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# ISTA BILL SUMMARY: 2026 LEGISLATIVE SESSION



A comprehensive summary of education legislation from the 2026 General Assembly.



Indiana  
State  
Teachers  
Association

# ISTA LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY

## 2026 Legislative Session

The 2026 legislative session included numerous education proposals affecting public schools, educators, and students across Indiana. While several harmful proposals were defeated or significantly amended, other legislation was passed that will require ongoing monitoring and implementation.

The following summary highlights key bills ISTA engaged on during the session.

### PROACTIVE WINS

*Legislation ISTA supported or influenced to include positive policy outcomes.*

#### **HB 1098 – Liability Insurance for Workplace Learning**

- The bill requires an intermediary and an employer to enter into an agreement that sets out the intermediary's and the employer's duties and responsibilities when participating in a work-based learning program.
- It also repeals provisions relating to the federal School to Work Opportunities Act under the workers' compensation and workers' occupational diseases compensation laws. Provides that, subject to certain limitations, a student who performs services for an employer as part of a work-based learning program is entitled to benefits under the workers' compensation and worker's occupational diseases compensation laws.
- Requires that any underwriting decision made by an insurer or rating factor applied to a participant must be based on objective risk-based criteria that are applied uniformly and without regard to the age of the student to be covered under the policy.
- **ISTA Position:** ISTA supported the bill because it offers another layer of safety and protection for students participating in work-based learning outside of the school building, which was a concern when the graduation pathways were adopted.

#### **HB 1145 – TRF/PERF Pensions**

- Provides for a 13<sup>th</sup> check stipend in 2026 for Teachers' Retirement Fund (TRF) and Public Employees' Retirement Fund (PERF) retirees.
- **ISTA Position:** Supported and a priority ISTA issue heading into the session.



## **HB 1325 – Behavioral Intervention/Special Education**

- This bill requires the DOE, in collaboration with the Indiana Department of Health, the Department of Child Services (DCS), and the office of the Secretary of Family and Social Services, to report and make recommendations on certain data regarding residential placement, developmental preschool and special education.
- It also requires financial reporting to assess how much the state spends on special education and behavioral interventions for future funding.
- **ISTA Position:** ISTA supported the bill, as it focuses on improving services for students in need.

## **HB 1423 – IPS School Board Governance and Operations**

- ISTA strongly opposed HB 1423 along with numerous partners and allied organizations. Because HB 1423 was a bill of such importance and focus during the 2026 General Assembly, ISTA worked diligently to make improvements during the legislative process. While ISTA maintained opposition to the bill until the final session day, the Association was able to negotiate some key successes moving forward. These improvements will be essential in the implementation of this new law, and if ISTA alongside our coalition partners had not fought until the last hours of the session, the result would not have included these key wins, including:
  - Delayed implementation until the 2028-29 school year to provide more transition time.
  - The inclusion of an opt-out provision both for traditional IPS schools and charter schools around facilities.
  - Incorporated IPS into the state accountability system regarding academic standards.
  - Defined “chronically underperforming” schools in state statute.
  - Established an appeals process to the State Board of Education, thus recognizing one more level of public accountability.
- Indianapolis Public Schools represents one of the largest districts in the state, as well as one of the most racially diverse and socioeconomically challenged districts in Indiana. ISTA stands by our students and educators of color when districts face threats like HEA 1423. The Association will continue to advocate for all Hoosier kids and educators.



