Members

Rep. Robert Behning, Co-Chairperson
Rep. Rhonda Rhoads
Rep. Timothy Brown
Rep. Edward Clere
Rep. David Frizzell
Rep. Kathleen Heuer
Rep. Cindy Noe
Rep. Jeffrey Thompson
Rep. Greg Porter
Rep. David Cheatham
Rep. Clyde Kersey
Rep. Vernon Smith
Rep. Shelli Vandenburgh
Sen. Dennis Kruse, Co-Chairperson
Sen. Carlin Yoder
Sen. James Banks
Sen. James Buck
Sen. Luke Kenley
Sen. Jean Leising
Sen. Scott Schneider
Sen. Earline Rogers
Sen. Frank Mrvan
Sen. Timothy Skinner

LSA Staff:

Allen Morford, Attorney for the Select Commission
Irma Reinumagi, Attorney for the Select Commission
Chuck Mayfield, Fiscal Analyst for the Select Commission
David Lusan, Fiscal Analyst for the Select Commission

Authority: P.L. 160-2012

SELECT COMMISSION ON EDUCATION

Legislative Services Agency
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Indianapolis, Indiana 46204-2789
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MEETING MINUTES[1]

Meeting Date:	**September 19, 2012**
Meeting Time:	**1:00 P.M.**
Meeting Place:	**State House, 200 W. Washington St., House Chamber**
Meeting City:	**Indianapolis, Indiana**
Meeting Number:	**9**

Members Present: **Rep. Robert Behning, Co-Chairperson; Rep. Rhonda Rhoads; Rep. Edward Clere; Rep. David Frizzell; Rep. Kathleen Heuer; Rep. Cindy Noe; Rep. Jeffrey Thompson; Rep. Greg Porter; Rep. David Cheatham; Rep. Shelli Vandenburgh; Sen. Dennis Kruse, Co-Chairperson; Sen. James Banks; Sen. James Buck; Sen. Jean Leising; Sen. Earline Rogers; Sen. Frank Mrvan; Sen. Timothy Skinner.**

Members Absent: **Rep. Timothy Brown; Rep. Clyde Kersey; Rep. Vernon Smith; Sen. Carlin Yoder; Sen. Luke Kenley; Sen. Scott Schneider.**

Co-Chairperson Kruse called the meeting to order at 1:12 p.m. and called upon the

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[1] These minutes, exhibits, and other materials referenced in the minutes can be viewed electronically at http://www.in.gov/legislative Hard copies can be obtained in the Legislative Information Center in Room 230 of the State House in Indianapolis, Indiana. Requests for hard copies may be mailed to the Legislative Information Center, Legislative Services Agency, West Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204-2789. A fee of $0.15 per page and mailing costs will be charged for hard copies.

members to introduce themselves.

Co-Chairperson Behning explained that the topic of the meeting, graduation waivers, arose out of an article in the Indianapolis Star that reported the Indianapolis Public Schools had a high percentage of students graduating through the waiver process. He called upon Will Krebs, Director of Policy and Research, Indiana Department of Education (DoE), to present information concerning graduation waivers and graduation rates.

Mr. Krebs explained that a graduation waiver can be granted to a student who has not passed the graduation examination, but meets other requirements for graduation. Under IC 20-32-4-4, to receive a waiver, a student must: (1) take the graduation exam at least once each year after the student takes it for the first time; (2) complete remediation opportunities provided by the school; (3) maintain at least a 95% attendance rate; (4) maintain at least a "C" average in courses required for graduation; and (5) satisfy all local and state graduation requirements. In addition, the student must either complete a sequence that demonstrates the student is ready for the workforce or receive recommendations from teachers, approved by the principal, that show the student has attained the necessary academic standards as shown by other tests or classroom work. Mr. Krebs also presented information concerning state-wide and school corporation graduation rates, including waiver rates. (Mr. Krebs' presentation is attached as Exhibit A; information concerning graduation rates and waivers from DoE is attached as Exhibit B.)

Dan Clark, Executive Director, Education Roundtable, pointed out that the requirement that a student pass the graduation exam or meet certain requirements to receive a waiver to graduate is statutory, and cannot be modified administratively by DoE. To receive a waiver a student must demonstrate mastery of course work, which may be a higher standard than passing a course; thus, a student who passes a course with a low grade may not be eligible to receive a waiver.

Tom Little, Superintendent, Metropolitan School District of Perry Township, Marion County, explained that Perry Township follows the statutory requirements for granting waivers. The waiver rate for Perry Township is over 15%, which is higher than the state average. Many of their waivers are granted to students who are English language learners or children in need of services.

Karyle Green, Superintendent, East Allen Schools, Fort Wayne, explained that East Allen has closed a high school that represented almost 75% of the waivers granted in the school corporation. (The school corporation has an overall waiver rate of less than 5%.) Like Perry Township, East Allen has had a large influx of students who are refugees from Burma and who speak no English; many of these students may need waivers to be able to graduate. They will be able to complete coursework, but may not be able to successfully complete graduation exams.

Chris Himsel, Superintendent, Northwest Allen County Schools, Fort Wayne, stated that his corporation rarely uses the graduation waivers. There are, however, circumstances in which the waiver is necessary. Most waivers granted in Northwest Allen County are work readiness waivers for students who have demonstrated they have the skills needed for the workplace. He feels that there is a false perception that waivers are overused. (Mr. Himsel's testimony is attached as Exhibit C.)

Eugene White, Superintendent, Indianapolis Public Schools, distributed information concerning graduation rates and waiver rates in IPS. The waiver rate for 2011 was 29%; however, IPS has a high proportion of special education and English language learners. IPS follows the state requirements to grant waivers. In addition to the state requirements,

beginning with students who will graduate in the 2012-2013 school year, waivers must be approved by a student's teachers and principal, followed by approval by a central committee. IPS has increased its graduation rate by over 10% since 2009, and has cut the dropout rate in half. In addition, the number of students receiving Core 40 diplomas has increased by 17%. (Dr. White's information is summarized in Exhibit D.)

Diana Daniels, Executive Director, National Council on Educating Black Children, Indianapolis, pointed out that achievement gaps between white and non-Asian children of color are growing. School corporations in Indiana with a high percentage of students who receive free or reduced price lunches and students of color have a higher waiver rate than the state average. She feels that waivers have been misused and waivers are given too often to minority students. (Ms. Daniels' testimony is included as Exhibit E.)

Jeff Jackson, Professor, Indiana University South Bend, spoke concerning bridge programs that can be used to provide students with extended learning time, additional instruction, group projects, educational field trips, and mentoring by college students who have graduated from the high schools involved in the programs to help the students graduate without waivers. The students would be placed in learning communities with peers to work together. Bridge programs can help ensure student success.

Nancy Papas, Indiana State Teachers Association, stated that testing is overused, and that waivers may remedy the overuse of high-stakes testing.

Vic Smith, retired educator, raised the question of whether it is possible and desirable to determine how well waiver graduates have done post-high school before considering changes to the waiver requirements. (Dr. Smith's testimony is included as Exhibit F.)

Terry Spradlin, Director for Education Policy, Center for Evaluation and Education Policy (CEEP), Indiana University, explained that CEEP followed the graduating class of 2010 from sixth grade through twelfth grade to determine the impact of chronic absenteeism on high school graduation. He sees the 95% attendance rate (not counting excused absences) as a flaw in the waiver requirements, since some school corporations have broad interpretations of what constitutes an excused absence. He suggested that a state definition of excused absences might be necessary. CEEP's study found a high correlation between high absenteeism and high school dropouts. He agreed with Mr. Smith's suggestion that a longitudinal study of how well waiver graduates perform post-high school would be helpful. (CEEP's report is included at Exhibit J.)

(In addition to the testimony presented at the meeting, the Commission received written comments from: Greg Parsley, Superintendent, Vincennes Community School Corporation (Exhibit G); Brian Smith, Superintendent, Hamilton Southeastern Schools (Exhibit H); and Brad Schneider, Superintendent, Warrick County School Corporation (Exhibit I)).

The final meeting of the Commission will be held on October 10, 2012 at 1:00 p.m. in the Senate Chamber. The meeting was adjourned at 3:39 p.m.

Graduation Waivers

September 19, 2012

Graduation Exam Waiver

The graduation exam waiver is a mechanism by which a student who does not achieve a passing score on the graduation examine may be eligible to graduate.

An individual receiving a graduation exam waiver is considered a graduate for the purposes of calculating graduation rates.

A diploma received through the waiver process is not different than a diploma of the some type received through the graduotion exam process.

Indiana Code 20-32-4-4

Objectives

1. Define the graduation exam waiver
2. Graduation exam waiver legal requirements and supports
3. Graduation exam waiver descriptive statistics

GRADUATION EXAM WAIVER

Legal Requirements
Supports

GRADUATION EXAM WAIVER

Definition

Legal Requirements

A student must do the following:

1. Take the graduation exam at least once a year every year after the student first took the exam;
2. Complete remediation opportunities provided by the school;
3. Maintain at least a 95% attendance rate (excused absences do not count against);
4. Maintain at least a "C" average in courses required for graduation; and
5. Satisfy all state and local graduation requirements

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Legal Requirements - Options

Option A – A student must complete the following:

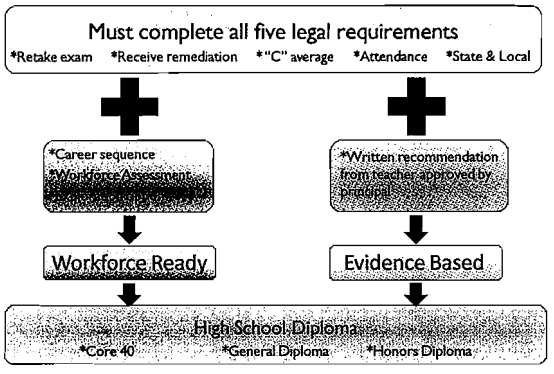
1. The course requirements for a general diploma, including the career academic sequence;
2. A workforce readiness assessment; AND
3. At least one career exploration internship; or cooperative education; or workforce credential

Option B – A student must do the following:

1. Obtain a written recommendation from teachers and concurred by the principal stating the student has attained the academic standard based on the following:
   (A) Tests other than the graduation exam; or
   (B) Classroom work

GRADUATION EXAM WAIVER

Descriptive Statistics



DOE Data Collection

1. Reports collected through the Application Center
2. The DOE collects information related to waivers via a graduation report
3. Publically available data
   1. Non waiver graduation rate and total graduation rate
   2. Four year cohort status
   3. Four year cohort diploma status
   4. Four year cohort graduation rate trends
   5. ECA results by year
   6. ECA percent passing trends

Supports

Local

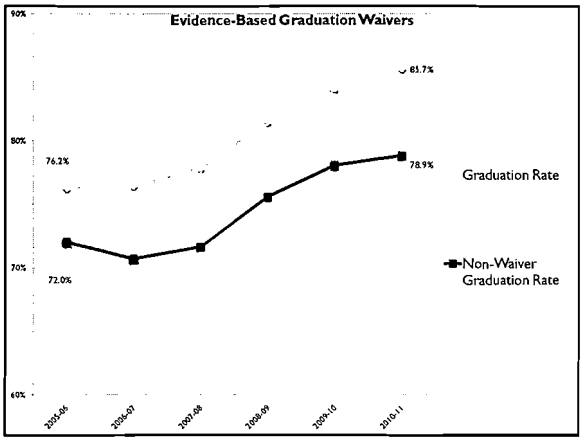
- The evidence based waiver is approved by the principal
- Relationship to the Student Graduation Plan
  - Created in grade 6, revisited in grade 9;
  - A pathway toward graduation guided by the student's interests and aptitudes;
  - To be reviewed annually by the parent, counselor, and student.

Resources provided by IDOE

- Academic standards by diploma type
- Diploma decision flowchart
- Requirements for graduation waiver
- Indiana Assessment Program Manual

DOE Data Report

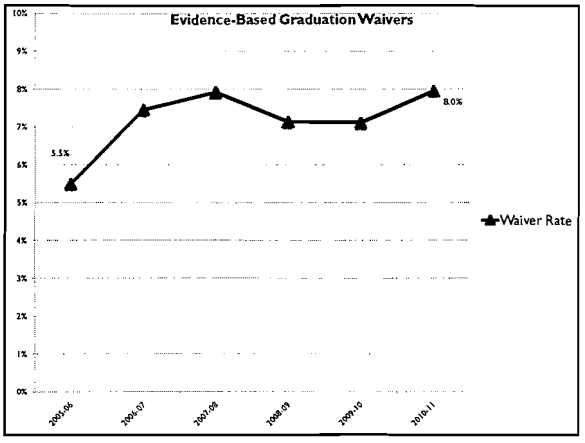
1. The findings only relate to the number of students receiving waivers
   And not whether or not the student met all the criteria
2. Last year's results and six-year trends
3. Focus on evidence-based waivers

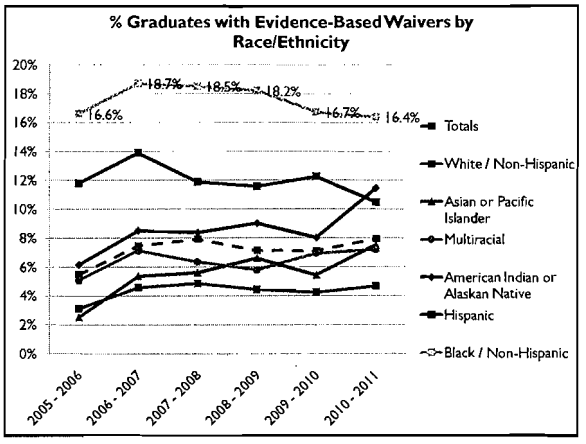


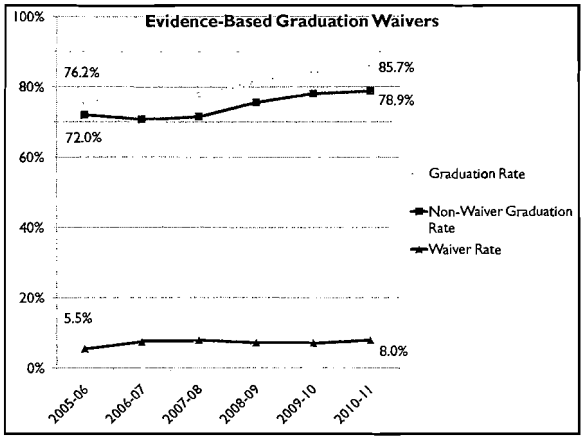
Disaggregated Rates

Percent of graduates who received waiver by race/ethnicity.

