

# The Metropolitan School District of Wayne Township

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Education Center  
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## Board of Education

November 5, 2013

To the Indiana State Board of Education:

What is the purpose of an A-F grading system? Can you create such a system for Indiana schools without first answering this fundamental question? The current, most prevalent answer is that the A-F grading system is a measure of a school district's "accountability." But is it, or does it simply label a school district and its surrounding community?

The MSD of Wayne Township Board of Education is proud to represent its school district and its community. Our teachers, administrators, and support staff have one goal: providing all that is necessary for our children to develop to their full potential. This was true long before there was an A-F grading system, and it would not diminish if the A-F system ceased to exist. We have long been seen as a district that sets the bar for others around the state. However, because the A-F grading system is based almost entirely upon ISTEP scores -- a *quick glimpse* of the work being done to fully develop our children -- we are labeled a "C" district.

We do not and will not strive for an "A" for the sake of the label; we strive for excellence for the sake of our children. While this is a great truth of our district, the negative side of being labeled is also true. Being labeled a "C" district has made it more difficult to attract and keep the high quality teachers that have always been the hallmark of MSD Wayne. This label has also made it more difficult for our community to attract new homeowners and businesses.

If "accountability" is the purpose, we suggest you include in your system all the ways that MSD Wayne excels in being accountable in the welfare and education of our children. Our district has a 78% poverty rate and a 30% mobility rate. Our children (and their parents) come from many different cultures; we currently have 75 different languages spoken in our community. In the face of these challenges, we have a growing graduation rate, which most recently was 88.3%. Included in this rate is our success in doing what even "A" schools consider to be impossible: eradicating the so-called "achievement gap" by graduating a larger percentage of African-American students than white students. Many of our students earn college credits, with approximately 20,000 earned by our 2013 graduates. Last year alone, more than 100 graduates earned their associate's degrees along with their diploma. MSD Wayne is *accountable* to its children and community in ways that are the envy of many "A" schools.

The A-F grading system does not help us do more for our students. When one of our schools, Lynhurst 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Center, was in danger of state takeover due to being labeled an "F" school, the IDOE sent in teams of experts to help. Working within the system, our teachers and administrators were

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open to any ideas the experts from IDOE could give to them. The response from the teams of IDOE educational experts was that they could not see, think of, or imagine doing anything that we were not already doing. What can you conclude from this?

Regardless, you are still tasked with creating an A-F grading system. It is our hope that the system you create does more than simply label a school and its community. We have ample evidence, both anecdotal and statistical, that poverty is the number one indicator of a child's ISTEP outcome. The poverty rate must, therefore, be included in any calculation of a district's *accountability*.

Enclosed with this letter, please find excellent examples of the numerous studies that tie poverty rates to test scores. These were done by Advanced Placement statistics students and International Baccalaureate math students at Ben Davis High School, but many more resources on this topic are available. Our AP statistics and IB math students also recommend that measures of college and career readiness be weighted more heavily than ECA exams in determining a high school's grade, and that measures in addition to ISTEP scores be considered for elementary and middle level students.

It is our hope that you will accept your responsibility toward all Hoosiers in a manner that reflects the facts before you, your knowledge, and your compassion by creating a system of accountability which accurately and thoroughly reflects the efforts being made to develop Indiana's children to their fullest potential.

Sincerely,

MSD of Wayne Township Board of Education

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## MEMORANDUM

DA: June 4, 2013

TO: Indiana Department of Education and State Board of Education

FR: An Advanced Placement Statistics Class at Ben Davis High School

RE: **Indiana's A-F High School Accountability Model**

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The A-F accountability model is a very complex grading structure that is used to score the public high schools in the state of Indiana, but something so complex inevitably has flaws. The school receives a grade based off the performance of its students in four categories: English 10 and Algebra 1 End of Course Assessments (ECA), graduation rate, and college and career readiness. Repeated poor grades will result in intervention from the State Board of Education. As a class we examined the current model and proposed changes to account for some of the numerous flaws. Our recommendations concern the following topics:

- Effects of Poverty on School Grades
- College and Career Readiness
- Goal-Setting and Feedback to Schools
- Teacher Observation
- Student Knowledge of the School Grade

Note: All scatterplots and bar graphs seen below were created using information from the Indiana Department of Education website<sup>1</sup> to give a visual representation of the problems we are investigating.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Brooklyn Bowman

Madeleine Holmes

Cole Crouch

Kara McKinney

Samantha Detzel

Kalen Phillips

Kegan Ferguson

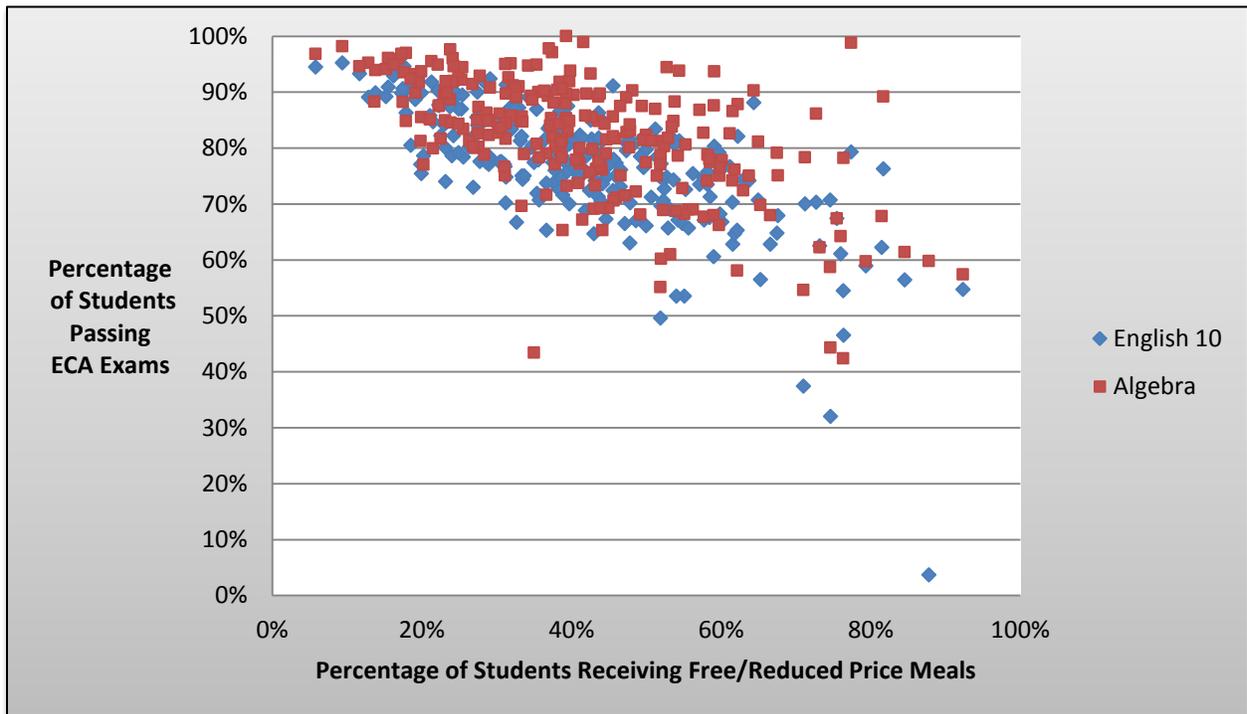
Morgan Stovall

## Part 1: Effects of Poverty on School Grades

**Current Grading Criteria:** None

**Recommended Grading Criteria:** The percentage of high school students receiving free and reduced meals needs to be added as both a fair and integral part of the equation for grading schools. There is a strong, negative association between students' English 10 and Algebra 1 ECA scores and the percentage of students on free and reduced meals.

**Rationale:** Due to the lack of acknowledgement for poverty stricken high schools, there is a trend of lower grades for those schools in the current grading system. The lower socioeconomic status of students in these schools is a contributor to the respective low grade they are receiving. As of now, the percentage of students receiving free/reduced meals is the best indicator to measure this problem. See Figure 1 below.