- Due to the weight of HEA 1423, for a brief background, the bill was the result of a law enacted in 2025 creating the Indianapolis Local Education Alliance (ILEA). It established a new Indiana Public Education Corporation (IPEC) and Board (IPEC Board). The existing IPS school board will now be referred to as the school city. This law now enacted went into effect upon passage (March 2026). However aspects to the implementation of IPEC's powers is deferred. The law empowers IPEC with fixing and reviewing of budgets, tax rates and tax levies and removes certain powers and duties from the existing IPS board. That said, the county auditor must distribute the revenue collected from the local levies to the IPS Board.
- Going forward, only the state charter board, the mayor of Indianapolis, or the existing IPS school board may grant a charter. Existing charters not authorized by one of these bodies can continue until the term of the charter expires, but then that charter expires. An existing school can be renewed but must be renewed by one of the three grantors listed here.
- Since the newly enacted law has numerous provisions, the major sections include language around the following:
  - The bill specifically gives the existing IPS board any powers that are not otherwise granted to IPEC.
  - The list of what IPEC is authorized to do is widespread, including establishing a unified transportation system for students within IPS and for charter school students within the IPS , a unified system for school property matters, and a unified school performance system within the IPS boundaries.
  - The IPEC board's make-up is nine members all appointed by the mayor of Indianapolis with three (3) who are leaders of participating innovation network charters or charter schools, three (3) who are members of the existing IPS board, and three (3) who have expertise in management, capital planning, facilities transportation, or logistics or experience in working with vulnerable student populations and communities. The initial terms are staggered.
  - There shall be a meeting at least once every three months. Members on the IPEC board receive no compensation. Final votes must record votes as aye and nay and on any other item if at least 2 (two) members request a recorded vote.
  - There will be an executive director of the IPEC board chosen by the IPEC board as recommended by the mayor. The executive director must reside within the boundaries of IPS. Salaries and other staff salaries shall be set by the IPEC board.



- In addition to the transportation and facilities duties, the IPEC board also is tasked with the following: (1) developing and implementing a single school performance framework that applies to all the participating schools, (2) developing a unified enrollment system, (3) creating a tracking system to monitor qualitative and quantitative data to measure outcomes and to publicly report data in a manner prescribed by the mayor, (4) making and executing contracts and other instruments as are necessary, (5) acquiring personal property that the IPEC board considers necessary, (6) making rules and carrying out any other power and (7) making any expenditure in carrying out the powers granted in this law that are reasonable from a business or educational standpoint.
- The IPEC board may establish advisory committees.
- Any unified transportation plan must be submitted to the legislative council at least one year before the date the plan is implemented.
- The IPEC is subject to required audits and all applicable laws subjecting a school corporation to regulation.
- No existing contract may be impaired by this law. However, after the effective date of this law, the existing IPS board may not enter into, renew, or extend a contract that is not in compliance with this article.
- Removes IPS from the \$1 charter school building law.
- The bill passed the Senate 27-21 and in a concurrence vote in the house 67-30.
- **ISTA Position:** Oppose.

### **SB 78 – Wireless Device Ban in Schools**

- The bill expands on prior legislation by requiring stricter enforcement of cell phone and related wireless device bans throughout the school day. It also requires uniform policies statewide with some local flexibility on storage units and other matters.
- The bill maintains exemptions for students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP), medical condition, English language learner translation (new), emergency situations, on determination by a school administrator (new) and for purposes of teaching instruction. The bill also allows students to use note-taking devices only in class, provided they are blocked from any online activity. Students are allowed to use their own personal devices in schools for a one-year period as long as the school blocks internet access.
- **ISTA Position:** ISTA supported the bill as part of its legislative priorities to improve student learning and teachers' ability to focus on instruction.



## **SB 14 – Pension Matters**

- The bill specifies that compensation received in contemplation of retirement is excluded from the average of the annual compensation for particular members of PERF and TRF.
- It provides that amounts forfeited under the public employees' defined contribution plan must be used as the board determines.
- Specifies a process by which a fully vested member of the public employees' defined contribution plan or the teachers' defined contribution plan may irrevocably elect to participate in PERF or TRF.
- It allows, subject to particular requirements, certain TRF members to purchase and claim years of service credit.
- Finally, it allows a PERF or TRF member's employer to pay all or part of the member's contributions required for the purchase of service credit.
- **ISTA Position:** Supported most of the bill and was successful in getting an amendment on wage payment concerns in the introduced version of the bill.

