

**STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION DR. TONY BENNETT**  
**STATE OF EDUCATION ADDRESS**  
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Students, parents, teachers, administrators, fellow Hoosiers: today, our children are learning more and performing better by every measure. More students—8 percent more than in 2009—are passing ISTEP+ and end of course assessments. More schools are meeting our 90 percent goal for students passing state exams than ever before. More students are leaving high school with a diploma. In 2011, more than 85 percent of students graduated, up from 81 percent in 2009.

And more are taking and passing challenging Advanced Placement exams. In fact, Indiana has the second highest two-year AP pass rate gains in the nation. In four years, the number of Indiana students taking advanced classes and exams has increased by almost 50 percent, and their success rate has jumped by 48 percent. This is news worth celebrating.

Now, our state's system of schools reflects our goals for student success. For the first time, we have policies in place to make sure every child learns to read in those critical early school years and to make sure every classroom has an effective teacher.

We have set high expectations for students and the adults who are responsible for helping them succeed. And, we're holding everyone accountable for achieving results.

Today, if you visit your neighborhood schools, you are likely to see some amazing things happening inside the classrooms. Our great teachers and principals are leading an era of progress, supported by a transformed system that is focused squarely on helping all students find pathways to success. And while ours is one of many states across the country to take up efforts to transform our schools in recent years, no one, and I mean no one, has done it better than Indiana.

What sets our state apart in education are the same values that set us apart as a state. These values give us an edge on the national and international scene. We set high expectations for our friends, neighbors, community groups and local businesses. But we respect local control and individual freedom. And when it comes to education, we Hoosiers believe parents know what's best for their kids.

Our new A through F accountability model outlines the components that make a successful school. Student performance on state assessments IS important, but so are measures of student growth, gains in closing achievement gaps, and challenging opportunities like dual credit, technical certifications and Advanced Placement—programs that give students an early advantage in college and in their careers.

So with high expectations clearly defined, Indiana set about freeing up local educators. For example, while states across the country are mandating specific educator evaluation tools, Indiana is giving schools the ability to choose and tailor those evaluations to meet the needs of their students. And unlike some of our neighbors, Indiana's Department of Education has stopped operating like the largest school district in the state. Instead of telling local districts how to teach their students—we set the bar high, we provide the tools necessary for success, and then, we get out of their way so they can get the job done. Our revised role is one that sets high expectations, holds everyone accountable and shares good information on what works best.

Among the first and most powerful actions this administration took in 2009 was to make schools safer and to empower educators to establish discipline in the classroom. We worked with Democratic and Republican legislators to pass a law that expanded criminal history checks to keep dangerous adults out of our schools. This law also required parents to attend meetings on poor student behavior and pledged state protection from frivolous lawsuits against teachers who act reasonably to establish order in their classrooms.

Since then, we increased quality options for families with expanded public school choice, a needs-based voucher program, and Indiana's Charter School Board, making sure all parents—no matter where they live—have the ability to find a good school that meets their child's needs.

Most important, our students and educators are stepping up to meet and even exceed the high expectations we set. Indiana is the state where reform meets results.

Let's look at some examples. Dickinson Fine Arts Academy in South Bend Community School Corporation, after four consecutive years in the lowest category of school performance, scored the highest single-year gains in ISTEP of any middle school in the state. And I'd like to point out that Dickinson's student population is 70 percent minority and 75 percent of students qualify for free or reduced lunch. Dickinson Fine Arts Academy is proving that demography is not destiny and that all students can succeed.

Together, the strong leadership of Principal Thomas Sims, community partners, and a team of committed educators helped improve this school before it faced state intervention for poor performance.

I'm excited to share that this year, preliminary reports show that Dickinson received an A for school performance. Not only can Dickinson boast dramatic increases in test passage but also in closing the achievement gap. More than half of Dickinson's lowest performing students demonstrated high academic growth.

Laura Domingo is a teacher and mother of twin boys at St. Mary's Catholic School in Greensburg. She was initially skeptical of the new reading program and state assessment at their school. In fact, one of her sons did not pass the third-grade reading assessment, called the IREAD-3. But when he received targeted reading support to pass the summer re-test, Laura was convinced of the power and importance of Indiana's intense focus on early reading.

Laura says had it not been for Indiana's new third-grade reading initiative, her son would not have received the instruction he needed to be a strong reader. This year, Laura took on a new role in her sons' school, as an elementary reading specialist—making sure more students like her son learn the critical reading skills they need to be successful in life.