**Figure 1: Scatterplot displaying the association between [percentage of students receiving free/reduced price meals](#) and [percentage of students passing ECA exams](#)**

Please note:  $r$  is the correlation. It measures the strength and direction of the linear relationship between the two variables. The values range from -1 to 1, with 0 representing the weakest relationship and  $\pm 1$  representing the strongest.  $r = -0.7$  for the English 10 ECA scores and  $r = -0.59$  for Algebra 1 ECA scores

A problem we investigated with the current A-F model is that there is a negative association trending between a school grade and that school's percentage of students receiving free/reduced meals. See Figures 2 and 3 below.

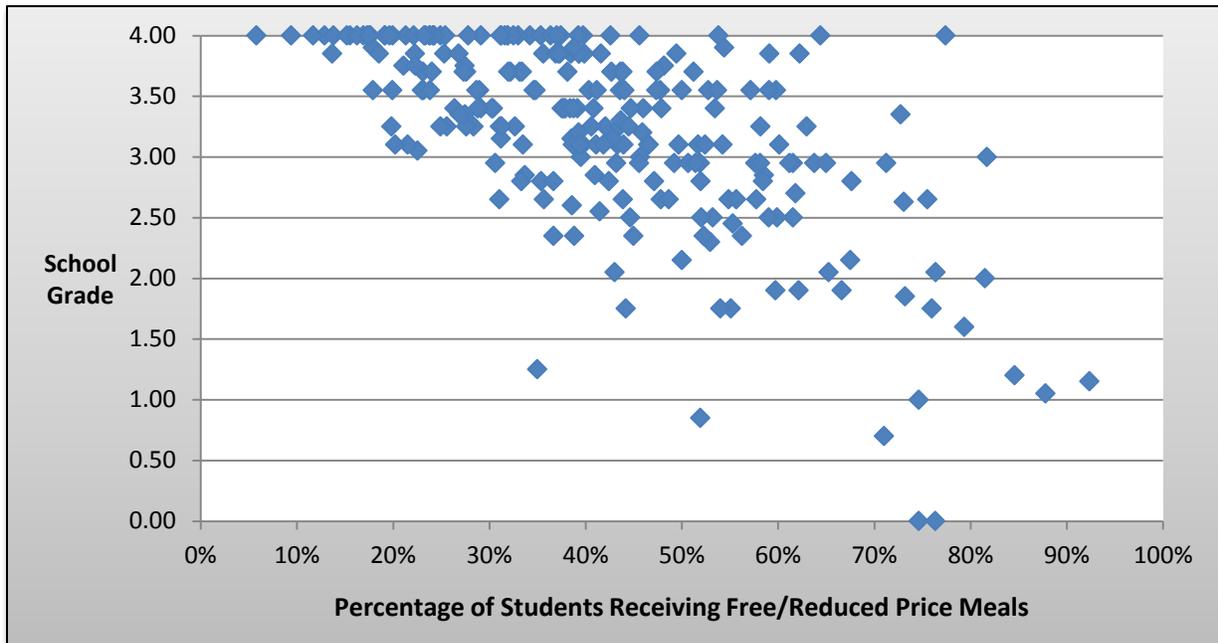


Figure 2: Scatterplot displaying the association between percentage of students receiving free or reduced meals and school grade