## **SB 199 – Various Education Omnibus**

- The bill amends the composition of the case review panel established by an interscholastic athletic association.
- The bill requires the Secretary of Education to identify key metrics and activities concerning civic literacy and submit information to the legislature.
- It requires the Secretary of Education to identify and make recommendations concerning paid leave for employees following certain events, such as a family death, miscarriage and other eligible situations, and to submit the findings to the General Assembly.
- It provides that certain requirements apply to schools in which, over three consecutive years, fewer than 75% of students achieved a valid passing score on the evaluation of reading skills.
- Requires the Commission for Higher Education to evaluate accrediting agencies of state educational institutions and to report the Commission's findings and recommendations to the General Assembly.
- Requires that state educational institutions with degree programs that meet the definition of a low-earning outcome program under federal law must request approval from the commission to continue the degree program.
- **ISTA Position:** ISTA supported language promoting paid leave for school employees, as long as local agreements are not negatively impacted, should they have more beneficial existing plans in their contracts. ISTA opposed requiring colleges to value majors and fields based on post-grad earning outcomes. ISTA also opposed allowing additional accrediting bodies to accredit higher education institutions.



## DEFENSIVE SUCCESSES

*Bills ISTA opposed that died or were significantly improved through amendment.*

### Teacher Collective Bargaining Rights

- No bills were filed during the session that would have prohibited teacher collective bargaining across the board or repealed teacher collective bargaining rights entirely.

### HB 1086 – Required Display of the Ten Commandments

- The bill would have required the posting of the Ten Commandments in every school classroom. From an equity perspective, concerns were raised about schools encouraging or promoting a single religion in public education.
- The bill passed out of the House Education Committee but was not called down on 3<sup>rd</sup> reading in the House and died.
- **ISTA Position:** Opposed.

### SB 88 – Various Education Matters / DEI Issues

- ISTA removed language that would have prohibited or discouraged classroom instruction or discussion of various DEI-related topics, thereby restricting school curricula and limiting or prohibiting teachers' ability to instruct students on important matters.
- The final bill:
  - Adds to good citizenship instruction the importance of earning at least a high school diploma, obtaining full-time work and delay having children until marriage.
  - Requires schools to accept the Classic Learning Test examination to the same extent as the ACT or SAT examinations for admissions criteria.
  - Allows certain teacher candidates in alternative licensing pathways to substitute standardized test scores such as the ACT, SAT, Classical Learning Test, or GRE in place of the state teacher licensing exam.
- The bill passed the House 67-29 and, in a concurrence, vote in the Senate 34-14.
- **ISTA Position:** ISTA was neutral on the bill after the amendments removed problematic language for educators.

### SB 182 – Gender

- The bill would have defined "female," "male," "gender," and "sex" across Indiana statutes and required schools to assign restroom and changing-room access based on biological sex.
- **ISTA Position:** Opposed.



## **SB 248 – South Bend School Board Governance**

- The bill would have dissolved the existing South Bend School Board by making it an advisory body only, and it would have replaced it with a fully appointed board by the Indiana Secretary of Education, thus removing public accountability to taxpaying voters and removing local representation. The bill died in the first half of the session after the author (Sen. Linda Rogers, R – Granger) withdrew it from further consideration following community opposition.
- **ISTA Position:** Opposed.

## **ADDITIONAL EDUCATION LEGISLATION**

### **SENATE BILLS**

#### **SB 4 – Fiscal Matters**

- As a large omnibus tax and fiscal matters bill, there is one section pertaining to public schools.
- The bill amends the Pokagon Indiana Education Fund to allow payments to both public and private Indiana institutions of higher learning for the fund's purposes.
- **ISTA Position:** Neutral, but ISTA monitored for tax implications around public school matters.

#### **SB 15 – Foster Youth**

- The bill requires DCS to create a statement called "the foster youth bill of rights," which summarizes a foster youth's rights and responsibilities.
- It also requires periodic updates to the statement and requires DCS to distribute it to specified individuals and publish it on the Department's website.
- **ISTA Position:** ISTA supported the bill as a step forward in addressing the unique challenges that Indiana's foster youth face not only academically but across many facets of youth life and development.

#### **SB 25 – School Board Candidates**

- This bill makes a few minor changes regarding school board candidates by specifying that if there are more than one candidate for a school board office within certain designated groups of candidates, the candidates shall appear in a specific order within the grouping and in alphabetical order by surname.
- **ISTA Position:** ISTA was neutral on the bill, as it did not make any substantial changes to school board elections.