Yorktown Schools, led by Superintendent Jennifer McCormick and a host of ambitious principals and teachers, have revamped their entire K-12 model based on providing every student a head start on college with a rich selection of Advanced Placement courses. In grade 3, Yorktown students begin an advanced curriculum designed to prepare them for college-level coursework as early as middle school. Yorktown has become one of Indiana's AP leaders, and their model for college preparation has become an example for forward thinking districts around the state.

And in the area of career and technical education, local demand for a skilled workforce is encouraging districts statewide to partner with local industries to help students gain career and technical training before they graduate from high school.

Fort Wayne Community Schools is pairing North Side High School with Fort Wayne Metals to be one of eight schools in the Conexus Advanced Manufacturing and Logistics pilot program this year. North Side will align its curriculum with industry demands and utilize Ivy Tech to let students earn dual credits and industry certifications before they graduate. The experience gained through this program will make them competitive for jobs at companies like Fort Wayne Metals, Cummins, Subaru, Honda and Toyota.

And Eastern Howard Schools, a district recognized for high ISTEP+ and IREAD-3 scores as well as an innovative one-to-one iPad program, has welcomed almost 200 new students from area schools or school corporations. In fact, Superintendent Tracy Caddell says the district even has a waiting list for students hoping to enroll. Eastern Howard's story, in particular, highlights the strength of Indiana's education system.

Today, in Indiana, all schools are schools of choice, and all parents have the freedom to find the best learning environment for their children—whether that's a traditional public school, a public charter school, or a voucher participating private school. Looking ahead, our next goal must be to make every school not only a school of choice, but a school worth choosing.

When it comes to improving our schools and preparing our students for future success, nothing is as critical or influential as making sure our classrooms are led by effective teachers.

Beginning this school year, all districts will use locally designed teacher evaluations. These new evaluations must consider students' academic performance and growth, but local schools have full flexibility to determine the other factors to include in the overall evaluation of teacher effectiveness. These evaluations will identify our strongest teachers and reward them for their efforts. And for the first time, all teachers will receive the feedback they deserve that will help them grow as professionals.

My daughter Trisha just began her first year of teaching, and I'm glad she's entering the profession at a time when she will be supported to make improvements and be recognized for her efforts. The career she is entering today is very different than the one I entered as a science teacher in 1983. Indiana is supporting its teachers as never before by treating them like the professionals they are.

Think about it, aligning teacher and principal performance with student outcomes is common sense. It focuses professional development on what's best for students. It identifies teachers' greatest strengths so they utilize their skills to reach more students—or those students who need it most.

To take it a step further, in the years ahead, we will be able to tell which teacher preparation programs are most effective by studying where the best teachers are trained. This new level of transparency will push our institutions of higher education to build teacher preparation programs that are more challenging and student focused.

We will continue to hold students and schools accountable, because we have learned that accountability works. Since Indiana began taking steps to enforce the measures outlined in our school accountability law, the number

of schools chronically underperforming has reduced dramatically—from 24 in 2009 to four in 2011, and this year just one school faced state intervention.

In our efforts to turn around the state's lowest performing schools, it has become clear that underperformance is often systemic, with problems rooted in district-level leadership. To make a greater impact on student performance where it is most desperately needed, Indiana should begin to explore expanding accountability to the district level.

What are the qualities and practices that make a district effective? How can we determine whether a district's financial and educational decisions are aligned to what is best for students? These are important conversations we need to start having now so that—as we did with teacher evaluations—we can build a strong, student-focused accountability system for districts that is informed by input from many stakeholders.

We will continue to propose ways to improve the way education is funded in Indiana, endeavoring always to align our fiscal policy with our education policies and building upon recent successes, like making sure every family that wants to enroll their child in full day kindergarten can do so. Looking ahead, we should examine ways to give our students even more high quality early learning experiences. How do we make sure those children who will benefit most from early opportunities, like preschool, have access to them?

And we are finding more ways to fund what is working in our schools. For example, Indiana is directing more money—about 128 million dollars since 2009—to our low performing schools that commit to taking bold action to improve student performance, increase community and parent engagement, and avoid state intervention down the road.

Two new grants created in the 2011 budget exemplify the ways we can direct funding to encourage innovation and support successful programs and educators: the Excellence in Performance Grant for Teachers provides 15 million dollars over two years for districts to reward their best teachers, and the Innovation Fund Grant—which gave ten Indiana schools, districts, and organizations each a portion of 5 million dollars to support ground breaking new programs, like the one at Herron High School, a charter school here in Indianapolis led by Janet McNeal, who joins us tonight. Herron is using one-to-one technology to create a digital learning environment for students that focuses on classical and liberal arts.

