

The Indiana Association of School Principals (IASP)

**2023 LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM**

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The IASP is a 501c3 & 501c6 non-profit association of 3300 members serving Indiana's Schools and their leadership.

*Acknowledgements*

Thanks to the 2023 Legislative Committee members for their work and dedication in reviewing and updating the IASPs position regarding educational issues facing today's lawmakers. The following association members served on the 2023 Committee:

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## Contents

Administrative Leadership.....	4
SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING.....	5
Professional Due Process.....	5
Recruitment.....	5
Compensation.....	6
Dropout Prevention (DOP).....	6
Assessment.....	7
Funding.....	8
Teacher Recruitment and Learning.....	9
Teaching and Learning.....	9
Home Schooling.....	10
Technology/Digital Citizenship.....	11
Alternative Education.....	11
Special Needs Programs.....	12
English Language Learners.....	13
The Fine Arts/Practical Arts, Physical Education, Co-curricular, Student Leadership, and Service Learning Education.....	13
Accountability.....	14
Best Practices Strategies.....	14
Professional Development.....	15
Effective Use of Administrative Time.....	16
Professional Negotiations.....	16
Ethnic and Racial Minorities.....	17
Professional Standards/Licensure.....	17
School Vouchers.....	18
School Choice.....	18
School/Community Partners.....	18
Hold Harmless.....	19
Consolidation.....	19
School Calendar.....	19

# Administrative Leadership

The Indiana Association of School Principals (IASP) believes that developing and supporting competent leadership throughout Indiana's schools is the key to increasing and enhancing learning opportunities for students. IASP supports legislation that recognizes the expertise and critical role of building-level leaders.

IASP believes the principal is an educational leader, and:

- School building leaders use their role as human capital manager to drive improvements in teacher effectiveness and student achievement.
- School building leaders are acutely focused on effective teaching and learning, possess a deep and comprehensive understanding of best instructional practices, and continuously promote activities that contribute to the academic success of all students.
- School building leaders model personal behavior that sets the tone for all student and adult relationships in the school.
- School building leaders build relationships to ensure that all key stakeholders work effectively with each other to achieve transformative results.
- School building leaders develop a school-wide culture of achievement aligned to the school's vision of success for every student.
- School building leaders leverage organizational, operational, and resource management skills to support school improvement and achieve desired educational outcomes.
- Fully supports the creation and continued funding of the Indiana Principals Leadership Institute (IPLI) and Indiana New Administrators Leadership Institute (INALI) as a means for continuous professional development

IASP believes in legislation that supports:

- The building principal as the educational leader responsible for monitoring curriculum and leading instructional improvement.
- The building principal leads the evaluation process which is designed to foster growth in all staff.
- These leaders' efforts in designing, implementing, and monitoring learning experiences that meet the appropriate developmental needs of all students.

# Social-Emotional Learning

IASP believes that:

- Inclusion of a Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) framework in our K-12 Schools in Indiana is essential. Across the state, our schools use SEL to help facilitate the development of a variety of skills required to be successful beyond K-12; in the workplace, post-secondary education, or the military. We believe SEL provides a positive foundation for learning as an increasing number of our students are coming to our schools with more social and emotional **deficiencies**. We believe it is necessary to foster the understanding and skills for well-rounded student development. IASP believes that schools should be transparent **and inclusive** in regard to the SEL offerings in our schools.
- **Additional funding sources for counselors, social workers, and/or mental health support are necessary and critical.**

## Professional Due Process

IASP believes that:

- Protection of the rights and personal welfare is essential for an educational leader to carry out professional responsibilities without fear of reprisal.
- In the protection of school staff serving the best interests of the school community and its stakeholders against inappropriate outside intimidation and/or threats
- If the governing body of a school corporation is considering non-renewal of an administrator's contract, the administrator should be provided a notice no later than January 1 of the current year with a written statement of the reasons leading to such a decision.
- Given the critical role of the building administrator, principals must be provided sufficient support and resources to plan, coordinate, and exercise leadership in the implementation of the instructional program at the building level.
- Process for evaluating building administrators should provide and include timely feedback. The evaluation should be completed annually and include objective evidence based indicators.