For example, XX% of graduates who identify as White/Non-Hispanic graduated with an evidence based waiver.





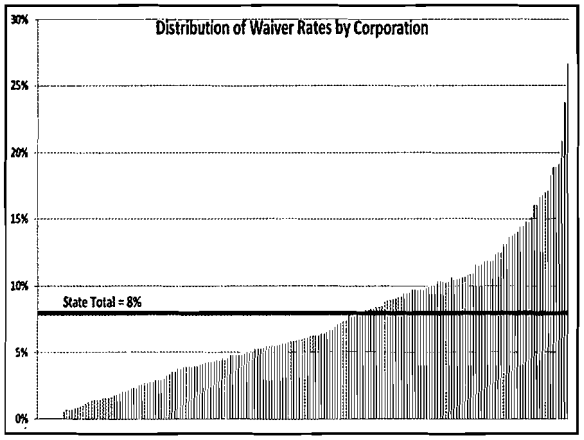


By Corporation

2010 - 2011 School Year

328 School Corporations

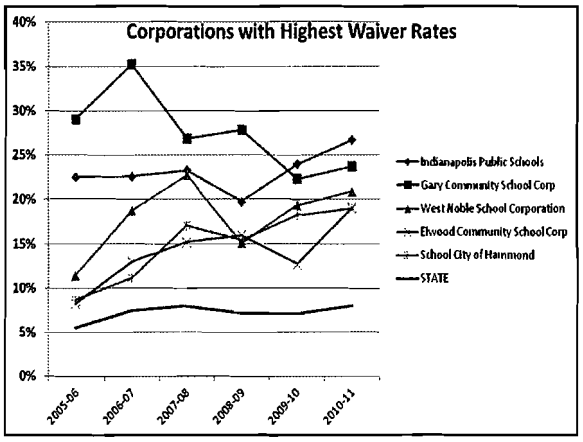
Avg (Mean)	6.1%
Avg (Median)	5.2%
High	26.7% (IP5)
Low	0.0%
Number above average	102



Transparency and Analysis

1. Modify existing data collections to require and reorganize the currently collected variables related to graduation waivers.
2. Improve the graduation report to show variables related to graduation waivers.
   * DOE Compass * Learning Connection

   Target parents, students, principals, superintendents, etc
3. Increase rigor of requirements.



GRADUATION EXAM WAIVER

Potential Changes

Indiana Department of Education
SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS

High School Diploma – Gateway to a Successful Future

Nothing is more important than ensuring our students have the skills necessary to succeed after they leave our K-12 system. In Indiana, we're focused on preparing a new generation of innovators and leaders ready to succeed in a competitive and dynamic 21st century economy.

Without a doubt, ensuring students graduate from high school is a key part of this equation. Studies show the job opportunities and career earnings available to students who graduate from high school are dramatically better than those who do not (www.dropoutprevention.org).

However, ensuring students receive a diploma that truly represents college and career readiness is equally important. We do no favors to children by sending them to the post-secondary world without the skills they need to succeed. For this reason, it's important to carefully track and thoroughly review graduation data to ensure every student is prepared for lifelong success.

Things to Know About High School Graduation in Indiana

Graduation Rate Calculation

In 2003, the General Assembly passed legislation instructing the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) to begin using a new cohort-based method for calculating high school graduation rates. This made Indiana one of the first states in the nation to calculate graduation rates based on student-level information.
The formula begins by establishing a cohort of first-time freshmen that expands and contracts as students transfer in and out of school during the years that follow. By tracking the progress of these students over the next four years, we're able to gain an accurate measure of the percentage of students within a four year cohort who receive a diploma at the end of grade 12.

Basic Graduation Requirements

Indiana offers several options for students including a General diploma, Core 40 diploma, Core 40 with Honors diploma, and Technical Honors diploma. Passing the English 10 and Algebra 1 End of Course Assessments (ECAs) is a graduation requirement for students. These exams help us measure whether students have attained the basic skills necessary to move on to post-secondary training without the need for time-consuming and costly taxing remediation courses.

Graduation Waiver Process

Indiana statute includes a provision allowing some students to receive a "graduation waiver." This provision should only be used when a student has sufficiently demonstrated mastery of the academic standards required of graduating students but has not been able to pass ECAs due to extenuating circumstances. For example, an appropriate use of the graduation waiver would be for a student with a medically diagnosed case of extreme test anxiety that keeps him from passing ECAs despite a strong academic record.

Two Types of Graduation Waivers

There are two types of graduation waivers available to students. Requirements for receiving a waiver include the following:

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Evidence Based Waiver

- In each subject area that students do not receive a passing score, they must retake the ECA at least once every school year following the first year in which they took the ECAs.
- Students must complete any extra help sessions offered each year by the school to prepare for the ECA retests.
- Students must maintain a school attendance rate of 95 percent or better over the course of their high school experience (excused absences are not counted against the attendance rate).
- In the courses required for graduation, students must maintain at least a "C" average over the course of their high school careers.
- **Students must obtain written recommendations from the teacher(s) in the subject area(s) not passed, as well as one from the school principal, and show proof that the academic standards have been met, whether through other tests or classroom work.**
- Satisfy any other state and local graduation requirements.

Work Readiness Waiver

- In each subject area that students do not receive a passing score, they must retake the ECA at least once every school year following the first year in which they took the ECAs.
- Students must complete any extra help sessions offered each year by the school to prepare for the ECA retests.
- Students must maintain a school attendance rate of 95 percent or better over the course of their high school experience (excused absences are not counted against the attendance rate).
- In the courses required for graduation, students must maintain at least a "C" average over the course of their high school careers.
- **Students must complete the course and credit requirements for a general diploma, which include the following: the career academic sequence; a workforce readiness assessment; and, at least one career exploration internship, cooperative education, or workforce credentials recommended by the school.**
- Satisfy any other state and local graduation requirements.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How have Indiana's waiver and non-waiver graduation rates changed over the last few years?
A: Both Indiana's waiver and non-waiver graduation rates have shown *steady improvement* in recent years. Since the 2008-2009 school year, Indiana's statutory graduation rate has increased from 81.4 percent to 85.7 percent. During that same time period, the state's non-waiver graduation rate has increased from 75.6 percent to 78.9 percent. In both cases, more and more Indiana students are meeting and even exceeding graduation requirements.

Q: How has the percentage of Indiana students graduating with a waiver changed over the last few years?
A: The percentage of students graduating with a waiver has remained *relatively flat* in recent years. In the 2008-2009 school year, 7.1 percent of students graduated with a waiver. For the 2010-2011 school year, 8 percent of students graduated with a waiver.

Q: Is the percentage of students graduating with a waiver consistent across all school corporations?
A: The percentage of students graduating with a waiver varies widely among school corporations. Many school corporations have a waiver rate that consistently reflects the state average while others are significantly below or above the state average.

Members of the Commission on Education,

Thank you for the opportunity to present information and answer questions about the use of graduation waivers. I appreciate the Commission on Education's willingness to gather additional information so that any legislative changes are based on factual information instead of hearsay.

Northwest Allen County Schools (NACS) rarely uses graduation waivers. However, there are circumstances that warrant the use of graduation waivers. As shown on the summary of data, our graduation waivers are typically based on results of the Work Readiness waiver provisions.

These graduation waivers benefit students who work hard and develop the skills necessary to provide evidence of learning worthy of granting the waiver. For this group of students, graduation waivers need to continue to be an option.

An example of how a student might demonstrate knowledge of a topic through application instead of through formalized, time restrictive tests follows.

In geometry class, which I taught while teaching at Pike High School in Indianapolis in the early 1990's, a concept that is included is the idea that the diagonals of a rectangle are equal. Learning this concept through the application of solving proofs is a wonderful way for those who desire to serve as a doctor, lawyer, or engineer to develop and demonstrate logical thinking skills necessary to the success of these professions.

However, from a practical perspective, a construction worker does not need to quote the theorem correctly or apply it to prove another theorem, but a construction worker does need to know whether or not a wall, floor, etc. are square along with the related logical thinking skills within the context of building or renovating a structure. With square walls, the construction plans developed by the architect will translate into a structurally sound building; without square walls, the entire building is in jeopardy. The method most construction workers use on the job site is to measure the diagonals of the structure. If the diagonals are equal, then the structure is square.

In the case of solving geometry proofs, a student demonstrates knowledge of this important geometrical concept through traditional classroom and testing activities. In the case of the construction trades student, a student can demonstrate knowledge of exactly the same concept, if given the opportunity, in a practical, application-based method. Depending on the career goals of the student, one method is no more or no less important than the other. The exact same skill is taught and demonstrated as learning, but in two completely different ways.

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The students who benefit from the graduation waivers by legitimately demonstrating knowledge of skills should not be punished because of a perceived need of "fixing" those schools that are perceived to "overuse" the graduation waiver option. Instead of changing a law that appears to be working for the vast majority of schools, emphasis should be placed on auditing those schools that are perceived to overuse the auditing process. The auditing process could be similar to the process used to determine whether or not a school's special education program is identifying a disproportionate number of students into their respective special education programs. In fact, the schools in question may not be overusing the waiver process, but rather may have a disproportion number of students attending their respective schools who happen to fit the intended purpose of the waivers. Without an audit, or some type of relevant collection of meaningful and accurate evidence, no determination can be made about whether or not a particular school is overusing the waiver process.

At NACS, we do not use the graduation waivers until evidence is presented that certifies that the student has learned the skill. We use it as a last resort. We make every effort to help each student achieve this student in the traditional way that is defined by the legislature and State Board. However, we do not limit ourselves to thinking that tests are the only way to determine whether or not a student has learned. We think about the practical applications of knowledge and skills, and we work with the individual student to meet the learning needs of our students and to determine what evidence might be available to certify evidence of learning.

The bigger issue for NACS is the Department of Education's position of disallowing students to retake the End of Course Assessments (ECA) during non-traditional time frames. Specifically, we had a student who passed the Algebra course during his sophomore year. He did not pass the Algebra ECA. He was not able to retake the ECA during the summer because he was not enrolled in Algebra during the summer. He was not enrolled in Algebra during the summer because he had already passed the course. He retook the Algebra ECA during the winter testing window and again during the spring testing window of his junior and senior years. Each time he took the ECA he was closer to passing than he was the previous time. The additional tutoring that we were providing was paying off. However, he still had not passed. He was again refused the opportunity to retake the ECA during the summer after his scheduled graduation date, just as he had been denied the previous summers, because he was not enrolled in the Algebra course. The choices that we had before us were to (1) grant a waiver; (2) lie and say he was enrolled in Algebra; or (3) delay his graduation until this fall when he can participate in the next available testing window, which delays his enrollment at Ivy Tech State College. His intended career choice is not related to any mathematical concepts. This student's career intention is related to graphic arts, for which he has demonstrated giftedness throughout his entire K-12 career. The point is that even though there is a perception that schools are overusing the waiver option, the Department of Education encourages a situation that makes the granting of a graduation waiver a more realistic and beneficial option for the student.

The second big issue affecting NACS is that because funding cuts from the legislatively approved biennium budget that were executively enacted in 2010 and 2011 have not been restored. The result of the lost funding for NACS is the loss of the program that we developed to decrease high school drop outs and to help students who failed the ECA's to re-engage in learning opportunities so they may pass them at a future date. We serve more than 600 additional students than we did in 2008, yet our projected 2013 revenue is less than our actual 2008 revenue. In 2012, NACS was the sixth lowest out of 293 school districts in per pupil funding in terms of the state basic tuition. This amount resulted in per pupil funding equal to about 80-85% of the state average in per pupil funding and per pupil funding less than some of the vouchers that were provided to Indianapolis and Gary families.

The funding cuts translated into cut programs that resulted in students not receiving services that they need to be successful, contributing adults, resulted in 30 additional adults being unemployed instead of being employed and contributing to our state and country's tax base, and resulted in pay reductions that eliminated the need for further program and staffing cuts but in return resulted in young, talented teachers in hard to find licensing areas like chemistry, Spanish, and upper level math leaving the teaching profession and seeking employment in non-education related businesses. This is plus for non-education related businesses in the short-term because these are truly talented individuals, but it will be a loss for these businesses in the long-term because these individuals were talented enough to not only prepare and inspire one potential employee, but to prepare and inspire thousands of potential employees over a typical career as a teacher.

As you deliberate on the use of graduation waivers and other related education topics, please do not be short-sighted and make decisions that sound great today but will weaken our State's standing in the future. The use of waivers does benefit students. However, they should be used as a last resort and they should be used sparingly and only when evidence indicates that the student has demonstrated the necessary knowledge. The demonstration of this knowledge should not be limited to a test that is easy and convenient to grade.

Respectfully,

9/19/12

Chris Himsel
Superintendent
Northwest Allen County Schools
Fort Wayne, Indiana
Learn. Achieve. Excel.

"Providing a healthy and safe learning environment that engages, supports, and challenges each learner in a culture of achievement and excellence."