Looking to the future, we must continue to find ways to reward schools and teachers doing the best work for students. Our focus must be the same indicators we use to measure school success, like growth and performance, progress in closing achievement gaps and efforts to increase graduation rates and college and career preparation opportunities.

Furthermore, as we look for better ways to fund our schools, we should not just focus on ways to give schools *MORE* money. As a former school leader, I know from experience that what a lot of districts really want is more freedom to use the money they *ALREADY* receive to advance their most effective programs. Indiana should find ways to reward successful districts with more funding flexibility and regulatory freedom.

All of this, everything we've done and everything we plan to do in the years ahead to advance education in our state, must be focused on helping every child gain the skills he or she must have to succeed in our future economy.

Since taking office, I have visited schools in every corner of the state and met more than 20,000 teachers. In my recent travels, I met with company leaders at Crown Equipment in Greencastle, a company that makes lift trucks for worldwide distribution. Their director of human resources told me they had 40 open positions, but were having difficulty finding men and women with the skills necessary to fill them, skills gained through two year degree and technical certification programs.

Unfortunately, Crown's workforce problem isn't unique, and it is an important example to guide our future efforts in education. In today's world, 80 percent of the fastest growing jobs require some form of post-secondary preparation. Our job is to make sure Indiana students are prepared to succeed in the competitive and dynamic economy that awaits them.

With that in mind, we simply cannot continue to allow students to drop out of high school, and we must take steps to make sure every student who graduates with an Indiana diploma is guaranteed he or she has the skills necessary to gain admission in post-secondary programs and colleges—or to land a good job in a growing industry. College and career readiness must be more than our *goal* for every student; it is a moral and economic imperative and should be our minimum expectation.

Indiana is unquestionably on the right path. We've adopted useful college and career readiness standards, and in the years ahead we'll adopt assessments better aligned to these standards. They will tell us—for the first time—which students are ready for post-secondary training and which need extra help before moving forward.

Today nearly one-third of Indiana students entering our public colleges and universities need remediation before they can begin meaningful coursework. This is a big problem for Indiana, because we know students who need remediation are far less likely to graduate from college or complete career training programs. Governor Daniels characterizes this problem well; he calls it a breach of the warranty schools have with our students and their families. To confront the problem, we have to ask ourselves some difficult questions: Who should be responsible for remediation? Who should pay when a student graduates from high school but isn't ready? Right now, families and taxpayers are paying for remediation—to the tune of \$40 million every year. This cannot continue.

No student who receives an Indiana diploma should require remediation before beginning meaningful post-secondary coursework.

Students should have the intensive support they need to be ready before they graduate from high school. And students who show college and career readiness before their senior year should be able to graduate early and take advantage of the Mitchell E. Daniels Early Graduation Scholarship—or choose from a multitude of opportunities designed to give them an early advantage, such as AP or International Baccalaureate coursework, dual credits, and technical certifications.

In the *NEXT* four years, Indiana's K-12 schools will continue to build upon the success made possible by the work of the *LAST* four years. The next steps will involve a closer alignment to—and a greater commitment from—our colleges, universities, and the industries that drive our state's economy. It should give us all great hope to know that the man who has led our state to new heights of economic success, efficiency and educational

accomplishment will soon lead one of our state's top universities. I can't think of anyone better than Governor Daniels, and I look forward to continuing our work together for Indiana's students.

Indiana is leading the nation in educational policies that facilitate student success, and there is nothing stopping Indiana's teachers and their students from achieving and surpassing the goals ahead of them. Already, we have seen the type of steady gains in student performance that are encouraged by a system that sets high expectations, enforces accountability and increases freedom for educators and parents. But we must not waver in our commitment to Indiana's students.

If we remain focused on our goal to give Hoosier students an education that is the best in the nation and on par with the most competitive countries in the world, our children—and our state—will continue to prosper even when other states struggle.

If we maintain this current momentum for our children, success stories like those we've highlighted tonight from Laura Domingo, Dickinson Fine Arts Academy, Eastern Howard Schools, Fort Wayne Community Schools and Herron High School will not be the islands of excellence in our state; they will be the stories we hear from teachers, parents and students in every Hoosier community.

Thank you for joining me tonight, and thank you for your work and attention to the important issue of education in our state. We have taken some powerful steps for Indiana's students these past four years, and I believe we can do even more to advance education in the years ahead.

God bless you all, God bless our educators and God bless our children.