## Building Administrator Recruitment and Retention

IASP believes that:

- Selection of principals must be based on qualities of instructional leadership grounded in established knowledge and skills that result in good instructional practice and learning. Principals who lack proper administrative course work have difficulty in being effective instructional leaders.
- The principal's position is highly demanding and highly qualified individuals are needed to serve in these leadership roles. Principal candidates should be developed from within

the professional teaching ranks. In order to foster and maintain this pool, principals must be valued and compensated appropriately.

- Racial and ethnic diversity will further demonstrate the recognition of minority contributions and serve as effective role models for minority students.

## Compensation

IASP believes that:

- While salaries for Indiana educators continue to remain low; given the educational and skill requirements, there is no question that compensation for building administrators in many communities has made the job less appealing to quality teachers.
- Salaries for principals must be based on an evaluation process and not only student assessment scores and school grades. Standardized assessment scores correlate with poverty levels and mobility; this could jeopardize the recruitment of qualified principals for low socio-economic communities.
- Merit compensation should be based on locally developed metrics.
- Indiana teacher retirement lags behind neighboring states; therefore, we believe Indiana teacher retirement must be improved to be competitive with surrounding states.
- A comparative study of retirement and compensation systems should be done on a continuous basis in the State and with other Midwest states **in an effort to increase our competitive value.**

## Dropout Prevention (DOP)

IASP believes that:

- DOP *is* an important part of all K-12 education; strategies to work with stakeholders are vital. IASP is in full support of reviewing, **and enforcing** laws regarding attendance, curfew, work permits and driver's license for all students. The state should recognize and consider these factors when drafting legislation or enacting policy which then impacts school practices.
- Students completing high school graduation requirements outside their cohort should not count against the graduation rate. The graduation rate should reflect those eligible for a diploma but be able to account for issues such as student timeline, Individual Education Program (IEP), mortality, incarceration, health, mobility, or other extenuating circumstances.
- It is important for accountability purposes to ensure transfers and withdrawals are properly tracked by state agencies and graduation rates for schools are not negatively affected by circumstances beyond their control.
- Interventions for preventing dropouts and expulsions should be communicated by schools to state agencies in order to illustrate efforts made by schools for keeping students on track to graduate on time in their cohorts.

# Assessment

IASP believes that:

- Diverse abilities and learning potential of students must be identified and developed; in addition, fair and effective assessment processes for diagnosing and prescribing the needs of learners must be used.
- Testing must be viewed in context as one tool among a variety to gauge academic progress. The use of single, high stakes test scores often present an inaccurate picture of academic progress.
- School improvement must be based on annual proficiency and growth. Available assessments for high school students should measure individual academic growth. These assessments should supplement additional measures used for accountability. Assessments are effective when they are administered and scored promptly, and minimally impact instructional time. Assessments should measure, as well as promote, student achievement consistent with authentic and meaningful curriculum and instruction.
- Mobility factors must be considered when evaluating schools. All effort should be made to maintain the current 162 day student enrollment factor for purposes of school accountability.
- To best impact learning, **timely assessment feedback is critical**. We encourage the State of Indiana to explore the expansion of technology and funding to administer, score, and disaggregate data in a more efficient manner. We would also encourage the rescore information to be provided during the school year (not during the summer) when administrators are under contracted time.
- We would encourage that schools should receive valuable student performance data before determining a recommendation for rescoring.
- The standard setting process for scores is academically sound and appropriate; for example, utilizing the skills of highly qualified professional educators. Any challenges to this process by the State Board of Education must be based on similar rigid, academically sound criteria.
- Ample time for attainment of the standards must be allotted before the standards are raised. This allows schools to properly assess the academic growth of their students. In reporting assessment results to the public, explanations must be included which detail limitations of the instruments used and that test results must be reported in terms broader than single-score national and/or state norms.
- Student retention on a single assessment such as IREAD3, is not a research-based best practice.
- Educators must be provided adequately funded and continuous professional development for administering and interpreting data to promote higher achievement by students, and to enhance professional practice.

- The use of test scores must not be the criterion in the dismissal or reassignment of principals.
- Reporting test data should be identified as “Preliminary” until all final results are determined.