## **SB 76 – Immigration Matters**

- This large immigration bill became even more troublesome during the session by adding in public K-12 schools to the list of entities that must communicate and comply with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) investigations.
- Provides that if a law enforcement officer, governmental body, or postsecondary educational institution is made a party to a civil suit and the Attorney General (AG) determines that the suit has arisen out of certain immigration matters, the AG may defend the law enforcement officer, governmental body or postsecondary educational institution if representation is requested.
- Provides that the prohibition on governmental bodies or post-secondary educational institutions limiting or restricting the enforcement of federal immigration law applies regardless of whether the enforcement is carried out by a federal, state or local law enforcement agency.
- The bill allows the governor to withhold grants or state funding from a governmental body for a period not to exceed one year if the body is found to have violated certain requirements concerning an immigration detainer.
- The bill allows the AG to bring an enforcement action against an employer if the AG determines that probable cause exists that the employer has violated certain recruitment and hiring restrictions concerning an unauthorized alien.
- Schools may not adopt or enforce any policy that limits communication, cooperation or information sharing with federal immigration authorities regarding citizenship or immigration status.
- It subjects schools to AG enforcement and penalties. If the AG determines probable cause that a school has not complied with an immigration detainer request, the AG may seek a court injunction, impose civil penalties or compel future compliance.
- It removes the intent standard for violations. Schools no longer need to knowingly or intentionally violate the statute to face consequences. This significantly raises legal exposure for routine administrative decisions.
- Concessions were made with regard to the duty to “gather information” by conditioning this so “long as the request for information does not conflict with applicable federal or state law or policy.”
- **ISTA Position:** ISTA strongly opposed this bill on all levels and particularly removing schools as safe places for students.



## **SB 140 – Doxing**

- This bill is generally about doxing, but school employees (particularly teachers in many cases) have been attacked or threatened online and through other formats by students, parents or others. This bill increases the seriousness of doxing as an offense.
- The bill amends the definition of "threat" in the intimidation statute to include posting a person's personal information on a social media platform with the intent to cause bodily injury to the person, damage to the person's property or the commission of a crime against the person.
- It increases the penalty for intimidation if committed against a legislator.
- It prohibits the release of personally identifying information concerning a railroad crew in a public report concerning a railroad fatality.
- Provides that certain drone uses constitute remote aerial harassment.
- **ISTA Position:** ISTA supported the bill, and while it does not focus solely on school employees, the additional protections it offers can benefit anyone facing these incidents.

## **SB 200 – Public School Matters/Civic Organizations**

- Provides that certain indemnity provisions contained in contracts entered into, amended, or renewed after June 30, 2026, between a school, including a charter school, and a vendor are against public policy and are void and unenforceable.
- Provides that a choice of law provision that subjects a vendor contract to the laws of a state other than Indiana is against public policy and is void and unenforceable.
- Provides that an organization may submit a grievance to the DOE if a public school refuses to allow the organization to provide information to students under certain conditions.
- Requires that organizations receive two opportunities each school year to enter the school during the school day or when a majority of students are present for recruiting purposes.
- This bill is not specifically about Turning Point USA. There is already a list of civic organizations under federal law that this bill directly relates to and that are allowed into schools, and SB 200 does not change that list.
- **ISTA Position:** Neutral.

## **SB 204 – Various Education Matters / Teacher Pay**

- The bill included provisions that negatively impacted state statutes governing teacher salary increases, increments, stipends and supplements. ISTA raised concerns that these changes could limit local decision-making regarding compensation structures designed to attract and retain educators.
- In every session, there is an effort to amend this statute to further micro-manage how salary increases and increments are determined.



- These efforts fundamentally take money from one teacher to give to another, tying the hands of the people who come together every year to figure out salary matters. ISTA requested that the author remove this provision from the bill and allow local educators to determine the best way to attract and retain qualified personnel through pay issues.
- Academic needs are a factor that the local school district determines. That is the essence of local control and decision-making. Last session, the high-need area was inserted as an example of academic needs and here we are less than a year later to further regulate the actions of the local school district.
- Districts have differing academic needs. Some of those academic needs could be things like teacher retention, teacher evaluation, leadership, etc. For some, it may be employment in a high-need area or it could be something else, altogether.
- **ISTA Position:** Opposed changes to salary schedules, supplements, increments and stipends. NOTE: The author was willing to delay implementation for one year but did not remove the change in statute altogether.

