

Indiana State Teachers Association

2020 Legislative Priorities

PRIORITIZE PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND RESTORE RESPECT FOR EDUCATORS

Hoosier public school educators and students deserve and expect bold action from legislators in the 2020 legislative session. It's time for legislators to demonstrate real change in state policy by making Indiana's public schools the top priority. Students and educators cannot wait for action.

IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES

PAY TEACHERS AS PROFESSIONALS

Hoosier teachers aren't paid as professionals. Parents understand to have the best qualified and most effective educators in the classroom, we need to pay teachers as professionals. However, Indiana teacher salaries rank last in the Midwest. Even with the largest increase in public school funding in a decade, Indiana teacher salaries lag our neighboring states and too many school districts will see little or no increase, while some will see more cuts. With the state budget surplus, lawmakers can act in 2020 to demonstrate teacher pay is still a top priority. **Invest \$75 million of the state's unanticipated budget surplus to provide an increase to teachers' salaries.**

HOLD HARMLESS FROM ILEARN

Low ILEARN scores don't reflect the hard work Hoosier kids and teachers are doing in our classrooms. **Legislators must hold schools and teachers harmless until educators feel confident in the system.** Hold harmless should also apply to school intervention and state takeover of schools. The scores at this stage are questionable and should not be used for high stakes decision-making.

REPEAL EXTERNSHIP REQUIREMENTS

Policymakers now require teachers to acquire 15 of their 90 professional growth points for re-licensure through externships on career navigation or economic development. This new requirement has placed an undue burden on teachers and is misplaced in its implementation. Relevancy of this requirement aside, real feasibility issues exist in many areas of the state, where compliance is challenging. **This PGP licensure requirement should be repealed.**



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ADDITIONAL PRIORITIES

RESTORE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Collective bargaining ensures qualified, licensed teachers are in every classroom and incentivizes teachers to stay in the profession. However, the systematic erosion of local organizing and collective bargaining have worsened Indiana's teacher shortage. **It's time to remove the arbitrary 50 percent salary cap on years of service and additional degrees used toward salary. Restore collective bargaining for the issue of days and hours worked. Uncouple teacher evaluations from salary calculation. Restore student learning/working conditions and the school calendar as mandatory subjects of discussion. Prohibit school districts with excessive cash balances and rainy-day funds (defined as having amounts greater than 15 percent of the district's annual budget) from claiming deficit finance at bargaining tables.**

ELIMINATE BARRIERS TO DUAL-CREDIT LICENSING

In 2015, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) required a dual credit teacher to hold a master's degree with at least 18 credit hours in the subject they teach. At the time, less than one-third of Indiana's dual credit teachers met this requirement. Most held master's degrees, but the 18-credit hour subject matter requirement proved problematic. None of the new rules reflected on the quality of Indiana's dual credit programs. **Use \$10 million over the next 3 years of the state's unanticipated budget surplus to reimburse teachers or higher education institutions for the costs associated with the additional coursework needed to qualify.**

REVISE ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK

Policymakers are revamping the state's school grading system. **ISTA supports capping a weight on standardized testing at 15 percent overall and will continue to advocate for the use of student growth measures as opposed to proficiency alone.** We also support including a dashboard comprised of locally-determined metrics such as class size, teacher retention rates, social-emotional learning and family engagement, among other metrics.

INVEST IN TRAUMA SENSITIVE SCHOOLING

Creating a safe and supportive learning environment for all children builds resilience in students who experience trauma. Public schools play an integral role in neutralizing the negative impact trauma has on children's health and their ability to learn. Currently Indiana has a dearth of school counselors. **We must invest \$16 million from the unanticipated budget surplus to create a multi-year grant program designed to lower Indiana's student-to-counselor ratio and encourage additional school psychologists and social workers.**



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REFORM SCHOOL COMPLEXITY FUNDING

For decades, Indiana's funding formula has attempted to address external challenges that research tells us impact student learning through additional funding designed to offset these outside challenges. Over the years, the criteria that trigger this funding has changed as has the amount of additional assistance. During this 2019 interim, lawmakers convened a study of Indiana's complexity index that was limited to a review of the possible factors associated with complexity funding. During the 2020 interim and leading into the next budget-writing legislative session, **ISTA urges the creation of a study committee focused on the levels of adequacy in funding complexity.**

STRENGTHEN TEACHER SAFETY

The American Psychological Association first reported on the growing phenomenon of violence against teachers in schools in 2013. Yet, in the intervening years, little attention has been given to the issue even as teacher anecdotal reports of victimization persist. In reviewing Indiana law, gaps in both reporting and enforcement stand out. **We need a series of amendments designed to close those gaps and strengthen enforcement mechanisms.**

GIVE VOTERS A VOICE IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

In 2021, Indiana will begin a new era of education leadership when the state superintendent of public instruction moves to a governor-appointed secretary of education. **The appointee should be fully qualified for the position as evidenced by having held a license as a teacher, superintendent, principal or any combination of these, and having had at least 5 years public school work experience in any of these positions.** Current law does not call for either of these to be a requirement for appointment. **Also, we should restore a state board of education that is elected.** Indiana voters deserve to have a voice in the state leadership for education.

SECURE RETIREES' FUTURE

Retired public employees and teachers have not seen a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) in a decade. Lawmakers continue to offer annual stipends, but these do not account for inflation. **It's time to fully fund the supplemental reserve fund originally created to guarantee a true COLA payment for every retired educator.**

HOLD CHARTER AND VIRTUAL SCHOOLS ACCOUNTABLE

It's time to enact policies that hold charter and virtual charter schools to the same standards of traditional public schools. **Require financial and policy transparency for all schools that receive state funding. Require charter school organizers who apply with an authorizer to start or renew a charter school to also report to the Indiana Department of Education, which could serve as a centralized repository of applications.**