The IASP supports efforts that require both public and non-public schools to meet the same standards established through the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE).

## Funding

The IASP believes that:

- Measuring the percent of state and local funding directed to classroom instruction must reflect all personnel impacting student learning.
- The primary responsibility for providing public education rests with the state. In light of judicial decisions highlighting disparities in providing equitable educational opportunities, we urge the legislature to develop plans and/or formulas that increase financial support for education and ensure the equitable distribution of resources for public education.
- School funding is at risk under property tax caps. Recognition of this impact should be reflected in the school funding formula and in how school corporations can manage operational funds.
- The state must be responsible for timely and equitable funding of formative assessments for all grade levels.
- The state should continue to fund PSAT and expand the testing to the 9<sup>th</sup> grade level.
- Any legislation requiring schools to provide programs, curriculum, services, and/or facilities must provide timely, full and complete funding and professional development commensurate with those mandates without negatively impacting existing programs.
- We call upon the legislature to fully fund at 100% all textbooks, related materials, and digital sources for all students.
- The minimum funding level for all schools should be established at the original base foundation grant per student. An increase in tuition support is essential in the development of the school funding formula. Indiana must raise foundation support for all students and adjust the dollar amounts in the complexity index to more adequately reflect the true costs of closing the achievement gap for free and reduced lunch students.
- Additional funding for limited English and special education students should be provided reflecting the costs of educating these growing populations. Indiana should fund Average Daily Membership (ADM) growth.
- Funding should be provided for remediation throughout the school year, as well as summer school, for students who need additional support to achieve academic goals. Funding that permits schools to offer courses that will make it possible for students following the most challenging curriculum to earn credits in summer school must be allocated.

- The Indiana General Assembly (IGA) should honor its commitment to Indiana’s educators and fully fund the Indiana State Teachers Retirement Fund.
- Indiana should take advantage of Title II monies, which, in conjunction with ESSA, will be allowed to set aside money for administrative professional development.
- **Midterm graduates should be fully funded according to ADM.**

## Teacher Recruitment and Retention

**There exists a reduced number of teaching candidates entering teacher education programs and entering the teaching profession.**

IASP believes that:

- The shortage in quality and quantity of teacher candidates must be directly addressed by all stakeholders.
- Teacher pay and benefits must be funded to a level which brings Indiana teachers in line with Midwest and national teacher pay and benefits.
- Flexibility in teacher licensing should exist to allow schools in areas where recruitment of fully licensed teachers is limited, to be able to hire quality people to put in front of students. Funding needs to be provided for teachers to seek and obtain proper licensure in high need areas.
- Appropriate resources must be allocated to provide professional development for incoming teachers, including but not limited to, pedagogy, salary and benefit information, loan repayment information, and managing the educator workload.
- Positive promotion of the education profession should be the responsibility of all stakeholders
- The impact of future decisions on teacher shortage should be considered. These include licensing issues, curricular requirements, and high school diploma requirements.

## Teaching and Learning

### Early Childhood Education

IASP believes that:

- Fully funded Preschool, according to the P-16 plan, provides an economic development tool for Indiana and provides a way to help close student achievement gaps. A focus should be placed on the highest need children.
- Full day kindergarten should be required and funded as a full day equivalent in the regular funding formula including staff and facilities.
- In order to insure the success of the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading initiative, the state should directly fund low student-teacher ratios to allow appropriate teaching, learning, and assessment of individual student needs.

## Student Discipline

IASP believes that:

- Parents perform a critically important role in recognizing that maintenance of a safe and orderly environment in schools is essential to effective teaching and learning.
- School leaders must develop and maintain positive working relationships with their local judicial and law enforcement agencies. Courts and communities must consistently support the position of the school when removing students for offenses that may risk the safety and welfare of others in the school, as well as securing appropriate placement of these students outside the school setting when deemed in the best interest of the students and the entire school. Communication between agencies and the school is vital to promote safety within the schools.
- School leaders must build on and support best practices that include pro-active strategies geared towards supporting positive student behaviors, and community-wide initiatives that decrease disproportionate minority suspensions, expulsions and arrests.
- Providing educational services and interventions for students who need care requires additional costs to local schools. Funding for programs that serve as alternatives to suspension and expulsion should be included.
- In matters of discipline, principals are fully committed to assuring a safe and effective learning environment for all students.