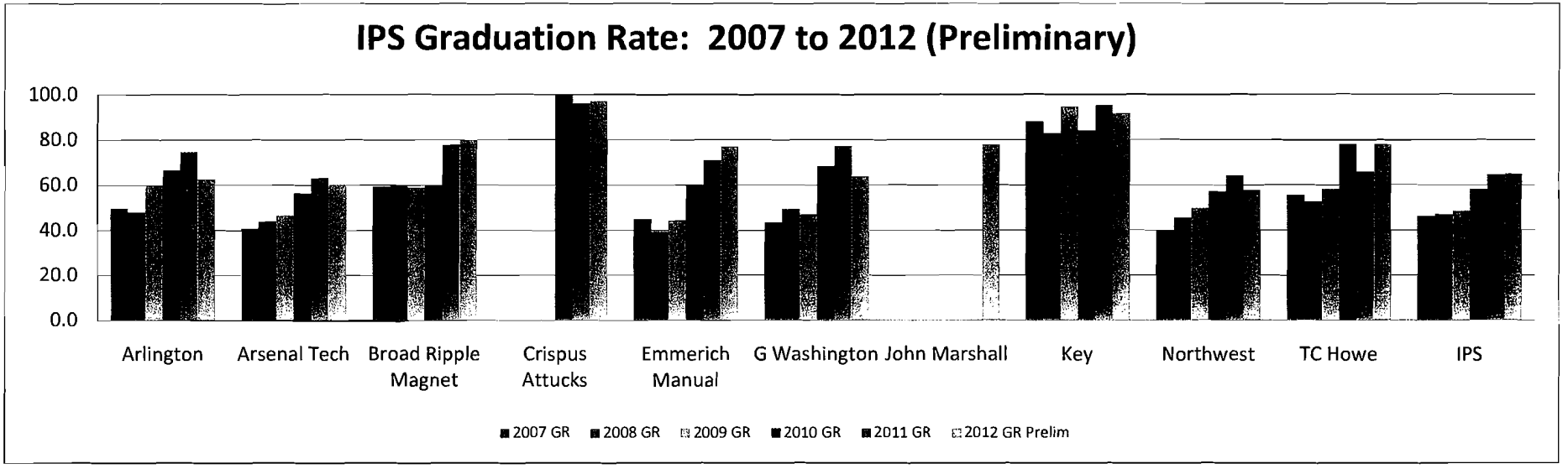
Graduation and Waiver DATA

YEAR	Number of grads	Number of waivers	#of certificates (Special Education Students not on the diploma track but who meet the demands of their IEP)	Number of drop outs
2009	395	6	4	21
2010	456	3	6	12
2011	432	4	8	6
2012	402+ Still pending until October 1st	6	10	9

- The number of waivers are included in the number of graduates
- All waivers were the Work Readiness Waiver
- We have not signed off on any Evidence-Based Waivers in these years

IPS Graduation and Waiver Data by School: 2007-2012 (Preliminary)

IPS anticipates a rise in its overall graduation rate for the spring of 2012; however, due to several schools showing a decrease from 2011 to 2012, the anticipated increase is not as great as hoped.



School Name	2006 GR	2007 GR	2008 GR	2009 GR	2010 GR	2011 GR	2012 GR Prelim
Arlington	51.7	49.9	48.0	59.7	66.4	74.7	62.8
Arsenal Tech	43.9	41.0	44.0	46.5	56.5	63.4	60.2
Broad Ripple Magnet	71.9	59.4	60.1	59.0	60.2	77.9	80.0
Crispus Attucks					100.0	96.3	97.1
Emmerich Manual	48	45.0	39.3	44.4	60.1	71.3	77.1
G Washington	60.2	43.5	49.3	47.0	68.35	77.11	63.9
John Marshall							78.2
Key	82.6	88.0	82.8	94.7	84.2	95.5	91.7
Northwest	53.6	40.3	45.5	49.6	57.2	64.3	58.0
TC Howe	53.7	55.6	52.5	58.3	78.1	65.9	78.3
IPS	51.1	46.1	47.2	48.6	58.3	64.6	65.1

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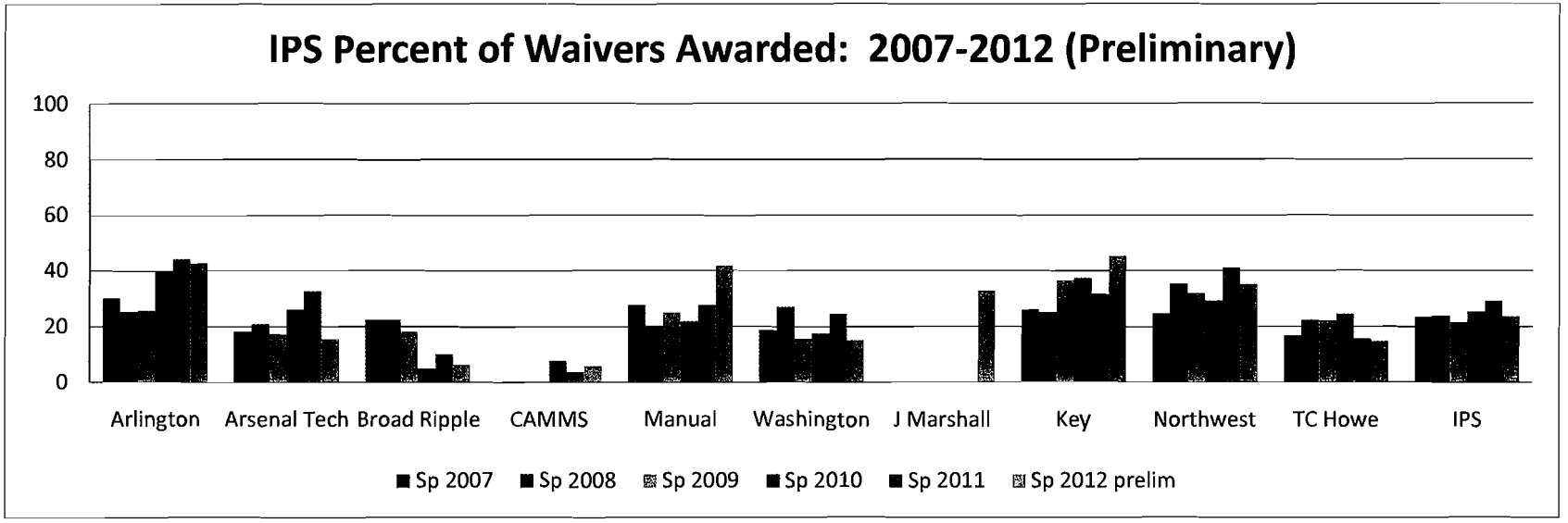
EXHIBIT D

9/17/12

IPS Graduation and Waiver Data by School: 2007-2012 (Preliminary)

The percent of Waiver Diplomas awarded has gone down in all but three of the schools this past year with an expected additional decrease this coming year as the criteria are reviewed and tightened even further across the district.

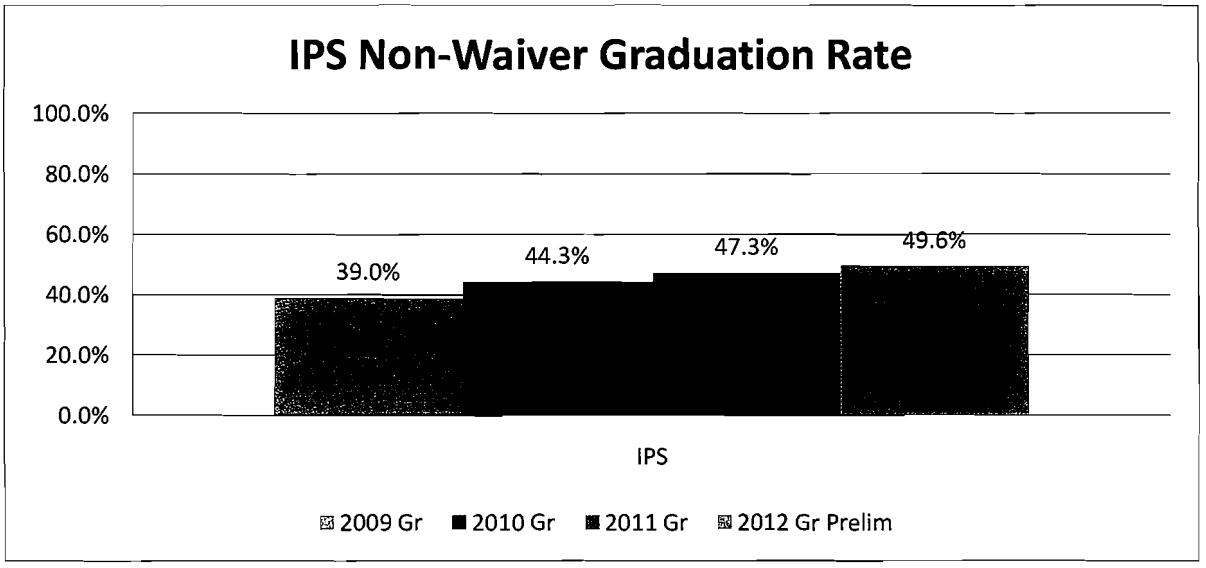


% Waivers	Sp 2007	Sp 2008	Sp 2009	Sp 2010	Sp 2011	Sp 2012 prelim
Arlington	30	25	26	40	44	43
Arsenal Tech	18	21	17	26	33	16
Broad Ripple	23	23	18	5	10	6
CAMMS				8	4	6
Manual	28	20	25	22	28	42
Washington	19	27	16	17	25	15
J Marshall						33
Key	26	25	37	38	32	45
Northwest	25	35	32	29	41	35
TC Howe	17	22	22	25	16	15
IPS	24	24	22	25	29	24

9/17/12

IPS Non-Waiver Graduation Rates

The non-waiver Graduation Rate in IPS has risen by more than 10 percentage points since 2009.

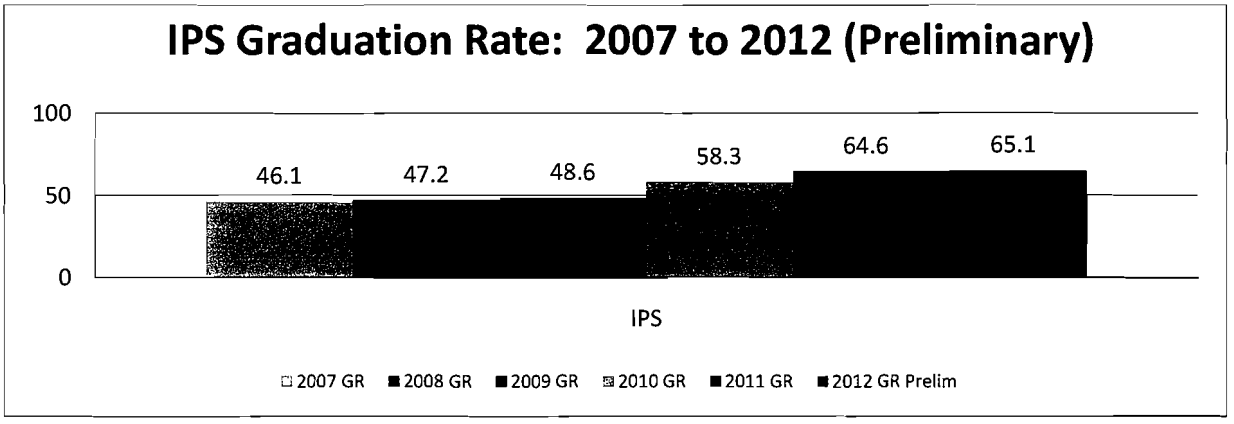


School Name	Prelim 2012 Non-Waiver Grad Rate	2011 Non-waiver Grad Rate	2010 Non-waiver Grad Rate	2009 Non-waiver Grad Rate	Increase/ decrease 2009-2011	Increase/ decrease 2009-2012
Arlington Community High School	35.9%	42.2%	41.4%	44.8%	-2.5%	-8.9%
Arsenal Technical High School	50.8%	44.3%	41.9%	39.6%	4.7%	11.2%
Broad Ripple Magnet High School for Performing Arts	75.0%	70.5%	56.7%	48.5%	22.0%	26.5%
Emmerich Manual High School	44.8%	55.8%	48.4%	36.6%	19.2%	8.2%
George Washington Community School	54.2%	60.2%	58.2%	39.7%	20.5%	14.5%
Key Learning Community	50.0%	63.6%	52.6%	57.9%	5.7%	-7.9%
Northwest Community High School	37.4%	44.0%	41.0%	35.2%	8.7%	2.2%
Thomas Carr Howe Community High School	66.7%	55.3%	59.3%	48.0%	6.5%	17.9%

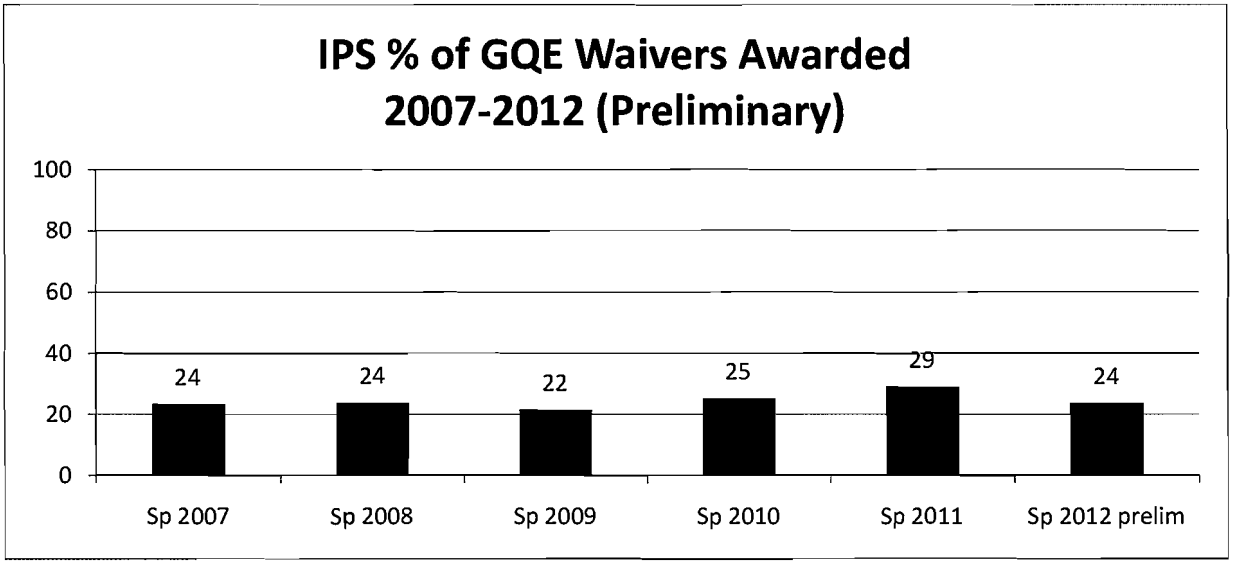
*** 3-year data is not available for Crispus Attucks Medical Magnet (CAMMS), which graduated its first class of 50 seniors in 2010. However, in 2010 CAMMS had a 92.2% non-waiver graduation rate, which rose to 92.6% in 2011.*

IPS Graduation Rate Trend Data

The preliminary data for Spring 2012 shows IPS continuing its trend of success with an anticipated 65.1% Graduation Rate. This is a 0.5% increase over 2011, and a 19% increase since 2007 across all IPS high schools.

