



On June 15, ISTA President Keith Gambill submitted the concerns and requests of educators across the state on school re-entry via a letter for Gov. Eric Holcomb's consideration. Gov. Holcomb has since agreed to meet with a group of ISTA members to hear our concerns directly. This closed meeting will occur virtually on Tuesday, July 14.

Following the meeting, ISTA President Gambill will go live on Facebook at 3 p.m. ET to share what we heard and discuss next steps. Plan to join at facebook.com/electkeith.gambill.

Top 10 Requests

(below is a condensed summary from the original letter)

1. **Address the needs of medically vulnerable students and school employees.** Both students and adults with serious underlying health conditions are at greater risk if exposed to the virus. In many instances these individuals should not return to school until a vaccine or other improved treatment options are developed. Neither federal nor Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) guidance on the return to school adequately addresses this concern.
2. **Eliminate or reduce standardized testing during the 2020 – 21 school year.** During this crisis it's important to prioritize school time on those activities that benefit students most.
3. **Promote local discussion and bargaining.** Good communication and collaboration between school administrators and local education associations is critical. Educators are on the front line of addressing the needs of our students and understand the practical implications of return-to-school policies.
4. **Offer consistent access to protective equipment.** Educators and students need consistently funded access to personal protective equipment and the ability to disinfect surfaces regularly. Schools shouldn't have to compete against each other to purchase these items.

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5. **Provide clarity around when schools should close and/or reopen due to COVID-19 spikes.** While we value local control and decision-making, the virus doesn't respect local lines of jurisdiction. Staff and parents need to have confidence that decisions on closing and reopening schools will be based on the prevalence of COVID-19 in a community or school.
6. **Issue waiver days when schools need to close.** If COVID-19 spikes occur in a given area, schools will need to close for periods of time. It is impossible to predict where and when this might occur. The state should provide a number of upfront waiver days to schools for use when it is necessary to close schools.
7. **Get staff and students home when they feel sick.** Some state and local policies discourage individuals from going home when they feel ill at school. Student attendance policies and using attendance as a factor in teacher evaluations are both examples of this. We need to examine all relevant policies and modify those that penalize students and staff for staying home when feeling ill.
8. **Maintain important educator rights.** We need to maintain the duty-free lunch to give educators time to decompress during the day. Reasonable work schedules are also critical.
9. **Safeguard important programs for students.** Continue to stress the importance of arts programs and prioritize public school funding in the next state budget proposal.
10. **Encourage our Congressional delegation to provide federal relief to our public schools.** Greater federal action to support our schools is needed. Indiana's Congressional delegation must support greater federal support to public schools in Indiana and across the country. The HEROES Act would provide over \$1.8 billion in federal dollars to public schools in Indiana.

ISTA continues to advocate that all districts and schools follow state and CDC guidelines to ensure the safety and well-being of educators, kids and parents.

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