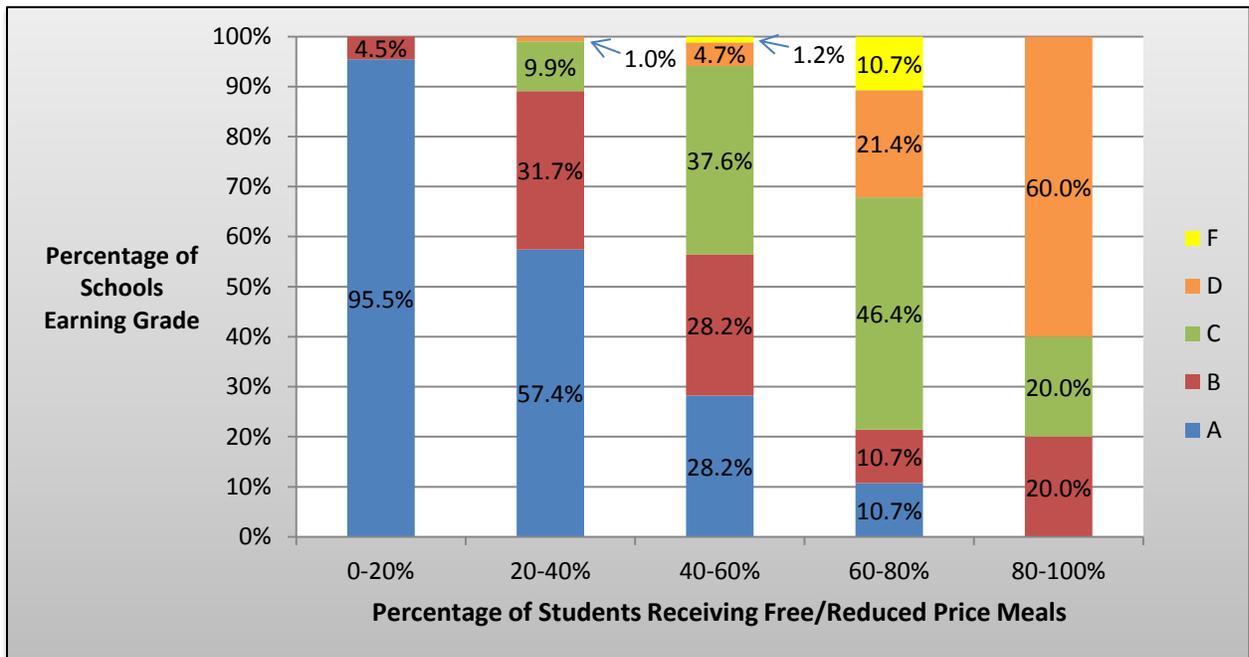


Figure 3: Segmented bar graph displaying the association between percentage of students receiving free/reduced price meals and school letter grade

## **Part 2: College and Career Readiness**

**Current Grading Criteria:** 10% of a school's grade; goal is for 25% of students to be career- or college-ready

### **Recommended Grading Criteria:**

- Expand the Career and College Readiness (CCR) component to 30% of the school grade and lower the weight of the two ECA sections to 20% each.
- One-quarter of the 30% component (or 7.5% of the overall grade) should be based upon the percentage of a school's students participating in Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), Dual-Credit, or Industry certification programs.
- Measure growth in career or college preparedness from the beginning to the end of high school.

### **Rationale:**

Reasons to raise the weighting of this component to 30%:

- According to Rice University's Center for College Readiness, participation in an AP program correlates with a measurably better performance in college.  
*"There is strong evidence that participation in AP strongly correlate with student achievement, college readiness, and college completion. The peer-reviewed research connecting AP participation to positive college outcomes has been conducted by non-profits, institutions of higher education, and the federal government. These organizations include Educational Testing Service, The College Board, the University of Texas and the U.S. Department of Education."*<sup>2</sup>
- Participation in the IB Programme is also an indicator of greater college success.  
*"In addition, regression analyses controlling for socio-economic status, high school GPA, and SAT/ACT scores, demonstrated a positive relationship between indicators of high school IB participation and performance and college performance. Performance in the Diploma Programme was the best predictor of college performance, accounting for around 25% of the variance (depending on the specific model). Among subject group exams, scores on the experimental sciences IB exams were the best predictors of college GPA, explaining around 17% of the variance."*<sup>3</sup>
- Participation in AP, IB, and Dual-Credit programs helps with college admissions. These classes are recognized as more rigorous high school courses by college admissions counselors. You are more likely to get into a good college if you take classes that are more indicative of the college class setting. A transcript with many such classes carries more weight than one without them.
- If a student participates in an industry preparation program, this also accelerates their professional career, and helps them to maintain a steady future after graduation.
- Passing AP or IB tests and Dual-Credit courses can help to lower college costs. The costs of attending college have been increasing every single year. As a result, many people have to drop out of college simply because they cannot pay for the classes. The AP, IB, and Dual-Credit

program helps to alleviate these harms by providing high school students with the opportunity to test out of college classes that they may not be able to afford.