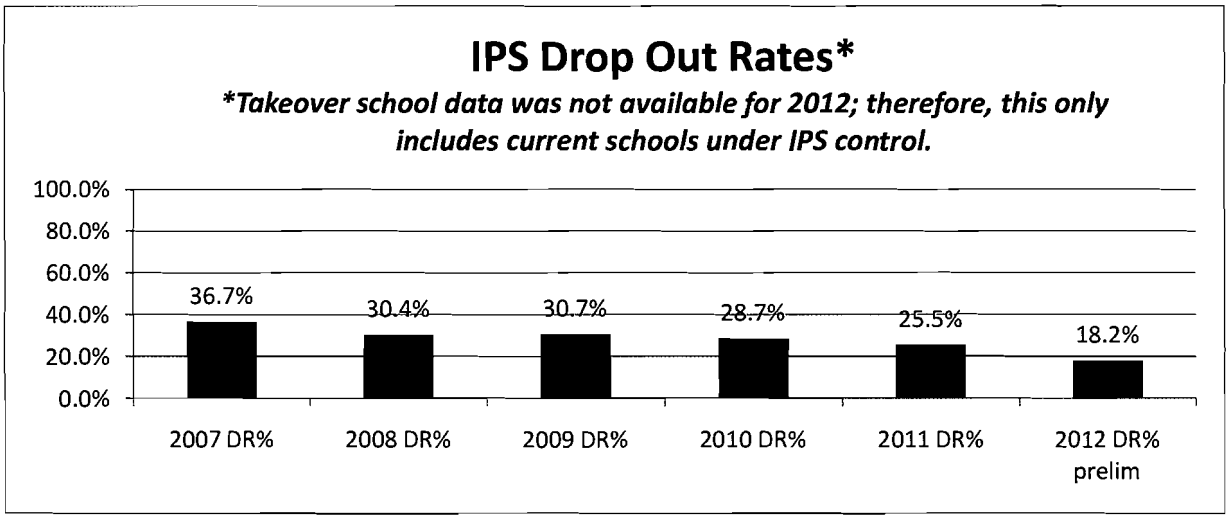


As IPS continues to graduate more students, the focus on improving the quality of graduates is clear in the decrease of waiver diplomas awarded. The preliminary IPS waiver results show only 24% of students receiving a waiver diploma, which is a 5% decrease from the previous year.

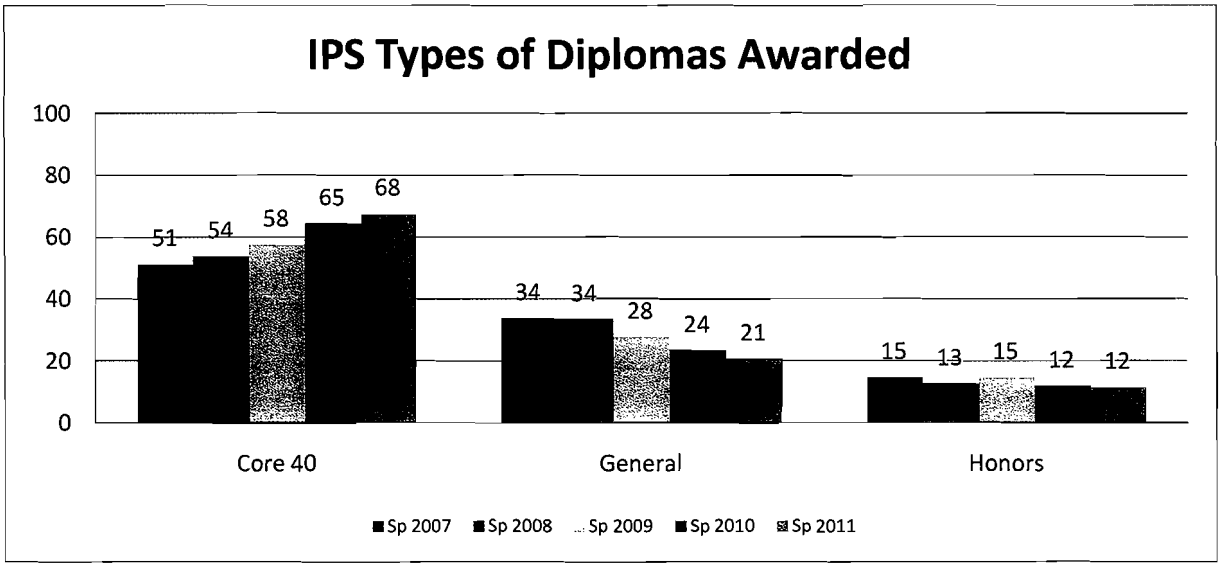


IPS Graduation Rate Trend Data

Another area in which IPS has continued to show a commitment to the success of its students is in the decrease of dropout students. Not only have graduation rates increased since 2007, but the focus on retaining students has paid off in a 50% reduction in dropouts since 2007. The dropout rate for the remaining schools under IPS control has decreased from 36.7% in 2007 to only 18.2% in 2012.



Once the data is available, these successes are expected to further advance our current trend lines of increased rates of students receiving Core 40 and Honors diplomas, and a reduced number receiving a General diploma.



Report to General Assembly

1.chart showing by ethnicity waivers (use chart Wil Prepared in his presentation)

1. Introduction

"Black children are the proxy for what ails American education in general. And so as we fashion solutions which help Black children, we fashion solutions which help all children." The Honorable Augustus F. Hawkins

The National Council on Educating Black Children was founded more than two decades ago through the efforts of Congressman Augustus F Hawkins, (CA) then chair of the House Education and Labor Committee of the House of Representatives, to call together leaders of organizations interested in the welfare of African American children to develop a plan for improving the quality of education for African American students.

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The work of NCEBC is grounded in the effective schools research of Dr, Ron Edmonds. His research revealed a nunber of positive results that occurred at successful schools. For example, Dr. Edmonds discovered that students of color could achieve at high levels in schools with strong leadership and teaching; in schools where high expectations were the standard and not a slogan; students are learning in a safe and supportive environment; and a coherent curriculum which is embedded with relevant materials, that reflect relevance to children's experiences. Dr. Edmonds' work is demonstrated in his words, that "We can, wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us We already know more than we need in order to do this. Whether we do it, must finally depend upon how we feel about the fact, that we haven't so far."

If it takes a village to raise a child, that same village must share accountability when many children

are educationally abandoned.

It has been 58 years after Brown v. Board of Education case that created equal opportunity for all children to learn; Unfortunately, large gaps in educational achievement remain between white and non-Asian "minority" students - in fact they have grown larger in the last 20 years - and the differences in access to educational opportunities are growing. Many young people in the United States, especially those who are low- income students of color, do not receive even the minimum education needed to become literate and join the labor market.

While other nations are moving rapidly ahead to high levels of educational achievement and attainment, the US, is falling behind, primarily because of its ongoing commitment to unequal education. 6 years ago on the international assessments conducted by the Program in International Student Assessment(PISA), the US ranked

21st of 30 (organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries in science and 25th of 30 in mathematics----these educational statistics must change if the US and our upcoming students in Indiana are to remain competitive for future employment opportunities and as world leaders.

In addition , the US is one of the nations where socio-economic background has the largest influence on student achievement . On this measure of equity , the US ranked 45th out of 55 countries just above Brazil and Mexico. Thus, the United States poor standing is substantially a product of unequal access for undeserved students of color to the kind of intellectually challenging learning measured on these international assessments.

2. chart showing percent of wavers

This brings me to the chart showing the percentage of

students of color in 20 cities in Indiana where 26.7 percent to 3.9 percent, of this years graduates received a waiver.

Many school corporations have a waiver rate that consistently reflects the state average .....unfortunately , others are above the state average. For example, the Indiana waiver rate in the 2010-2011 school year was 8 percent; some districts' rates were more than three times that percentage.

IPS, for instance, with an 82.5 percent free and reduced lunch population and an 88 percent minority population , granted waivers to 27 percent of its graduates. Additionally, the South Bend Corporation , which is 70 percent free and reduced lunch, and has a 73 percent minority population, had a double digit waiver rate for its 2012 graduates. However if we look at districts like Carmel and Hamilton Southeastern where the poverty level is significantly reduce, you have lower rates of waviers being granted to students

of color. The states strongest schools and wealthiest districts are not located in the poorest neighborhoods. N Districts with higher poverty rates have fewer highly educated experienced teachers and less stable teaching staffs. The real outrage is illustrated on this chart showing , how education in Indiana is more likely to reinforce existing patterns of inequality… than to serve as a pathway to opportunity. It is as if Indiana is testing Black, Latino and poor students on their swimming abilities after knowingly relegating them to pools, where the water has been drained. These students who fail the test repeatedly are then stigmatized as failures, their parents labeled as less than fully engaged, and their teachers called ineffective. Ultimately, their community schools are given the grades of D and F, become part of the state "take over schools" , rather than being supplied with the necessary resources and supports to flourish.

We have a duty as educators , administrators,

legislators and parents to provide the best possible education for future generations. When our children graduate from high school , they need the assurance their diploma represents they have the skills needed to be successful in college, marketable skills to succeed in the workforce, and the ability to compete in a shrinking global society with students from other foreign countries, with the capacities, for intellectual deep meaning, understanding and application. We perform a disservice to our children when we send them off to the post-secondary world without tools to be successful. For this reason we must address the misuse of graduation waivers and the issues that lead to this misuse.

3.Real life Change to chart on race(Wil)

Current graduation standards require students to pass the English 10 and Algebra 1 End of Course Assessments. These exams help us measure whether students have the

very basic English and Mathematical skills they need to be successful. Indana statute allows students who fail to pass these assessments to receive a waiver, if they demonstrate their knowledge in other ways. This provision is meant only for students, (I repeat only for students)
who have the skills they need, but have not been able to pass the ECAs, due to extenuating circumstances. For instance, a student with a medically diagnosed condition, such as test anxiety, that keeps him or her from passing ECAS despite a strong academic record. These are the types of circumstances that merit students receiving a waiver.

In most cases this is what we see in most Indiana schools. In others, however the waiver numbers - especially for minority students- are so high they suggest abuse of the waiver process, and in turn .....a failing in our responsibility to students.

These examples show what cannot be overlooked. Students of color are more likely to receive a waiver than their counterparts.

Just imagine a thousand Indiana students ....standing at the edge of the ocean...caught in a perfect storm.....a perfect storm of soonami force ….(slow) many of our children are already there.....being washed away by soft educational policies, which have increased the state's graduation rates, but not necessarily equipped students with the skills need for a successful post secondary exsistence.

The National Council on Educating Black Children join the Indiana Council on Educating Black Children in urging you to begin an honest and serious discussion about what should be done to remedy this situation....regardless of a child's zip code or race .... A disservice is being done to our students , ourselves and our future , if we allow a policy on

waivers that is weak and needs strengthening to ensure the high numbers of waivers given to Black and Brown students in this state cease……Let's just do it!

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "Cowardice asks the question - is it safe/ Expediency asks the question - is it polite? Vanity asks the question - is it popular? But Conscience asks the question - is it right? And there comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor polite, or popular, but one must take it…….. because it is right."

Mr. Jeffrey Jackson will present what we hope will be a solution to support students caught in this perfect storm.....before they are washed away.

Select Commission: Testimony on Graduation Waivers offered by Dr. Vic Smith **September 19, 2012**

My name is Vic Smith. I retired in 2009 after working 40 years in the public schools of Indiana. I speak today as a Hoosier taxpayer and lifelong citizen of Indiana who believes that continuation of our democracy depends on strong public schools.

Today I bring just one question to this discussion on graduation waivers:

Would it not make sense to know how well waiver graduates have done in life after high school before judgments are made about the waiver law?

We have now had several years since the General Assembly listened to parents who sought a waiver law based on their belief that one test should not be the sole determinant of graduation. Has anyone followed up to know the outcomes of the waiver law? These questions need answers:

- **Have waiver graduates been successful in post-secondary classes? On the job? In the military? What were their life outcomes?**
- **Is there a difference between waiver graduates who failed to pass math compared to waiver graduates who failed to pass English?**
- **Is there a validation study that confirms passage of both math and English tests is correlated with better life outcomes?**

These are questions that should be answered before policy changes are considered. Many are now questioning the dominant role of testing in our educational system. Is it better for students to deny them a diploma if they do not pass math and English tests, even if they have passed all of their courses and the checklist of other requirements needed for a waiver diploma? The validation study I am proposing would help answer that question based on life achievements after graduation. We need that information to know how to proceed on this issue.

I would remind you that sixteen math and sixteen English teachers met for three days in July of 2010 reading items of the Algebra 1 and English 10 exams to recommend cut scores for passing. Their recommendation, as Wes Bruce told the August 3, 2010 Roundtable, would have failed 29% in Algebra 1, but IDOE recommended a more rigorous cut score, one which would fail 35%. The bar set by the English teacher committee was similarly raised to a higher level by IDOE, one which would fail 34%. The Roundtable was told that IDOE raised teacher recommendations by 2 standard errors of the cut score data. **This clearly demonstrated that passing scores are somewhat arbitrary and do not necessarily reflect what those who have actually read the items have recommended.** Is this good for students by raising standards? Or does it just mean more students fail and become candidates for waiver diplomas?

Rather that debating in a vacuum what is good or bad for students or for the workforce, we should find out what happened to waiver graduates in the workforce, in post-secondary schools, and in the military. **It is an empirical question that should be answered with research: Will passing two high schools tests correlate with a better life outcome compared with those who passed only one test or neither test? I urge you to commission an independent study to answer these questions to inform your deliberations on this issue.**

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak.

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From: Greg T. Parsley **[mailto:parsleyg@vcsc.k12.in.us]**
Sent: Wednesday, September 12, 2012 12:36 PM
To: Josh Schlake
Subject: RE: Select Commission on Education

Josh-

I cannot be present on this date, but I am a strong supporter of the waiver process. I have served as both a high school principal and a superintendent and feel as if I can advocate for the importance of waivers first-hand.