## Home Schooling

IASP believes that:

- Appropriate agencies and authority must be provided to make certain that those who exercise this option are held accountable for the academic achievement and social/emotional growth of students. Schools must be permitted to assess the educational level of a child entering from a non-traditional learning environment prior to appropriate placement. Sufficient evidence of homeschool instruction and learning utilizing a standard or State approved format/transcript must be maintained and provided to a school upon enrollment.
- All home school students must register with the IDOE, receive a Student Testing Number (STN) and take the state assessment at a state appointed facility.
- Home schooling students should be provided:
  - Social interaction with students of other social/racial/ethnic groups.
  - Full range of curriculum experiences and materials;
  - Instruction by certified and qualified personnel;
  - Assessments of the state academic standards;
  - The accurate diagnosis of and planning for meeting the needs of children with special talents, learning difficulties, and other conditions requiring atypical educational programs.

# Technology/Digital Citizenship

IASP believes that:

- Providing increased local funds to hire technology/instructional coaches to improve the use of technology as an instructional tool. This would require less teacher time outside of the classroom.
- IASP urges individual districts to use their sources of technology to maintain an open line of communication between the district and stakeholders.
- The state must provide adequate funds to increase building technology capacity in schools if all students are to be adequately prepared to live and work in a changing world.
- The state must provide adequate funds to increase awareness and training in regard to cyber-bullying and the appropriate use of social media in our communities and state.
- Appropriate allocations and training of staff are critical for educators to effectively implement online testing. This issue is elevated at both the local and state level given the increased emphasis of online assessments and results for data analysis and accountability.
- Educators are well-served by integrating future technology into effective educational practices through ongoing staff development that is funded by the state legislature.
- The state must invest in providing reliable broadband technology in our rural areas so that they are not disadvantaged in the digital age.

# Alternative Education

IASP believes that:

- Future Virtual Schools must be based on pilot reviews and existing standards. These schools serve a specific need and student population and should not be construed as a means to avoid school accountability.
- Alternative education programs must:
  - Be constructed to meet the needs of individual students, schools, and communities;
  - Have a clear statement of guidelines, procedures, and academic goals;
  - Include parent involvement in the planning and development of local programs;
  - Be an opportunity for local schools, given sufficient and equitable funding, to provide unique programs/training;

- Permit waivers of appropriate statutes, rules, and regulations, as they are able to enhance learning performances;
- Take into account equal access for all students in a district;
- Not exceed class size limits;
- Be fully funded when mandated or dictated by best practice;
- Have as their foundation the approval of the local boards of education and be staffed by licensed teachers and principals;
- Provide schools with flexibility to meet requirements of the new Graduation Pathways.

## Special Needs Programs

IASP believes in:

- Supporting programs for students with special needs, including, but not necessarily limited to: at-risk, developmentally and emotionally disabled, high ability, socio-economically disadvantaged, and students with limited English proficiency are essential.
- **Supporting alternate licensing or flexible timelines to encourage teachers to enter Special Education/Speech Pathologists**
- The basic concepts embodied in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.
- The inclusion of special education students in regular classrooms with their peers when appropriate.
- The right of school administrators to determine the appropriateness of a Section 504 plan for students with medical needs only if necessary.
- Reducing the burden of excessive paperwork that is imposed on personnel, thereby detracting from their effectiveness in the instructional program.
- Appropriate full funding, staff development, and timely support services following these students.
- The uniqueness and importance of the course completion certification for special needs students should be recognized and not included in a high school's dropout rate.