- The vast majority of individuals entering high school plan on attending college<sup>4</sup>. More than 90% of middle schoolers say that they plan on going to college. Therefore, when looking to the kids who will be entering high school, their main goal is to graduate and be ready for college.
- 66.2% of high school graduates went on to college in 2012<sup>5</sup>. When a majority of graduates are going on to college, it should be given a greater sense of importance in the high school's grade.
- AP test scores can be improved by schools fairly quickly<sup>6</sup>. While this is not necessarily the program we are putting forward, what the National Math and Science Initiative shows is that schools can **significantly** improve the percentage of students that pass AP tests in a very short amount of time. As a result, increasing the weight and importance of the CCR section would work to incentivize schools to place a higher emphasis on these programs. This higher emphasis could easily result in significant score improvement.

Reason to decrease the weighting of the Algebra 1 and English 10 ECA proficiencies to 20% each:

- There is one very large reason that the weight of both ECAs should be decreased. In Indiana, passing the English 10 and Algebra 1 ECAs is a **requirement** for graduation. Under the current system, we are placing such a gigantic emphasis on the aspects of high school that lead to graduation. By looking at both of the ECA scores and the graduation rate, we are examining this one aspect of the high school for **90%** of the total school grade. (See Figure 4 below, which demonstrates the strong, positive correlation between graduation rate and ECA passing rate.) This is a pretty large flaw because it allows the Indiana Department of Education to overlook aspects of high school that are highly important, and instead focus almost entirely on graduating. While, graduating high school is very important, the high school system is not designed to be a 90% emphasis on pushing everyone through graduation. An integral part of a successful high school is looking to how well it can prepare its students for life outside of the school, and that is what the CCR section works to measure.