As it pertains to our community in Vincennes, there are many jobs available for those who, according to the state, have not passed L/A and algebra proficiencies. This is evident through our discussions with the KCDC (Knox County Development Corporation) group and the industry in Vincennes. Further, I have seen many students who graduated with a waiver go on to be successful members of society. Most recently, we had a young lady graduate from Vincennes Lincoln High School who missed passing the L/A ECA by one point and is now enrolled in college, and clearly will go on to enjoy a successful life because she has her high school diploma in hand.

Also and as a conservative educator, I believe very much in local control. Because of this, I firmly believe that while parameters may need to be in place, local school corporations should be allowed to develop their respective policies and this includes waivers.

I can assure you that Vincennes Lincoln High School has followed the rules set by the state regulating the use of waivers, and my position is that I would like to continue to see our high school principal be in a position and more so have the ability to waiver those students who are deserving.

Mr. Greg Parsley
Superintendent
Vincennes Community School Corporation

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Hamilton Southeastern Schools

Comments Regarding the Graduation Qualifying Exam Waiver Process

The number of GQE waivers requested, each year, is less than 1% of our graduating classes.

In many cases, the GQE waiver is reserved for unique situations. For example, it may include students that are new to our school from out-of-state or out of the country. There are examples of seniors who have enrolled after the spring test administration and did not have an opportunity to be tested. The waiver allows us to verify that those students have met graduation requirements.

In other cases, the GQE waiver requests are reviewed by the school principal to ensure that a student has truly met the guidelines for a waiver. Data is gathered regarding a student's attendance, participation in remediation, testing attempts, test scores, GPA, and individual teacher input. Additionally, waivered students must meet all other graduation requirements and pass all other classes that include the state standards for the ECA Algebra and English 10 exam.

Additional information may be required regarding students who need support services through Special Education Services or English as a New Language Services.

The GQE waiver process is an important tool to maintain for schools and students. When used as intended, it gives schools one more tool "to do what is best for students."

Please feel free to contact me if you have questions.

Brian Smith
Superintendent
Hamilton Southeastern Schools

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EXHIBIT H

Warrick County School Corporation
Office of the Superintendent
300 East Gum Street
Boonville, IN 47601

September 14, 2012

Dear Select Commission on Education:

First, I would like to thank the Commission and Representative Behning for the invitation and opportunity to share my thoughts on the use of waivers in high school graduation. I apologize that my schedule and the logistics of this meeting prevent me from attending and presenting my thoughts in person.

Educators fully understand the need for accountability, and we readily accept that as part of our profession. Educating the children of Indiana well is one of the most important jobs any Hoosier can have. We understand the need for statewide assessments, such as ISTEP+ and the End of Course Assessments. Educators accept the role these tests play in the accountability process. Educators also know and understand that NO test can effectively measure all the knowledge, skills, concepts and processes our students learn in a year of school, or over the course of their K-12 experience. Professional educators should, and must, have flexibility to determine when students have mastered required standards for graduation. I feel the waiver process for students to earn a high school diploma has provided professional educators with that flexibility, and strongly advocate for retaining the waiver process. The waiver process allows students alternative ways to demonstrate they have mastered state standards required for graduation. In the day and age of high stakes testing, no one should be surprised that a number of Hoosier students suffer from test anxiety. Having been a high school principal for six years, I have personally witnessed test anxiety. It is real, and does impact student performance on ISTEP+ and other high stakes tests. While I feel the End of Course Assessments are less stressful than the old ISTEP+ testing, they still cause great anxiety in some students, which then negatively impacts their final score. Without the waiver process, this could result in a student that has mastered the standards, being denied a high school diploma.

I have spoken with Dr. Tony Bennett, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, on several occasions. During our conversations, and in his public speaking addresses, he speaks of the virtues of local control. He has consistently voiced his support for school boards and superintendents to have local control. Retaining the high school graduation waiver process is one example of local control that should remain with local schools. I appreciate you taking the time to consider my thoughts. If you have any other questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (812) 897-6050.

Sincerely,
Brad Schneider
Superintendent, Warrick County School Corporation

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EXHIBIT I

CENTER FOR EVALUATION & EDUCATION POLICY

Education Policy Brief

Attendance and Chronic Absenteeism in Indiana: The Impact on Student Achievement

Terry Spradlin, Katherine Cierniak, Dingjing Shi, and Minge Chen

VOLUME 10, NUMBER 3, SUMMER 2012

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UPCOMING POLICY BRIEFS . . .

- ✓ *Overhauling Teacher Evaluation Systems: Examining Preparation and Implementation Issues of School Districts*
- ✓ *Charter Schools: Charter Revocation Procedures*
- ✓ *Trends in Virtual Learning in the U.S. and Indiana*

INTRODUCTION

Student attendance serves as an effective predictor of future academic achievement as well as of high school graduation. An analysis of Indiana attendance data indicates a direct link between absenteeism and school achievement, with chronically absent students scoring lower on achievement tests and dropping out of high school at higher rates than peers with better attendance. Between the 2008-09 and 2010-11 school years, 55,264 students on average missed 10% or more of the school year, a percentage that classifies these students as either chronically absent or severely chronically absent. However, the number of students who fall in these categories is likely higher, as this figure does not include school days missed due to out-of-school suspensions or expulsions.

Data on attendance in Indiana reflect national trends and illustrate definitively that missing school matters. Cohort analysis conducted by the Center for Evaluation & Education Policy (CEEP) at Indiana University revealed that for the high school class of 2010, approximately 88% of students with good attendance (missing fewer than five days) throughout high school graduated, compared to 24% of students who missed 18 or more days on average per school year (Spradlin et al., 2012a). Additionally, students with higher attendance rates scored higher on Math and English/Language Arts portions of the Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress-Plus (ISTEP+) than students with lower attendance rates. This held true for students of all racial backgrounds, English language proficiency, socioeconomic status (SES), and ability. For example, in grade 3, students who were chronically absent scored nearly 50 scale score points lower on the Math portion of ISTEP+ than same-age peers who missed fewer than five days.

In this report, *chronic absence* is defined as missing 10% or more of school days, for any reason, including excused or unexcused absences. This is a national definition of chronic absence that is increasingly being used across a number of states. In Indiana, this equates to 18 days or more of school during one school year. Furthermore, *severe chronic absence* is defined as missing 20% or more of days in a school year (36 days or more of one school year in Indiana). This definition of chronic absence does differ from the definition established presently by law in Indiana, but is the definition used here to allow for meaningful comparisons to other states and national statistics.

By comparison, Indiana law defines chronic absence as missing 10 or more days within a school year without being excused (Indiana Code 20-20-8-8). However, Indiana lacks statutory definitions of *excused* and *unexcused* absences, leaving districts to develop these definitions themselves. Many school districts have chosen to define all absences as excused or provide a rather narrow definition of unexcused absence, thus producing an artificially low number of students who are categorized as chronically absent in the state. Chronic absence, as defined by Indiana, also qualifies as truancy under Indiana Code 20-33-2-11, as described by the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) in a 2011 advisory memorandum to Indiana superintendents and principals (IDOE, 2011). Furthermore, though students miss instructional time when suspended from school, out-of-school suspensions are not categorized as absences.

This Education Policy Brief summarizes the research and data analysis completed by CEEP on Indiana's student attendance and absenteeism data. The study was initiated by The Indiana Partnerships Center and conducted by CEEP with funding from USA Funds and State Farm. Additional partners in the study are the Marion County Commission on Youth, Net Literacy, and Attendance Works. The intended use of the study is to

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inform educators, families, community partners, and policymakers about the status of attendance in Indiana and the degree to which poor attendance impacts student achievement and attainment. Findings indicate that although the majority of schools report good average daily attendance, chronic absenteeism occurs in schools in all areas of Indiana.

This brief quantifies the prevalence of chronic absenteeism in Indiana and describes the impact of chronic absenteeism on achievement and graduation at the student, school, and locality level. Additionally, best practices for improving attendance are discussed, and examples of successful interventions provided. This brief concludes with a set of recommendations for education leaders and policymakers to consider that will ensure sufficient attention, reporting, and action to reduce chronic absenteeism in Indiana and help improve academic outcomes for thousands of Hoosier students.

NATIONAL RESEARCH FINDINGS

Research on attendance and achievement indicates attendance rates in early grades affect later academic performance. Not only is attendance linked with achievement during a specific school year, it also appears to influence later academic performance (Buehler, Tapogna, & Chang, 2012; Chang & Romero). For example, a study in California found that only 17% of children who were chronically absent in both kindergarten and grade 1 were proficient readers by the end of grade 3. By comparison, 64% of their peers who attended school regularly read proficiently at the end of grade 3 (Applied Survey Research, 2011). Furthermore, students who were chronically absent in both kindergarten and grade 1 had the poorest reading achievement levels in grade 5, compared to students with chronic absence in only one of these grades (Buehler, Tapogna, & Chang, 2012). The same trend is evident in Indiana's attendance data. Students with lower attendance rates in early grades performed worse on the English/Language Arts and Mathematics portion of the ISTEP+ in later grades (Spradlin et al., 2012a).

Data from Indiana and other areas of the country suggest a link between attendance rates and graduation rates. Of Indiana students who missed 2.5% or less of school days, 88% graduated (Spradlin et al., 2012a). However, only 24% of chronically absent Indiana high school students in this study graduated (Spradlin et al., 2012a). A similar study that followed grade 6 students in the 1999-2000 school year through graduation in 2006 found only 36.4% of Baltimore's chronically absent students graduated from high school (Baltimore Education Research Consortium [BERC], 2011b). A study of Chicago Public Schools revealed that students who missed between 15-19 days of school in a year had a graduation rate of 21%, and only 9% of students who missed 20-24 school days graduated (Allensworth & Easton, 2007).

Attendance is a particular concern for low-income students, as they may have more barriers to attending school, such as mobility, health, and safety (Chang & Romero, 2008; Larson & Rumberger, 1995). Chronic absence rates for low-income students tend to be more pronounced than for other students (Buehler, Tapogna, & Chang, 2012; Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Romero & Lee, 2007). In the CEEP study of Indiana, low-income students were considered to be those who qualified for the free or reduced lunch (FRL) program. Reflecting nationwide trends, Indiana students who receive FRL had lower attendance rates than non-FRL students (i.e., those whose families' incomes were higher than income eligibility guidelines). Similarly, in all regions of the state, Indiana schools with higher percentages of students receiving FRL experienced lower average daily attendance rates (Spradlin et al., 2012b).

ATTENDANCE AND CHRONIC ABSENCE IN INDIANA

Methods and Data Collection

For this report, CEEP collected and analyzed Indiana's attendance data in a variety of ways. First, the school-level data were structured as one set for each school per year. The school-level analysis focused on the descriptive statistics of the average daily attendance (ADA) rates in public schools from the 2003-04 school year to the 2009-10 school year and examined school attendance outcomes at the state, region, county, and locale-type levels. Finally, an in-depth analysis looked at chronic absenteeism of Indiana students using both a cohort dataset and school-level data. The data for these analyses were generated by public schools that submit all official records of enrolled K-12 students to the IDOE. These datasets were provided by the IDOE to CEEP in accordance with a Data Sharing Agreement between the two entities.

At the school level, a variety of academic measures, such as attendance, ISTEP+ passage, graduation, and dropout rates were presented in the aggregate for all students and then by subgroups of students, including students qualifying for the FRL program, special education (SPED), and Limited English Proficient (LEP). Students' average daily attendance rates over a 7-year period were summarized and categorized based on **exemplary** (≥97.5%), **good** (between <97.5% and ≥95%), **poor** (between <95% and ≥90%), **very poor** (between <90% and ≥80%), and **extremely poor** (<80%) attendance rates. By locale type (urban, suburban, rural, and town), the disaggregated attendance rates by attendance category were summarized with other factors to investigate the influence of the attendance rates on achievement and graduation rates.

Datasets for the student-level analysis were focused on two cohorts: (1) students enrolled in kindergarten and (2) in grade 6 during the 2003-04 school year. The 2003-04 school year was chosen as the baseline year because sufficient longitudinal data on attendance were not available for prior school years and graduation data for the Class of 2011 were not available at the time this study commenced. A focus on these two cohorts enabled CEEP to measure the impact of attendance over time in both elementary education (grades K-6) and in middle through high school education (grades 7-12).

Attendance in Indiana

Overall, Indiana's aggregate average daily attendance rates were relatively consistent from the 2003-04 to the 2009-10 school year, and all attendance rates were approximately 96.0% (Figure 1), which falls in the good attendance rate category of this report. However, average daily attendance (ADA) rates can mask the prevalence of chronic absenteeism. When the Indiana data were disaggregated, some alarming statistics regarding student absences were revealed.

In Indiana, attendance is a key factor in promoting academic achievement for students of all ages and demographic backgrounds. For all students in both the kindergarten and grade 6 cohorts, those with higher attendance rates scored higher on the ISTEP+ in each year they were tested. For example, among the kindergarten cohort, students' scores on the grade 3 Math portion of ISTEP+ fell as their attendance rates fell. Students who missed less than 2.5% of school days had an average scale score of 437 on the Math portion, while students who missed 5% - 10% scored 410, and students who missed over 10% of school days had an average score of 390. Additionally, scores on the grade 3 English/Language Arts portion among this cohort followed the same pattern;

students who missed less than 2.5% of school days had an average scale score of 447, while students with an absence rate of 5% - 10% scored 427, and students with an absence rate over 10% scored 409. The pattern of decreasing scores with decreasing attendance rates repeated when the kindergarten cohort took the ISTEP+ in grade 6.

Among the grade 6 cohort, the same performance pattern appeared when examining their ISTEP+ scores in grades 6 and 8. For instance, in grade 8, students who missed less than 2.5% of school days had an average scale score of 571 in Math; students missing 2.55% of school days had an average scale score of 555; students missing 5% - 10% of school days had an average scale score of 536; and students missing 10% or more of school days had an average scale score of 507. Similarly, students missing less than 2.5% of school days had the highest average scale score on English/Language Arts in grade 8, with an average score of 548; students missing 2.5% - 5% of school had an average scale score of 539; students missing 5% - 10% of days scored 527, and students missing 10% or more of days had an average scale score of 513. Furthermore, these patterns were consistent among all groups (racial groups, FRL, SPED, LEP, etc.) as well as in all locales and all regions of the state. Indiana data thus reveal a consistent trend: students with higher attendance rates score higher on the ISTEP+ measures of achievement.