## English Language Learners

IASP believes that:

- When a student arrives at school with limited or no ability to speak English, he or she is at an immediate and significant disadvantage in terms of benefiting from the curriculum. Instructional efforts must be supported with adequate funds and other resources, accompanied by an understanding of each English Learner's (EL) progress in learning English and subject-matter information.
- A student whose first language is not English must be given the state assessments only after he or she has become proficient in academic English. The student's inclusion in school accountability should be a gradual inclusion.
- The assessment of the achievement of English Language Learners must be based on a growth model that measures their progress from year to year.
- Funding should match the level of service required to educate English Learners

*\***English Learners** are sometimes referred to as Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students, or English Language Learners (ELL).*

## **The Fine Arts/Practical Arts, Physical Education, Co-curricular, Student Leadership, and Service Learning Education**

IASP believes that:

- The arts, physical education, and all co-curricular services, are a vital part of any school's curriculum, and therefore affirm that these programs must be an integral part of the total instructional program. These curricula facilitate creative thinking, wellness, and expression, provide relevancy to the curriculum, and have a positive impact on student achievement and personal growth.
- We also believe that they are a functional part of the broad vocational demands of our society and therefore affirm that they must be an integral part of the basic curriculum. We urge allocation of adequate funds for these areas, effectively taught by licensed teachers within each discipline.

# Accountability

IASP believes that:

- In order for accountability to produce positive outcomes for the student, educational objectives, which include affective and cognitive components, must be created in all districts and have full financial support.
- Accountability models, K-12, should have an appropriate balance of qualitative and quantitative measures. Accountability grades should be a comprehensive representation of a school's impact on students and the community, and account for the diverse grade level configurations that exist throughout the state.
- Stakeholders involved with students' educational growth and development should be jointly accountable for the education of all students.
- Principals should be given resources to fully affect change as the Indiana Academic Standards are implemented. This would include adequate resources and supports for professional development aligned to assessment results.
- A fair and equitable accountability system for schools should be implemented statewide. This system must account for the volume and pace of change occurring with standards, assessments and accountability measures and schools and communities should not be negatively impacted upon initial implementation.
- Consider indicators of our students' preparation for success after high school. These indicators include, but may not be limited to: (1) Academic mastery (2) Career and postsecondary readiness (credentials and experience) (3) Communication and collaboration (4) Work ethic (5) Civic, financial, and digital literacy.
- Empower educators by defining clear expectations for student knowledge in the Indiana GPS characteristics.
- Support families and community stakeholders by providing them meaningful, relevant, and transparent information about school progress and performance.
- Elevate the highest-performing schools as models of excellence, and identify other schools for additional support.
- Encourage school districts/corporations to provide some level of input as to the indicators used in their school assessment.

## Best Practices Strategies

IASP believes :

- All students can learn. It is incumbent upon all principals, as instructional leaders, to explore with stakeholders best teaching practices, diverse learning styles, and developmentally appropriate materials to provide the best opportunities for success for all students. We believe in;
  - Differentiated Instruction is a key to student achievement

- Waivers of appropriate statutes, rules, and regulations are available for all schools equally
  - Avoidance of fostering segregation by race, social, economic, or developmental disability
  - Indiana principals should be qualified and licensed administrators.
- At the same time, any school receiving public funds must maintain proven elements of quality education, including, but not limited to:
    - Certified principals and instructors who support and guide the learning process;
    - Educator-developed curricula based on current research and best practice;
    - Human relations skills developed through social interactions and communication within a diverse population; and,
    - Multiple assessments that are valid, reliable, appropriate to the curricula, and provide timely feedback.

## Professional Development

IASP believes:

- Continuous opportunities for professional development must be provided to all staff. Adequate time and resources are critical to continuous, results-oriented professional growth, which positively affects student achievement/learning.
- The Indiana General Assembly, the IDOE, and local districts must recognize that the investment in professional development for all staff will result in more effective instruction leading to improved student performance. Professional development must be adequately funded and supported at the state and local levels.
- Ongoing professional development that focuses on knowledge, skills, and dispositions to improve the principal's ability to lead and manage are essential. These skills can be enhanced for newer administrators through programs like the Indiana New Administrators Leadership Institute (INALI) which is sponsored by the Association.
- We affirm the evaluation of staff performance as a vital part of instructional improvement in our schools; a major responsibility of the principal. The principal has the responsibility

for performance assessment of all staff and must be involved in the development of evaluative criteria and procedures.

- Flexibility must be restored to local school communities regarding use of professional days.
- Training (release time) should be provided for state mandates, e.g. diabetes, CPR, bullying, airborne pathogens, autism and teen suicide. These training sessions should be streamlined to preserve educator time with students.