### **SB 239 – Various Education Matters/Charter Expansion**

- At its core, this bill is another charter school expansion measure, one of several this session. Taken together, these bills do not resemble thoughtful reform. They resemble a coordinated effort to convert, consolidate, coerce and compel, all while calling it “choice.”
- The bill makes it easier to convert multiple traditional public schools into charter schools at once, allows them to be bundled under a single charter, and expands innovation network charters across multiple school corporations. In other words, it reduces oversight, concentrates control and weakens accountability while continuing to use public dollars.
- At the same time, the bill penalizes school corporations financially, imposes attorney fees on districts that dare to appeal state determinations, fast-tracks appeals directly to the Court of Appeals, and allows charter operators to collect \$10,000 per day in liquidated damages/reduced tuition support if a building transfer is delayed.
- **ISTA Position:** Opposed based on charter expansion at the expense of community-based public schools and the diversion of taxpayer dollars.



## **SB 254 – Ivy Tech**

- As a higher education bill, it consolidates duties and responsibilities for Ivy Tech Community College.
- Includes logistics, information technology and life sciences as areas of expertise for members of the college's board of trustees.
- Provides that members of a campus board may represent an employer that operates within the campus service area.
- It provides further that the campus board, in collaboration with the campus chancellor, shall nominate and submit candidate names in the event of a campus board vacancy.
- The bill requires the campus board to develop and recommend certain plans to the board and make certain budget recommendations to the campus chancellor. It also realigns and consolidates the college's primary purposes.
- **ISTA Position:** Neutral.

## **HOUSE BILLS**

### **HB 1004 – Deregulation**

- The bill is this year's version of deregulation, and there remain a few sections of serious concern; the hours-in-the-contract issue stands out as the chief problem.
- The bill removes from the regular teacher contract "the number of hours per day" that the teacher is expected to work. This applies to all teachers who teach under that contract.
- ISTA is fully aware that teachers already work well beyond the school day on numerous additional duties brought to them by their administrators and we continuously shared this reality with lawmakers. There is legal precedent favoring ISTA's position.
- **ISTA Position:** So long as the hours issue remained an issue, ISTA opposed the bill and will closely engage in implementation of this law going forward on multiple levels.

### **HB 1018 – School Age Child Care**

- The bill removes certain transportation requirements in the approval criteria for the school-age childcare project fund and requires the Division of Family Resources to adopt rules specifying cost and expense standards for transporting a child to a facility where the child does not attend school.
- While it is a simple bill, it does take some positive steps around childcare issues.
- **ISTA Position:** Neutral.



## **HB 1177 – Child Care Assistance**

- As another positive bill around childcare, it increases the maximum number of individuals an entity may employ to be eligible for the employer childcare expenditure income tax credit.
- It provides that costs incurred for the operating costs of a childcare facility operated for a taxpayer's employees or under a contract with a child care facility to provide child care services to employees of the taxpayer, or under a contract with an intermediate entity that contracts with one or more child care facilities for childcare services are qualified expenditures for purposes of the employer childcare expenditure income tax credit.
- The bill allows a redevelopment commission to use revenue from a tax increment financing district to support or incentivize the construction or expansion of childcare facilities.
- **ISTA Position:** Neutral. ISTA supports expanding childcare opportunities, but the state needs to invest real dollars into making programs more accessible and affordable for Hoosier parents.

## **HB 1195 – High School Equivalency Programs**

- The bill amends the eligibility requirements for the Indiana high school equivalency diploma program for individuals under 18 years of age and extends the expiration date of the high school equivalency pilot program from June 30, 2026, to June 30, 2028.
- **ISTA Position:** Neutral.

## **HB 1242 – School Corporation and Charter School Report**

- The bill requires certain reporting information for school corporations and charter schools.
- It requires the DOE to prepare a report that compiles statewide data on school corporations and charter schools and submit it to the legislative council and the interim study committee on education.
- **ISTA Position:** Neutral but watching future efforts around school consolidation.

## **HB 1249 – Employee Battery Protections**

- The bill increases criminal penalties for certain vulnerable workers, including school employees. However, the bill also repeals the requirement for the DOE to file an annual teacher injury report.
- **ISTA Position:** Supported additional penalties for assaults on teachers but opposed the removal of teacher injury reporting.