Similarly, when looking at graduation rates among the grade 6 cohort and their attendance rates in grades 9-12, there is a clear link between attendance and graduation (Table 1). As previously mentioned, of students who missed 2.5% or less of school days, 88% graduated on time. Students who missed 2.5% - 5% of schools days had a slightly lower graduation rate, at 82%. However, the graduation rate begins a sharp decline for students in the 5% - 10% absence range, with only about 64% of students in this group graduating from high school. For students who missed over 10% of days of school, the rate declined significantly, with only 24% graduating. As rates of absenteeism increased, graduation rates decreased for Indiana students.

Like the student cohort analysis, attendance rates have an impact at the school level as well, as the findings from CEEP's descriptive statistical analysis indicate. For schools with overall better ADA rates, higher percentages of students passed achievement tests and graduated from high school (Figure 2). In schools with exemplary attendance rates, for example, 89% of students graduated. For schools with good attendance, 85.1% graduated; and 74.5% of students graduated in schools with poor attendance (5% - 10%). A noticeable drop-off in graduation rates occurs in schools with an ADA rate of less than 90%, or very poor average daily attendance, at a rate of only 45.6%. In schools with extremely poor average daily attendance (below 80%), only 27.7% of students graduate. Similarly, ISTEP+ scores are higher in schools with better ADA rates. Schools with exemplary attendance had an ISTEP+ passing rate of over 70.3%, and schools with good attendance had an ISTEP+ passing rate of 64.2%. By comparison, schools in the poor attendance category averaged an ISTEP+ passing rate of 40.4%. Schools with

Figure 1. Indiana's Average Daily Attendance Rates

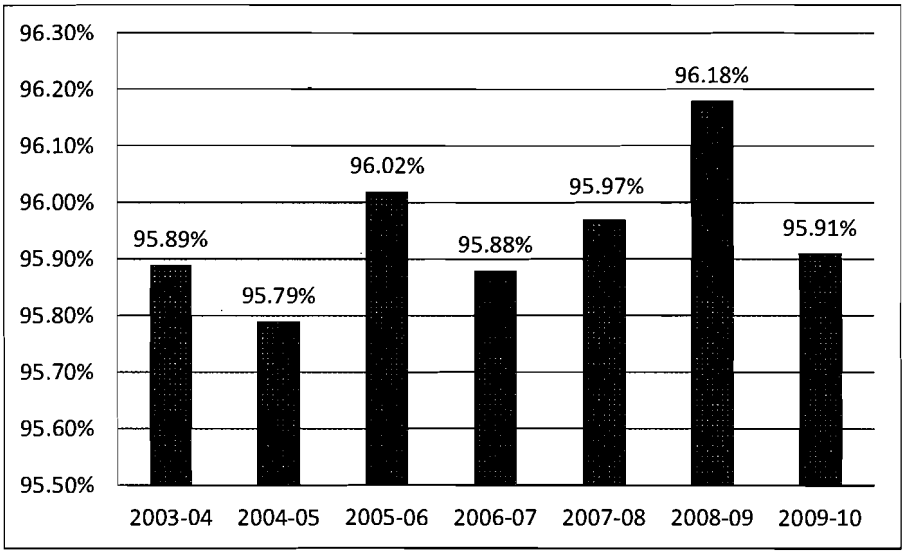
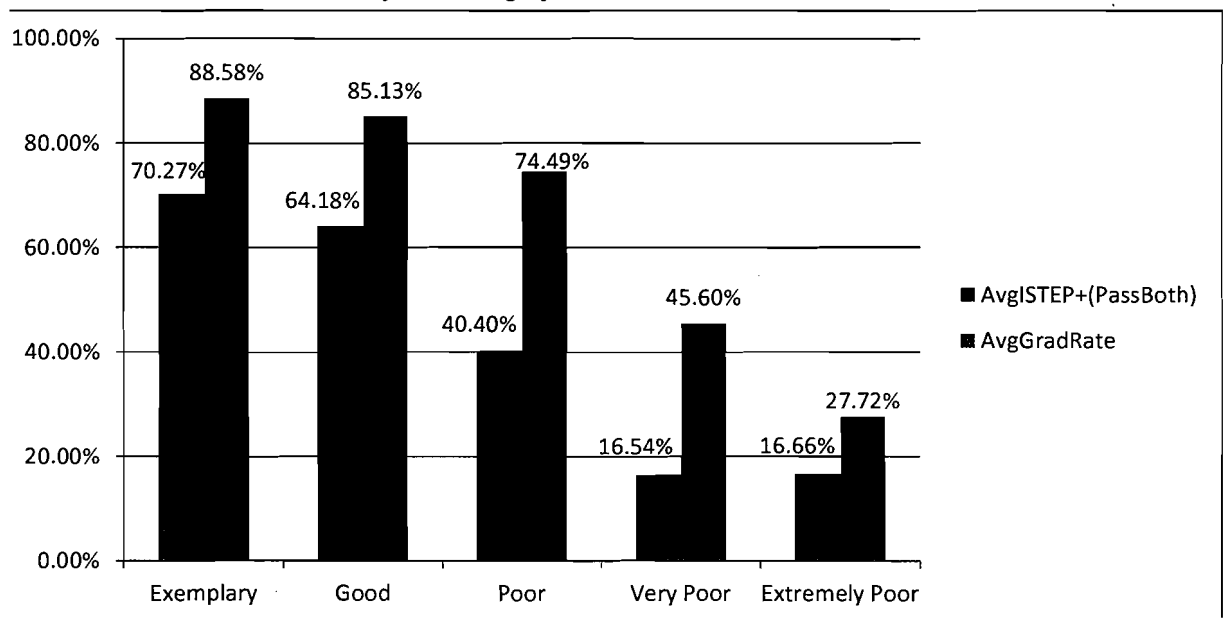


Table 1. Grade 6 Cohort Graduation Rate by Attendance Group in Grades 6-8 and 9-12

	Graduation Status			
	Graduate		Non-graduate	
	N	Row Percentage	N	Row Percentage
Average % days missed, grades 6-8				
0 to <2.5% absent	28,095	84.32	5,223	15.68
2.5 to <5% absent	16,132	72.54	6,108	27.46
5 to <10% absent	8,754	55.09	7,137	44.91
10% or more absent	1,359	27.00	3,675	73.00
Average % days missed, grades 9-12				
0 to <2.5% absent	22,547	88.07	3,053	11.93
2.5 to <5% absent	17,368	81.97	3,821	18.03
5 to <10% absent	11,668	63.87	6,600	36.13
10% or more absent	2,757	24.13	8,669	75.87

Figure 2. ISTEP+ and Graduation Rates by ADA Category



very poor and extremely poor attendance produced comparable ISTEP+ passing rates, at 16.5% and 16.7% respectively (Figure 2).

When looking at attendance patterns across a student's elementary career, student absences tend to be higher in the early grades, but decline in upper elementary grades (before ultimately increasing again in middle and high school grades). This "U-shaped" trend appears in other states' data on attendance as well (Buehler, Tapogna, & Chang, 2012). In Indiana, during their first three years of school, 6.35% of the kindergarten cohort missed 10% or more of school days, and another 23.5% missed 5% - 10% of days. However, in later grades, the same cohort had higher attendance rates. In grades 3-5, for instance, 3.6% of students missed 10% or more of school days. The percentage of students missing 5% - 10% of school days also decreased, from 23.5% to 18.45%.

Despite this upswing in attendance in upper elementary grades, attendance rates begin to fall as students approach middle and high school, with increasing percentages of students chronically or severely chronically absent. During middle school, 7.39% of students in the grade 6 cohort missed 10% or more of school days. Another 21% missed 5% - 10% of days during middle school. By the time these students reached high school, their chronic absence rates doubled. Nearly 15% of students in the grade 6 cohort missed 10% or more of school days in high school. Though not considered chronically absent, about 24% of students missed 5% - 10% of days.

As the CEEP study's data illustrate, chronic absence affects a significant number of Indiana public school students. Due to the exclusion of out-of-school suspensions from absence data, however, these numbers are likely underestimated, especially for older students. Cities and states that include suspensions in absentee data report proportionately higher rates of chronic or severe absenteeism, suggesting that Indiana's numbers would rise if these numbers were included. For example, when comparing Indiana's data to Baltimore and Oregon's data, which include suspensions, a smaller number of secondary students are chronically or severely absent (BERC, 2011a; Buehler, Tapogna, & Chang, 2012). In Indiana, the days missed as a result of a suspension are not counted as absences, even though the student is out of class and missing instruction, which is a policy unusual among other states. Cohort data used in the study show that roughly 10% of Indiana students in middle school and high school were suspended at least twice. In the 2010-11 school year, a total of 81,402 students were suspended at least once and over half of this number was generated in grades 7-10. These students accumulated a total of 412,816 days of suspension for an average of 5 days missed due to said suspensions (Catherine J. Danyluk, personal communication, April 17, 2012). Certainly, if the suspension data were included, the data on attendance would reflect a higher rate of absenteeism. Additionally, given that suspension is significantly correlated with dropout occurrences, including suspensions with attendance data would provide a clearer picture of the ways in which absenteeism is connected to school dropout data in Indiana.

Problematic attendance in Indiana is associated with higher levels of poverty. Research on attendance across the U.S. indicates that higher rates of absenteeism are associated with higher levels of poverty (Buehler, Tapogna, & Chang, 2012; Romero & Chang, 2008). At the student level, those who received FRL had higher rates of absenteeism than non-FRL students. Indiana schools with higher percentages of students receiving FRL had lower average daily attendance rates (Table 2). An exemplary or good average daily attendance standing for schools is associated with lower percentages of the complexity factors of FRL, Special Education, and Limited English Proficient students, while poor or very poor attendance rates among schools are associated with the highest percentages of those factors.

In particular, high percentages of students receiving FRL had the greatest impact on a school's attendance rates (Table 2). To illustrate, for urban schools the exemplary attendance group encompasses the lowest percentage of FRL (38.87%), and relatively low percentages of special education (16.29%) and LEP (2.75%) students. The poor and very poor categories contain a higher percentage of students participating in the FRL program (approximately 63%), and the extremely poor attendance group (three schools) has the highest percentage of students who are qualified for FRL at 97%.

Table 2. FRL, Special Education, and LEP by Locality and Average Daily Attendance Category (7-year Average)

Locale	Category	Number of Schools	Average Attendance Rate	Average FRL	Average SPED	Average LEP
Urban						
	Exemplary	10	98.13%	38.87%	16.29%	2.75%
	Good	342	96.10%	58.91%	16.57%	7.30%
	Poor	81	93.68%	62.73%	19.28%	6.56%
	Very Poor	14	86.95%	63.29%	28.42%	2.36%
	Extremely Poor	3	74.07%	96.72%	14.21%	1.92%
Suburban						
	Exemplary	11	97.71%	13.41%	14.23%	1.44%
	Good	421	96.32%	30.20%	15.02%	3.94%
	Poor	54	94.30%	52.49%	16.08%	6.97%
	Very Poor	6	86.15%	47.97%	51.90%	2.59%
	Extremely Poor	0	N/A*	N/A*	N/A	N/A
Town						
	Exemplary	1	98.85%	5.92%	14.04%	Missing**
	Good	169	96.05%	40.82%	16.59%	4.65%
	Poor	20	94.20%	44.02%	20.43%	2.27%
	Very Poor	1	86.73%	77.89%	86.26%[1]	Missing
	Extremely Poor	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Rural						
	Exemplary	19	97.83%	20.22%	15.00%	1.61%
	Good	625	96.34%	28.87%	15.78%	1.80%
	Poor	39	94.48%	36.55%	16.60%	2.06%
	Very Poor	1	81.91%	Missing	100.00%[2]	Missing
	Extremely Poor	1	74.07%	Missing	Missing	Missing

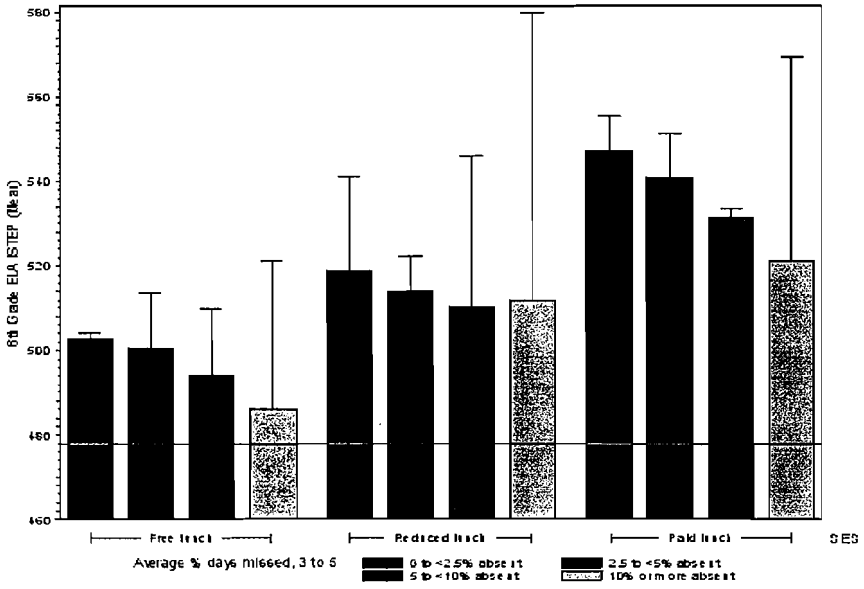
* N/A = not applicable; no schools classified in this category and locality
** Missing = no data available in the specific category
[1] North Campus Alternative School.
[2] Wabash/Miami Area Special Education Cooperative

When examining absenteeism in the cohort analysis by socioeconomic status (SES), compared to non-FRL students, students in the kindergarten cohort receiving FRL had higher rates of chronic absenteeism from kindergarten to grade 2. Approximately 33% of students who received free lunch were absent 5% - 10% of days (a range representing students at-risk of chronic absence); approximately 24% of students with reduced price lunch missed 5% - 10% of days, and 17% of non-FRL students missed 5% - 10% of days. Missing 10% or more of school days, or chronic absence, was more prevalent among students receiving free lunch (11.21%) than among students with reduced lunch prices (3.81%) or non-FRL students (2.4%). Among the kindergarten cohort, a similar pattern held in grades 3-5, as a greater percentage of students receiving free lunch (6.25%) were chronically absent than students receiving reduced lunch (3.81%) or students who paid for their own lunch (2.42%).

