

Letter to the Legislators of Indiana and State Board of Education:

As the superintendents of Indiana Association of Public School Superintendents (IAPSS) District VIII Schools we want to express concerns about the results of the past two years of ISTEP testing and how these questionable test results can be used to label our schools. As our parents and community members know, across the state our local public schools provide the curricular framework for over one million students to be successful in today's competitive workforce.

To be clear, drastic changes were made to the ISTEP in each of the last two years, and overall across the state the test scores show a significant drop from the 2013-2014 scores in all tested subjects and at all tested grade levels. We feel that these new tests were developed hastily and do not accurately measure the students' ability and their mastery of the Indiana Standards. Additionally, we know that our teachers were not given ample time to adjust curriculum and instruction to prepare students for these more rigorous assessments. We believe that changes in the test structure along with arbitrarily set cut scores are producing the significant drops in passing rates.

As school leaders, we are all for accountability, however, we strongly believe that the methods used to provide this accountability must be reliable and valid, and must go beyond one test score. We further believe that educators must be given a strong voice in developing a new accountability system that will give a more accurate picture of the quality of work being done by the students, teachers and staff members in our public schools.

In the meantime, as the work to develop a new accountability system is still in progress, we implore our elected officials to not use the results of this flawed ISTEP assessment to place inaccurate labels (letter grades) on our public schools. The A-F grading system needs to be paused and schools need to be provided with a hold harmless provision from the results of the 2015-2016 ISTEP, similar to what was done last year.

Refusing to provide a hold harmless provision fails to take into account the fact that for the second year in a row, ISTEP results have not been released in a timely manner, which significantly reduces the opportunity to provide remediation to improve student performance. Additionally, using this flawed test to place inaccurate labels on our schools will negatively impact the perception of Indiana communities and the education we provide for our students. Our students and parents deserve better. This will also continue the false negative rhetoric surrounding public education which is contributing to the severe shortage of teacher candidates we are experiencing in our state.

In closing, we firmly believe that these test scores do not accurately reflect our students' yearly achievement and the great job our teachers do each day in the classroom. These test scores should not be used to give a letter grade to our schools or school districts, and our elected officials need to re-evaluate what impact this flawed assessment system is having on public education. A hold harmless provision from the 2015-16 ISTEP results for our schools and students is the right thing to do, and we call upon our state leaders to take a stance in support of public education in Indiana.

Signed: District VIII Superintendents

Tom Hunter	Greensburg Schools	Terry Sargent	Jennings County Schools
Rob Moorhead	South Ripley Schools	Marc Slaton	Scott County #2 Schools
Johnny Budd	Decatur County Schools	Greg Walker	Brownstown Schools
Mark Eastridge	South Harrison Schools	Steve Morris	Lanesville Schools
Trevor Jones	SW Jefferson County Schools	Tim Taylor	JCD Schools
Andrew Melin	Greater Clark Schools	Andrew Jackson	Sunman Dearborn Schools
Bruce Hibbard	New Albany/Floyd County Schools	Branden Roeder	Rising Sun Schools
Chad Schenck	West Clark Schools	Debbie Howell	Franklin County Schools

Ginger Bolinger	Madison Cons. Schools	John Mehrle	South Dearborn Schools
John Thomas	North Harrison Schools	Kim Knott	Clarksville Schools
Karl Galey	Lawrenceburg Schools	Keith Nance	West Washington Schools
Lynn Reed	Salem Schools	Paul Ketcham	Milan Schools
Mike Jones	Switzerland County Schools	Robert Anderson	Scott County #1 Schools
Roger Bane	Medora Schools	Dennis Stockdale	East Washington Schools
Laura Hammack	Brown County Schools	Shawn Price	Flat Rock- Hawcreek Schools
Rob Hooker	Seymour Schools	Terry Goodin	Crothersville Schools