## **HB 1266 – Various Education Omnibus Bill**

- Another massive omnibus bill will numerous disparate provisions.
- The bill requires the Secretary of Education to prepare a report to the General Assembly with recommendations around strategies to support academically and fiscally underperforming schools, along with interventions needed for schools. While this seems like a positive support system around school improvement, it resembles previous legislation about school takeovers by the Indiana State Board of Education and other outside boards and entities in some districts. These efforts failed to produce positive outcomes for students. It was a flawed experiment that was later repealed from state law. We do not want to go back down that path again.
- Makes changes to the board composition for the Indiana School for the Blind and Visually Impaired and Indiana School for the Deaf.
- An emergency permit is to be renewed up to two times for an individual enrolled in an alternative teacher certification program if the individual is in good standing. This could be an improvement, as currently there are instances of emergency permits being perpetually renewed while candidates have not completed progress towards certification.
- It provides for a potential four-day work week at school if a school meets certain requirements, including providing transportation to students whether it is a five-day or four-day school week. The school must also be in the highest category of performance under DOE metrics, meet minimum teacher salary thresholds and provide remediation programming on the regular school day at no cost to the parent or student.
- The DOE is required to develop a teaching and learning framework around math standards, including a K-5 math framework. The framework must include a proficiency implementation guide and daily instruction in math for a minimum of 60 minutes for Tier 1 instruction and 20 minutes of math interventions.
- Changes some CTE programs from the Department of Workforce Development to the Commission for Higher Education.
- It provides that a grant received by a school corporation, or the Department of Correction (DOC) (i.e., DOC-operated schools), may be used to pay the Federal Insurance Contributions Act and TRF costs associated with distributing a stipend under performance-based stipends.
- Makes various changes to education provisions concerning the following: (1) Schools eligible for grants from the Indiana secured school fund, teacher appreciation grants, grants under the robotics competition program, and funding for certain advanced placement examinations and Cambridge International courses.



- Requires the creation and updating of a list of employers that have agreed to provide career support for or interview Indiana residents who graduate with an Indiana diploma with an employment honors plus seal.
- The bill requires salary differentiation regarding teachers who possess a literacy endorsement. Amounts expended in participating in an interlocal agreement included in determining amounts school corporations expend on full-time teacher salaries for purposes of teacher salary minimum funding requirements.
- Makes changes to the calculation of operating referendum distributions and school safety referendum distributions to charter schools regarding virtual instruction.
- The bill creates a new qualification option for a transition to teaching program participant who seeks to obtain a license to teach in grades five through 12 and provides that state accredited nonpublic schools and nonpublic schools that are accredited by a national or regional accreditation agency that is recognized by the state board of education are eligible to participate in the teacher residency grant pilot program.
- It removes a requirement that for a parent or student to use a career scholarship account, (CSA) annual grant amount for costs related to transportation a CSA participating entity must pay a matching amount for the transportation costs.
- **ISTA Position:** ISTA opposed language that could potentially lead to school takeovers or punitive interventions; supported school safety measures, summer school programming and career pathways language.

### **HB 1408 – Workforce and Higher Education Matters**

- The bill mostly deals with higher education issues, specifically Ivy Tech and its board of trustees.
- It also requires certain data reporting by the Management Performance Hub (MPH).
- It amends the definition of workforce-focused agency to include the state workforce development board.
- Provides that certain workforce-related programs include apprenticeship programs, unless the apprenticeship program receives certain funding.
- Requires each college campus to review building utilization data before approving capital requests or requests for proposals.
- It requires the state board of trustees to create and approve evaluation tools for campus boards to provide annual feedback on the campus chancellors performance.
- Requires the college to annually provide certain program and student metrics information and an analysis of market labor outcomes to each campus board.



- The bill requires each college campus to prepare a campus strategic plan that connects to the college's strategic plan and submit the campus strategic plan to the state board of trustees for approval.
- The bill establishes requirements and restrictions regarding adolescent use of social media and makes a violation of the requirements and restrictions a deceptive act. The provision requires parental consent for certain social media platforms and protection against addictive algorithms.
- **ISTA Position:** ISTA was neutral on the introduced House bill as a higher education matter. However, language was inserted in conference committee to provide stronger social media protections for students – language that ISTA strongly supports.

