fine arts beyond the state requirements. Mr. Boots said they did not.
- Mike McDivitt, Principal at Oak Hill High School, raised concerns about the two new courses required, increased math requirement and reduced emphasis of world languages. He mentioned the need to hire new staff, particularly math teachers, should these proposals be adopted. He also voiced his opposition to the removal of the general diploma requirement.
- Makayla Cooper, Purdue University engineering student, testified about her experiences in music and how it helped her educational progress and development as a young adult. Dr. Bertram praised Ms. Cooper for her accomplishments and commented that she and others elected to take Fine Arts classes, they were not required, and these diploma proposals would not eliminate a student's opportunity to take elective Fine Arts classes.
- Mrs. Whicker voiced her support for Fine Arts classes and that her son is taking classes outside the traditional school day in order to be able to take music and other types of classes. She spoke of the need of balance and providing options for students rather than requirements.
- Mr. Hendry noted the change in the honors degree is not about removing elective Fine Arts, but the removal of two credit Fine Arts requirements.
- Dr. Freitas suggested the possibility of two credits required for character education that could include Fine Arts.
- Tammy Hurm, representing Indiana Council of Administrators of Special Education (ICASE), voiced her support for legislatively mandating all schools to offer access to all diploma options. She introduced statistics about the percent of special education students that graduate with a diploma and what type of

diploma they receive. She also raised concerns of increased math requirements in the new diploma options and the reality that some schools may not have the resources to offer all math options.

- Tim McRoberts, Associate Director of Indiana Association of School Principals, shared the results of a survey with school administrators about the diploma proposals. He summarized the concerns in two areas: flexibility and communication. The group feels the added math requirements and sequences could limit opportunities for students and require additional staffing. He also said principals need details on the plans, sequences, course descriptions, and capstone requirements so they can begin to plan for the changes.
- Dr. Ernest raised concern about voting on proposals that are not well defined. Superintendent Ritz responded by saying the Department wants to define terms in broad ways that include current local practices. The same holds true about course definitions.
- Penny Dallen-Smith, parent of music students, said her students take courses online in the summer in order to have enough time to take music during the school day. She stressed that music and math complement each other as do higher test scores and college readiness. She said Fine Arts prepares young people for life, career and college.
- Nick Bridgewater, Executive Director of the Indiana State School Music Association (ISSMA), thanked the Board for preparing students for college and a career and invited Board members to the upcoming state marching band championships. He voiced concerns of the group to the elimination of the Fine Arts requirement from the academic honors diploma. He also worries added requirements will reduce students' opportunities to use electives for Fine Arts. Dr. Bertram asked Mr. Bridgewater if any schools in Indiana require Fine Arts beyond state minimums. Mr. Bridgewater replied that he was not aware of any school adding Fine Arts beyond the state minimum.
- Superintendent Ritz said the committee intentionally, based on public comment, merged the world language and Fine Arts credits into one of the optional pathways for students to earn the honors diploma.

- Dr. Ernest asked if these sequences would lock students into career paths. Superintendent Ritz said it was not the intention of the committee to lock students into career paths in high school, but to help give purpose in their selection of elective courses.
- Park Ginder, Principal of Homestead High School, raised concerns about lack of information about certain aspects of new diploma proposals, requirement that students make college/career choices at 14-16 years old, and lack of student/family choice in diploma options.
- Steve Baker, Principal at Bluffton High School, spoke about the statistics referencing the percent of students who require math remediation in college. He mentioned a 300% increase in the percent of graduates who attend college from the early 1970's. He said the number of students who need math remediation may not be caused by lack of math courses in high school, but the fact that more students who previously may not have enrolled in college are now seeking a college degree.
- Donna Schepers, Education Director at the Jasper Arts Center, spoke to the importance of the arts in education. She spoke against removing the arts requirement from the honors diploma and making it one option a student could pursue in earning that diploma.
- Mary Roth, parent of special education students, raised concerns about new diploma requirements and impact on children with autism. She spoke to the fact that many high schools don't offer a general diploma. She also raised concerns about the proposed names of the new diploma offerings.
- Kendra Smith, mother of a daughter with Down syndrome, urged the Board to keep the option of students earning a general diploma, rather than just a Certificate of Completion.
- Debby Ketron, representing the Indiana Association of Home Educators, is encouraged by the words of Commissioner Lubbers and Mr. Bearce that proposed diplomas would not negatively impact home educators. They raised

concerns about requirements of college and career ready sequences, use of AP course curriculum, and graduation capstone requirements.

- Todd Hitchcock raised concerns about the additional math requirements and lack of world language requirement in the honors diploma. He mentioned concerns about the impact of new rules that could reduce availability of dual-credit course options. He also urged future proposals to include principals, guidance counselors, and teachers in the committee process.
- Cheryl Clemens addressed concerns with the new diploma proposals as it relates to students with dyslexia. She said raising the requirements and removing the general diploma option places an obstacle on students with dyslexia wanting to graduate from high school with a diploma.
- Jeff Huffman, Chair of The Arc of Indiana Education Committee, urged the Board to keep the general diploma option. He called it key for many people to be able to get a job later in life.
- Kim Dodson, Executive Director of The Arc of Indiana, distributed a packet of information with concerns about the new diploma options for students with disabilities. She said the State is working to increase job opportunities for students with disabilities, but these diplomas would limit those options. She continued by saying employers want diplomas, not a Certificate of Completion.
- Superintendent Ritz commented that a student's high school transcript can prove, more than just a diploma, that the person has the skills to fill a position and be a good employee. She also stated the Department of Education is ready to do the necessary communications to employers to ask them to place emphasis on the transcript and not just a diploma.

The Board took a recess.

X. NEW BUSINESS – ACTION *(taken out of order)***A. ISTEP+ Standard Cut Score Setting**

- Dr. Michele Walker, Director of Assessment at the Department of Education, and Cynthia Roach, Sr. Director of Assessment and Accountability with the State Board of Education, presented the [cut score recommendations](#) to the Board.
- Superintendent Ritz made a motion to approve the cut score recommendations for English Language Arts and Math in grades 3-8 and add, as an action item during the November meeting, the recommendations about adjustments in student scores due to compatibility issues. Mr. Hendry seconded the motion.
- Mrs. Whicker asked whether there would be further information provided during the November meeting about the score adjustments. Dr. Walker and Ms. Roach said there would be another presentation on that topic during the November meeting and prior to the Board taking action.
- The Board voted unanimously 8-0 to approve the motion.
- Superintendent Ritz made a motion to approve the Performance Level Descriptors for English Language Arts and Math for Pass and Plus+.
- The Board voted unanimously 8-0 to approve the motion.
- Mr. Hendry thanked educators and leaders who are working together to help people understand the decline in ISTEP+ test scores. He also noted the release of NAEP scores that showed Indiana students scored 4th in the nation in 4th grade math in reading and 11th in 8th grade math. Hoosier students ranked 10th in 4th grade reading and 16th in 8th grade reading. All of those rankings were improvements from previous NAEP results. He continued that those results showed the positive things taking place in Indiana education.

XII. BOARD OPERATIONS

- Board operations not discussed.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

- Upon receiving a motion and second, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn by voice vote.