## **Effective Use of Administrative Time**

IASP believes that:

- The state should seek additional efforts to streamline procedures and paperwork for school administrators and provide training for certified staff.
- Information and data from the IDOE need to be easily accessible, current, consistent and accurate.
- Any changes in reporting practices or forms must be provided to school personnel in a timely manner.
- Rules and statutes must be waived or repealed that place an undue burden on administrative time.

## **Professional Negotiations**

IASP believes that:

- The process of professional negotiations is part of educational decision making, particularly concerning the condition of professional service. Many of these negotiated agreements yield decisions that have a serious impact on the educational programs for which principals are held accountable. It is, therefore, imperative that principals must have a role in the negotiations process in order to capitalize on their unique perspective of the complex factors in educating our students.

## **Ethnic and Racial Minorities**

IASP believes that:

- It is paramount that policies and practices that promote the recruitment, placement, and retention of school leaders are reflective of the diversity found in our schools and communities.

## **Professional Standards/Licensure**

IASP believes that:

- The importance of standards-based certification should provide as much flexibility as possible in recruiting a quality licensed teaching staff.
- New teachers and principals must be allowed to prioritize their time and energies in pedagogical and content-related efforts during their first year. New teachers and principals must be mentored. These mentorship programs should be fully funded by the state.
- The principal's role in the final decision of staff selection is vital. We expect principals to be actively involved in the certification/licensure process at the building level. Certification and employment decisions cannot be totally separated.
- Indiana administrator's license should correlate with Higher Ed and Indiana standards.
- In emergency situations, flexibility is necessary in order to fill critical roles that exist in order to provide high-quality education to our students.
- A complete program of educator preparation should include pedagogy, hands-on training, classroom management, and appropriate internship, to ensure that diverse students achieve significant academic growth.
- Educational experience is imperative in the development of administrators as educational leaders.
- All adults working with students should have a comprehensive background check.

# School Vouchers

IASP believes that:

- Diverting public dollars to support private schools is a fundamentally harmful policy to public schools at any time and would be especially damaging when funding shortfalls are already undermining public school programs.
- Vouchers detract from the goal of comprehensive improvement of public schools, do not enhance public and non-public school competition, and do not significantly affect student achievement levels.
- Voucher programs do not cover the full tuition of many schools, preventing true choice for many parents and students.
- The acceptance or use of public funds by non-public institutions threatens the unique mission of these institutions by requiring every recipient of public funds to abide by the same laws, rules, and regulations as public schools.
- Effectiveness of a school voucher program should be evaluated with future legislative and policy decisions shaped by this study.
- Non-public schools ultimately determine which students will be admitted and/or removed from their rolls. The 'playing field' must be leveled, holding all who serve students to the same standards of excellence.
- **The expansion of Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) should not be expanded until the current legislation in place has an opportunity to be implemented and evaluated.**

# School Choice

The IASP believes that:

- Education is essential to our democratic form of government and support of and improvement to the nation's school system must be a societal priority.
- Acceptance of student transfers should be established by each school board.

# School/Community Partners

IASP believes that:

- Improved communications and collaboration among community, business, and school groups strengthen educational opportunities.
- Mutually beneficial partnerships offer students an advantage for a successful future.
- Parent-teacher organizations in Indiana have a long and successful history of working with our association as advocates for children.

- Principals should initiate school/community/business partnerships in their communities based on what is in the best interests of their students. Funding for student programs may be dependent on these partnerships.
- The creation of public education foundations for each corporation financially benefits schools and families.

## Hold Harmless

IASP supports legislation that:

- Requires a governmental entity to pay a judgment, compromise, or settlement of a claim or suit against a school employee when the act or omission causing the loss is within the scope of the employee's employment.
- The state must provide civil immunity for making certain reports concerning a teacher.

## Consolidation

IASP believes that:

- Consolidation issues are best focused upon community needs and should be decided at the local level. Funding must not be withheld to influence these decisions.

## School Calendar

IASP believes that:

- School start and stop dates, and calendars, **should be decided at the local level to meet unique student and community needs.**