Among the grade 6 cohort, the difference between groups is quite dramatic, and becomes more pronounced in later grades. In grades 6-8, 13.8% of free lunch students, 6.78% of reduced lunch students, and 3.57% of paid lunch students were chronically absent. By grades 9-12, there was a significant rise in the percentage of students from each group who missed 10% or more of school days. In the free lunch group, 28.6% were chronically absent, followed by the reduced lunch group at 17%, with non-FRL lunch students at the lowest percentage of 9%. Given that students receiving free or reduced lunch have higher absenteeism rates and high rates of absenteeism are linked to lower ISTEP+ scores, it follows that, chronically absent students with FRL had lower ISTEP+ scores than their peers of a higher SES and with higher attendance rates (Figures 3 and 4).

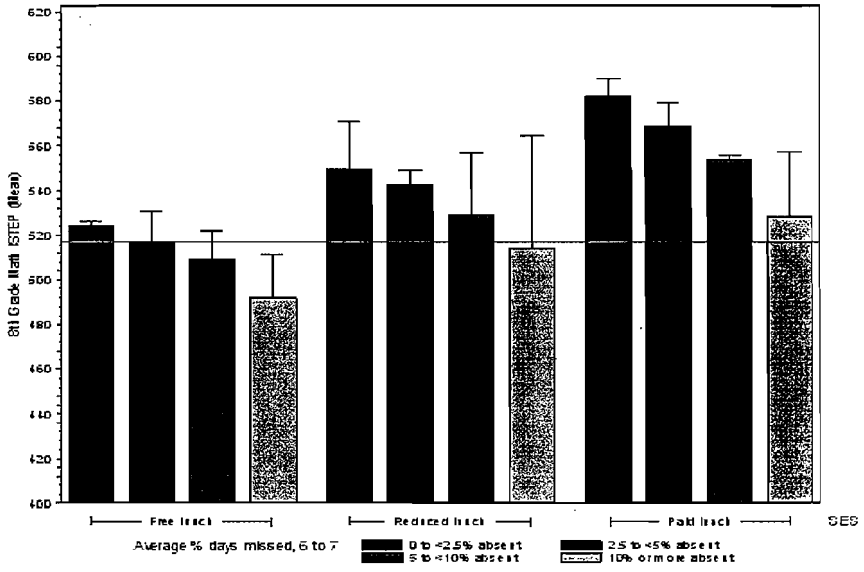
Attendance rates impact achievement for all racial groups. Indiana attendance data indicate that for all racial groups, students with higher attendance rates score higher on statewide tests. For example, among the kindergarten cohort, Asian students who missed five or fewer days scored 35 points higher on the English/Language Arts portion of the ISTEP+ in grade 3 than Asian students who were chronically absent (Figure 5). Similarly, Black students missing less than 2.5% of school days scored approximately 30 points higher on the English/Language Arts portion ISTEP+ in grade 3 than Black students who were chronically absent. Hispanic students who were chronically absent scored 26 points lower than Hispanic students who missed less than 5 days of school. Finally, among White students, those who missed 2.5% or less of school days had an average English/Language Arts ISTEP+ score that was 38 points higher than the average score of chronically

Figure 3. ISTEP+ Score for E/LA for Each Attendance Group by SES for Grade 6 (KG Cohort)



Note: Horizontal line represents passing score. Lines above the bars represent confidence intervals for the means, which are typically wider for smaller populations.

Figure 4. ISTEP+ Score for Math in Each Attendance Group by SES for Grade 8 (G6 Cohort)



Note: Horizontal line represents passing score. Lines above the bars represent confidence intervals for the means, which are typically wider for smaller populations.

absent White students. The same trend was found for the kindergarten cohort on the Math portion of the ISTEP+, as well as among the grade 6 cohort on the English/Language Arts and Math portions of the ISTEP+ (Spradlin et al., 2012a). For all racial groups, in both cohorts, attendance impacted achievement on the ISTEP+ (Spradlin et al., 2012a).

Chronically absent students are found throughout Indiana. Indiana's attendance data clearly illustrate that chronic absence occurs in all parts of the state. Average absence rates for the kindergarten and grade 6 cohorts were consistent across the Northern, Central, and Southern regions of Indiana (Table 3). A majority (70% - 72%) of Indiana's students fall into "missing less than 5% of school days" category. In all three regions, roughly 22% of students had absence rates between 5% - 10%. Additionally, approximately 5% of students in each region were chronically absent, missing between 10% - 20% of school. Finally, 0.3% - 0.5% of Indiana's students were severely chronically absent, missing more than 20% of school days. Clearly, chronic absenteeism is not concentrated in one region of Indiana, but occurs throughout the state.

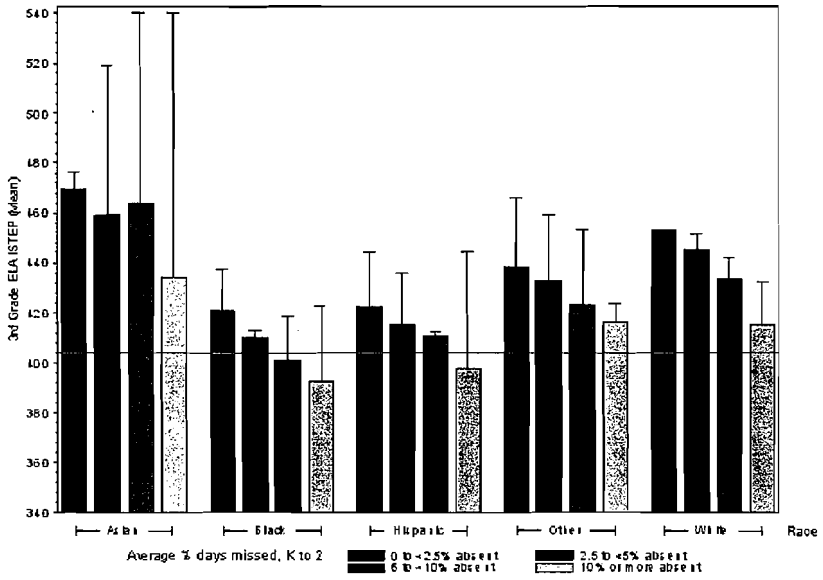
Data on absence rates in Indiana indicate that students are chronically absent in all types of settings throughout the state. Comparing cohort data by locality reveals that more students in the two cohorts attended rural schools than other types of schools, and rural schools had the highest percentage of students with attendance rates of 95% or greater, with 74.39% of students in this category. They also had the lowest percentage of chronically absent students (3.92%) and severely chronically absent students (.21%) (Table 4).

Suburban schools had the second highest percentage (73.13%) of students who miss less than 5% of school, and the second lowest percentage of chronically absent students (4.73%) as well as severely chronically absent students (0.30%). Urban schools had the highest percentage of students missing 5% - 10% of school days, at 24.45%, followed by town schools (23.33%), suburban schools (20.9%), and rural schools (20.7%). Urban schools also had the highest percentage of students (7.1%), and towns the second highest (5.9%) percentage of students, in the chronically absent category.

For both the kindergarten and grade 6 cohorts, urban schools had the highest percentage of severe chronic absences (0.66%), and town schools had the second highest (0.36%). Though percentages of chronic and severe chronic absenteeism vary by locale, chronically absent students appear in all settings (Figures 6-7).

Poor attendance is concentrated in a minority of schools; chronic absence data can help identify the most challenged. The final level of data analysis conducted for the CEEP study was the degree of chronic absenteeism for all students by school type (elementary, middle, high school, and other, with "other" including multiple grade configurations such as K-12, K-8, and grades 7-12), not cohort group. These data reflect total absences, both unexcused and excused absences, reported to the IDOE by every school corporation and charter school. Data were compiled for the 2008-09, 2009-10, and 2010-11 school years for the over 1 million students in the state. Fortunately, as the data indicate, high levels

Figure 5. ISTEP+ Score for Math in Each Attendance Group by Race/Ethnicity for Grade 3 (KG Cohort)



Note: Horizontal line represents passing score. Lines above the bars represent confidence intervals for the means, which are typically wider for smaller populations.

of poor attendance occur in a small percentage of schools in Indiana. Additionally, most schools have a small percentage of students who are chronically absent. During the 2010-11 school year, in over 82% of Indiana's elementary schools less than 5% of students were chronically absent. At the middle school level, most schools (55.63%) experience less than 5% chronic absenteeism, about one third of middle schools had between 5% - 10% of students with chronic absenteeism, just 8% of middle schools had between 10% and 15% of its students who were chronically absent, and only 3% of middle schools had a chronic absenteeism rate above 15%.

Indiana high school attendance data reveal, however, only around one quarter (25.6%) of high schools had less than 5% of students with chronic absence. In approximately 37% of high schools, 5% - 10% of the student body was chronically absent. In nearly one quarter (22.12%) of high schools, 10% - 15% of students were chronically absent, and more than 15% of high schools in Indiana had a chronic absence rate above 15%. Data for the 2009-10 school year are similar across

Table 3. Student Absenteeism Rates for Kindergarten and Grade 6 Cohorts by Region: 7-year Average

Days Missed		Northern	Central	Southern	Total
<5%	No. of Students	45,135	50,013	17,763	112,911
	Percentage	70.45%	70.86%	72.06%	70.88%
≥5% to <10%	No. of Students	14,697	15,462	5,321	35,480
	Percentage	22.94%	21.91%	21.59%	22.27%
≥10% to <20%	No. of Students	3,343	4,002	1,245	8,590
	Percentage	5.22%	5.67%	5.05%	5.39%
≥20%	No. of Students	215	347	89	651
	Percentage	0.34%	0.49%	0.36%	0.41%
Missing Data	No. of Students	676	755	232	1,663
	Percentage	1.06%	1.07%	0.94%	1.04%
Total Students	No. of Students	64,066	70,579	24,650	159,295

Table 4. Student Absenteeism Rates for Kindergarten and Grade 6 Cohorts by Locale: 7-year Average

Days Missed		Urban	Suburban	Town	Rural
<5%	No. of Students	24,881	33,155	10,283	41,948
	Percentage	66.52%	73.13%	69.40%	74.39%
≥5% to <10%	No. of Students	9,071	9,469	3,456	11,641
	Percentage	24.25%	20.89%	23.33%	20.65%
≥10% to <20%	No. of Students	2,649	2,143	887	2,211
	Percentage	7.08%	4.73%	5.99%	3.92%
≥20%	No. of Students	248	136	54	116
	Percentage	0.66%	0.30%	0.36%	0.21%
Missing Data	No. of Students	555	431	136	470
	Percentage	1.48%	0.95%	0.92%	0.83%
Total Students	No. of Students	37,404	45,334	14,816	56,386

Figure 6. Chronic Absence Rates for Kindergarten and Grade 6 Cohorts by Locality

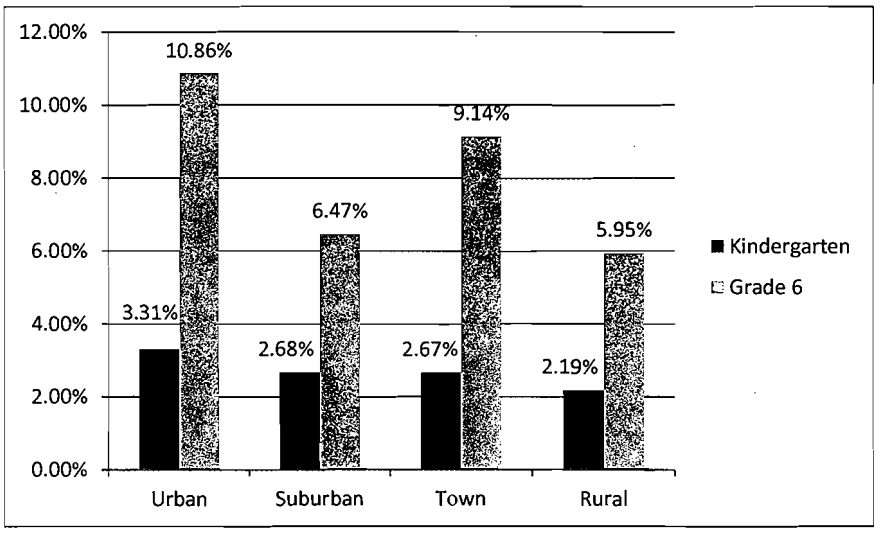
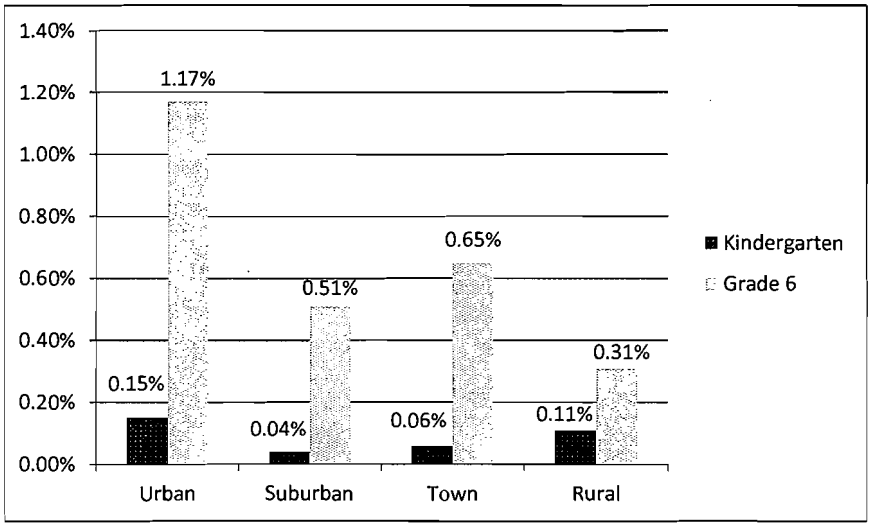


Figure 7: Severe Chronic Absence Rates for Kindergarten and Grade 6 Cohorts by Locality



grade levels. Chronic absence data can help to identify which schools are experiencing the largest number of students at risk due to poor attendance. Although school-level data can indicate which schools are struggling with attendance, allowing for school-wide interventions, data on individual student absence allow for more targeted interventions.

Table 5 illustrates the total number of students in Indiana in the categories of chronic absence or severe chronic absence by year, and the percentage of chronic or severe chronic absences at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. For example, during the 2008-09 school year, a total of 45,142 students were chronically absent and 7,686 students were severely chronically absent. Of the number of chronically absent students, 31.7% were enrolled in elementary school, 37.3% in middle schools, 19.3% in high schools, and 11.7% in schools with other grade configurations.

BEST PRACTICES

Research and experience show chronic absence can be reduced when schools, communities, and families work together to build a culture of attendance and remove barriers to school attendance (Chang & Romero, 2008; Larson & Rumberger, 1995; Smink & Reimer, 2005). One of the key elements of creating a culture of attendance is careful monitoring of attendance data. Without accurate attendance data, schools and districts will be unable to assess the needs of its students and provide appropriate interventions (Chang & Romero, 2008). Attendance Works, a national and state-level initiative aimed at raising awareness of the importance of school attendance, recommends setting attendance goals, providing attendance incentives, communicating with parents and families about the importance of attendance, providing individual intervention and outreach, and partnering with community agencies to address barriers to attendance. Other recommended changes include the creation of a meaningful and relevant curriculum and facilitating positive student relationships with adults or peers in the school (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Smink & Reimer, 2005).

Across the nation a number of best practices for improving attendance rates have been identified. Baltimore City Public Schools, for example, has adopted a number of initiatives aimed at raising attendance rates and preventing dropout. Additionally, the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC), an initiative of the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES), systematically reviews educational research literature and provides a summary of the effectiveness of interventions. Some of the interventions it has reviewed that have been identified as effective in improving attendance and graduation rates include Check & Connect, Achievement for Latinos through Academic Success (ALAS), and career academies. We conclude the best practices section with a brief discussion of attendance teams that have been established in middle and high schools in Indianapolis Public Schools.

Baltimore City Public Schools

Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS) partner with child welfare services and have an agreement that allows welfare workers to access attendance data for the youth they are monitoring. The attendance data are used as one means of providing early intervention and support for children who may be facing challenges such as high mobility (frequent

Table 5. Total Chronic and Severe Chronic Absenteeism by School Type and Year

		Chronic			Severe Chronic		
		2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Elementary	No. of Students	14,323	17,167	16,552	1,018	1,373	1,249
	Percentage	31.73%	34.84%	35.28%	13.24%	15.83%	15.40%
Middle	No. of Students	16,839	14,870	15,272	3,488	3,358	3,574
	Percentage	37.30%	30.18%	32.55%	45.38%	38.72%	44.08%
High	No. of Students	8,697	11,068	9,825	2,313	2,820	2,323
	Percentage	19.27%	22.46%	20.94%	30.09%	32.52%	28.65%
Other[1]	No. of Students	5,283	6,164	5,267	867	1,121	962
	Percentage	11.70%	12.51%	11.23%	11.28%	12.93%	11.86%
Total Students	No. of Students	45,142	49,269	46,916	7,686	8,672	8,108

[1] "Other" includes schools with multiple grade configurations such as K-12, K-8, or grades 7-12.

moves), homelessness, transportation issues, or physical or mental health problems within the family. Social workers use data on attendance to identify early warning signs and provide support for families. Data on individual student attendance allow for social workers to target support efforts to specific students. Through this program, social workers visited the homes of 315 kindergarten through grade 2 students during the summer, all of whom had been absent during the school year (Attendance Works, 2012a).

At Franklin Square Elementary in Baltimore, the principal and attendance monitor work closely together to address barriers to attendance. They have created a culture of attendance at Franklin Square, and students are expected to come to school. The school principal has an attendance dashboard, allowing daily tracking of attendance, and meets with the parents and families of all new students about attendance and the school's policies. The attendance monitor calls a student's home and sends a letter when a student is absent. Furthermore, community services have joined forces with the school in tackling barriers to attendance. Students receive free in-school dental care, haircuts, or clean uniforms because of the efforts of the community. Franklin Square also strives to provide an engaging environment through an intervention program called *Path to Pax*. The program teaches positive behavior techniques, including how to handle confrontations. A day care center and a Head Start program are housed in the school, and operate through partnerships with local sororities and churches. In recent years, Franklin Square's chronic absenteeism rate has been between 3% - 6%, as compared to Baltimore's citywide average of 14% for elementary and 17% of middle school students. The principal and attendance monitor say they promote the idea in school of treating people the way we want to be treated (Attendance Works, 2012b).

The City of Baltimore has implemented a *School Every Day!* initiative, which utilizes the help of volunteers to break down the barriers to school attendance by delivering alarm clocks, school uniforms, umbrellas, and winter coats to students and families in targeted neighborhoods. Volunteers connect families with support they need, whether material or emotional, create a peer-to-peer messaging system where older students write to younger students letting them know they are missed when they are absent, and solicit gift certificates from local merchants to offer incentives to students for good attendance. The goal of the program is to reduce chronic absenteeism by 20% in the neighborhoods where it operates. The program is funded by the Abell Foundation and housed in the BCPS Office of Engagement (Attendance Works, 2012c).

A number of programs aimed at improving attendance rates have adopted some or all of these measures and subsequently have proven to be effective. Though each program approaches intervention in a slightly different way, they all strive to improve attendance through addressing these common elements. Baltimore City Public Schools have made significant efforts to improve attendance across the district's schools, and have done so in a variety of ways. These efforts are important as the district continues to address high absence and drop-out rates. Currently, attendance data indicate that chronic absence rates in Baltimore's middle grades have been cut in half; however, rates for elementary and high schools have not changed (Attendance Works, 2012d).

Check & Connect

The Check & Connect program, which started as a dropout prevention program in Minneapolis high schools in the early 1990s, has expanded to elementary schools within the city as well as to school districts outside of Minneapolis due to its success. According to the program's website "Check & Connect is a comprehensive intervention designed to enhance student engagement at school and with learning for marginalized, disengaged students in grades K-12, through relationship building, problem solving and capacity building, and persistence. A goal of Check & Connect is to foster school completion with academic and social competence" (University of Minnesota, 2012). Districts utilizing the program look at absences and tardiness as signals that a child or family needs support and find mentors for students to provide that support.

In addition to monitoring attendance (*Check*), mentors work with students, parents, and teachers to promote participation and engagement in school (*Connect*). The Check & Connect program assigns mentors at the district level, allowing them to continue working with the same students and families in the event that they move or change schools within the district. The program emphasizes relationship building, problem solving, and strengthening students' and families' affiliation with school and learning. Significant improvements in student attendance, increased engagement in classrooms among students, and increased involvement of parents have been noted as positive effect of the Check & Connect program (Lehr, Sinclair, & Christianson, 2004; Sinclair et al., 1998; Smink & Reimer, 2005).

Research indicates that Check & Connect improves attendance, enrollment, and odds of graduation for students who are at risk of dropout. Anderson, Christianson, Sinclair, and Lehr (2004) reported that the mentor-student relationship improves engagement for elementary students. The What Works Clearinghouse reports that available research indicates the Check & Connect program has positive effects for staying in school and potentially positive effects on progressing in

school (What Works Clearinghouse, 2006c). Additionally, the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network lists Check & Connect as one of its model strategies in the area of mentoring/tutoring (Smink & Reimer, 2005).

Achievement for Latinos through Academic Success (ALAS)

Achievement for Latinos through Academic Success (ALAS, which is Spanish for "wings") is another intervention aimed at middle and high school students to increase attendance and prevent student dropout. The program was developed by Katherine Larson and Russell Rumberger at the University of California, Santa Barbara in partnership with the U.S. Department of Education, and aims to address student, school, family, and community factors that influence attendance and student dropout rates. ALAS features six related intervention strategies: (1) monitor attendance, (2) improve student social and task-related problem-solving skills, (3) provide feedback from teachers to parents and students, (4) teach parents how to participate in school and manage child behavior, (5) provide recognition and bonding activities, and (6) connect students and families with community services (Larson & Rumberger, 1995). The What Works Clearinghouse rates ALAS as a potentially positive intervention for staying in school and progressing in school, based on existing literature on the intervention (What Works Clearinghouse, 2006a).

During the implementation of ALAS in Los Angeles County from 1990-1995, students received 10 weeks of problem solving instruction as well as two years of continued problem-solving prompting and counseling (Larson & Rumberger, 1995). Given that "disruptive social and task-related behavior is the student characteristic which most disturbs teachers and school staff" and correlates more with school failure over achievement, Larson and Rumberger felt this focus was necessary (1995, p. A-22). Another core aspect of the ALAS program is bonding activities with students. Larson and Rumberger (1995) utilize research that indicates dropouts and ethnic and racial minorities report feeling much less a sense of membership in the school than other students (p. A-23).

Frequent teacher feedback is also provided to the parent and student, which parents reported to find helpful. Furthermore, the ALAS program worked with parents regarding school participation and teen management. The parent program provided training related to the philosophies of educators, the practices and procedures of the schools, when and how to contact school personnel, due process and legal rights of parents and students, when and how to monitor adolescent behavior, and how to monitor the adolescent's school behavior and performance. ALAS personnel worked closely with parents in connecting them with community services and facilitating communication between them (Larson & Rumberger, 1995).

Career Academies

Career academies seek to make the curricula more relevant, meaningful, and practical for students. Like Check & Connect, career academies were originally developed as a dropout prevention strategy, but have expanded in use because of their effectiveness. Career academies have been around for over 30 years and feature a school-within-a-school structure. Often, the academies "are guided by a career theme such as health care, finance, technology, communications, or public service" (What Works Clearinghouse, 2006b, p. 2). Career academies may partner with local employers who offer internship opportunities and mentoring or contribute resources to students (What Works Clearinghouse, 2006b). The National Career Academy Coalition (NCAC) details three common aspects of career academies: "a small learning community, or group of students within the larger high school, who take classes together for at least two years, and are taught by a team of teachers from different disciplines; a college preparatory curriculum with a career theme, enabling students to see relationships among academic subjects, and their application to a broad field of work; and partnerships with employers, the community, and local colleges, bring resources from outside the high school to improve student motivation and achievement" (National Career Academy Coalition, 2012).

The Career Academy Support Network (CASN) reports that there are over 500 career academies in California alone, and that career academies "have been evaluated since their inception, and have a strong track record of improved attendance, credits, grades, and graduation rates among participants" (Career Academy Support Network (2012). In 2009, the NCAC named 16 career academies in the U.S. as "model" academies. All model academies adhere to the 10 National Standards of Practice and are evaluated by a consortium of career academy organizations (National Career Academy Coalition, 2012). Model academies include The Business Academy (the BIZ) in Florida, Health Sciences and Human Services Academy in Arizona; Technology Tower Academy in Texas, and Ridgewood Academy for Health Professionals in New Jersey, to name a few. Career academies continue to be utilized throughout the nation as one means of improving attendance and graduation rates.

Creating Attendance Teams

During the 2008-09 school year, all middle and high schools in Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) adopted an intervention strategy called "College Pathway Teams," comprised of school administrators, guidance counselors, college support staff, parent liaisons, and families. Teams focused on creating a college-going culture within each school. In the 2010-11 school year, College Pathway Teams were converted to Attendance Teams. Team members met regularly to create goals for increasing attendance rates, through utilizing data on chronically absent students to focus outreach to students and families. During that school year, IPS created a rubric reflecting best practices for engaging families and increasing attendance. While all IPS attendance teams received $500 as an incentive for engaging families, the four schools that showed the most attendance progress and implemented strategies to engage families each received an award of $5,000 (J. Garvey, personal communication, April 24, 2012). Attendance Teams provide a means for setting attendance goals, monitoring attendance, collaborating with families, and offering incentives to schools that demonstrate improvement.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Attendance matters for all students and this report has quantified the degree to which good attendance contributes to student success. However, Indiana must improve its policies and guidelines to ensure the availability of reliable data and timely identification of students at risk of academic failure due to poor performance. Teachers, administrators, community and family members, as well as policymakers should pay attention to the attendance of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, since they are more vulnerable to chronic absence. All stakeholders must work collaboratively to provide a welcoming, engaging learning environment at school to encourage these students to attend school regularly. Once truancy begins, early intervention strategies should be implemented.

Recommendations

For Policymakers

1. Indiana should adopt the definition of chronic absence that is consistent with the definition being used in the national discussion of students missing 10% or more of the school year, and include both excused and unexcused absences in this definition.
2. Indiana should change its current statutory definition of chronic absence, which is 10 days of unexcused absences, to serve only as a definition of truancy.
3. Indiana should change existing policy established in the IDOE-AT Report and corresponding guidance that excludes out-of-school suspensions from attendance and absence rate calculations. It is not clear why this exemption exists as students are certainly not in attendance at school nor typically receiving educational services. This allows for artificially higher attendance rates and lower reported levels of chronic and severe chronic absence rates than truly exist. This policy change would align the state with the policies of the other states that have conducted similar chronic absenteeism studies.
4. Indiana should implement either clear and consistent policies and guidance or rules for the definitions of excused and unexcused absences. The data analysis revealed that many schools report no unexcused absences or extremely low levels of unexcused absences – far lower than the excused absence numbers. This appears counterintuitive. Clearly the lack of state-level guidance on this issue has led to discrepancies in the ways that excused and unexcused absences are defined and reported. This must be addressed.
5. Indiana should identify chronic absence as an attendance measure to be tracked, monitored, and reported to enable the IDOE to better assess absenteeism and address it at the school, district, and state level. Similarly, Indiana may choose to explore the possibility of adding chronic absence as a performance index for school accountability, to be considered as a factor in targeting and prioritizing schools for intervention strategies.

For Educators

1. Indiana schools should track individual students' attendance, identify students with chronic absenteeism, implement appropriate interventions, and work with families to improve student attendance.
2. Attendance teams should identify barriers to attendance and address them through interventions, such as partnering (collaborating) with community organizations to address needs of families and students.
3. Administrators should work closely with classroom teachers to identify students with a pattern of absence and collaborate with one another to identify barriers to attendance and provide early intervention.
4. Teachers should strive to create a rich, engaging, and safe classroom environment for students, so they are excited about attending school.
5. Indiana schools should set attendance goals and monitor progress.
6. Indiana schools should provide incentives or rewards, such as recognition certificates, and prizes or gifts cards donated by the community, to students with good attendance.

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