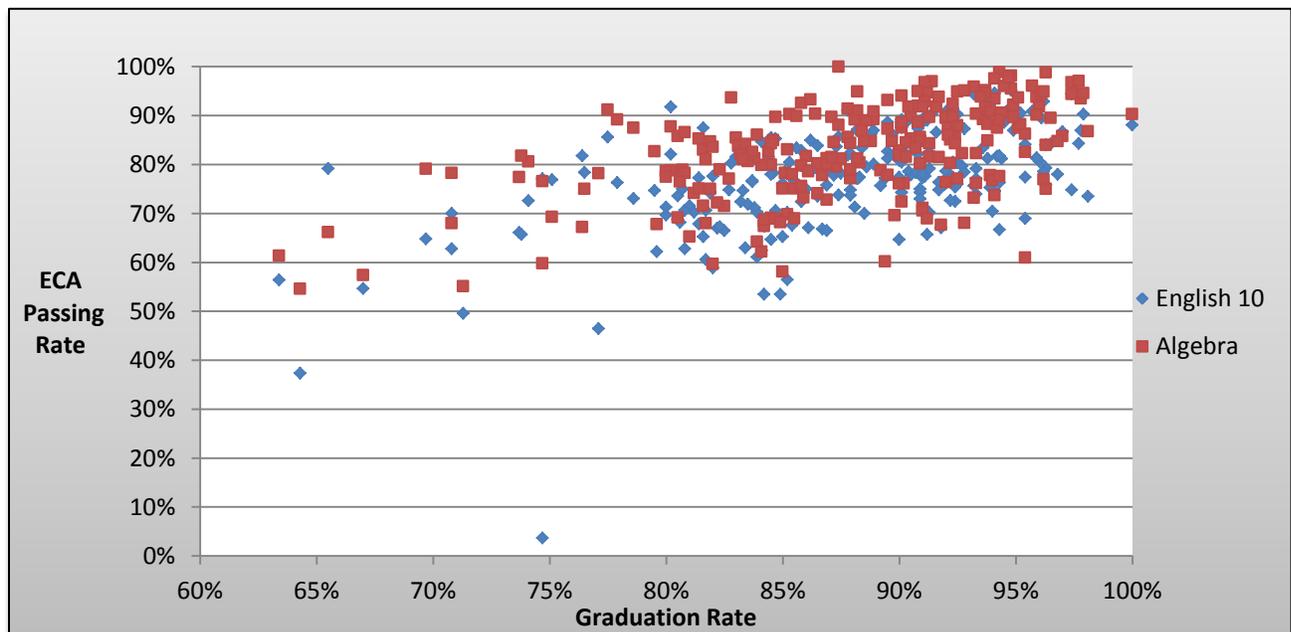


Figure 4: Scatterplot displaying the association between [graduation rate](#) and [ECA passing rate](#)

How we suggest grading this recommended College/Career Readiness component:

- 25% of the Career and College Readiness section grade should be based solely upon the proportion of students within the AP, IB, Dual-Credit, or industry certification programs. The reason for this is to provide schools with an incentive to expand the amount of kids in those programs. Research has shown that, regardless of performance in the course, all of these types of accelerated learning classes lead to students having a higher level of college success. This section should not be based completely upon the test scores alone, because the test scores are not the only important part of these courses. Being in these classes in the first place is what is most important.
- Only 22 high schools in Indiana offer the IB program, and larger schools are more likely to offer a variety of AP courses. Career centers are available to any school in its “area”, but students at the school that hosts the program are more likely to take advantage of it than students who have to drive more than half an hour to get to it. Large schools are able to offer more opportunities to get students college- and career-ready. Giving a school credit for the amount students who simply take part in what they are able offer makes the grading system more fair for small schools, and provides a larger incentive for schools to adopt more programs.

We also recommend that there should be two ways to meet the other 75% of this total grade.

- **Method 1 (the status quo):** Maintain the test performance system that we currently use. Simply roll over the way that we currently measure the grade in this category, which is having a certain portion of the students pass the AP, IB, or industry tests, or having students get at least 3 college credits.
- **Method 2 (measures growth):** A large part of the restructuring that has gone on within the education system over the past 5-10 years is the shift from performance to improvement. Therefore, instead of strictly measuring test performance, we should also have a way to measure CCR improvement. The way to go about this would be by having some indicator of college or career readiness freshman year. After measuring the portion of students who are deemed CCR, the school should measure this level again their senior year. This eliminates the performance emphasis, and looks more towards the growth model that the Indiana DOE has seemed to like. The standards that could indicate CCR to the state are not something that we have a recommendation for, but the state could probably formulate a simple way to measure that during freshman year.
- ECA performance and graduation rates have bonuses written into how they are graded, which encourages growth in both areas. College and career readiness does not have any bonuses offered, which shows the state is not encouraging growth. Schools should be rewarded for increasing the percentage of students ready for a future after high school. If a school meets both Method 1 and Method 2, it should be awarded a bonus.

### **Part 3: Goal-Setting and Feedback to Schools**

**Current Grading Criteria:** None

**Recommended Grading Criteria:**

- The Department of Education defines a goal for each school every year.
- Schools take action to achieve that goal.
- The Department of Education sends goal-related information on their efforts back to schools along with the letter grade.

How can we change a school for the better if they are not given consistent information related to their efforts? We would like to see the Department of Education give schools timely feedback when they receive their letter grade for the year. Formative assessment (like establishing checkpoints) is a teaching tool that works by helping students monitor their own progress. We would like to see the Department of Education establish this technique between itself and schools. This expectation can only be met if communication is made with the schools throughout the year. A formative assessment can only be effective if negatives and positives are presented about each school, including helpful ways to change the procedures that are not effective. Timely and useful feedback is key to a successful school.

### **Part 4: Teacher Observation**

**Current Grading Criteria:** None

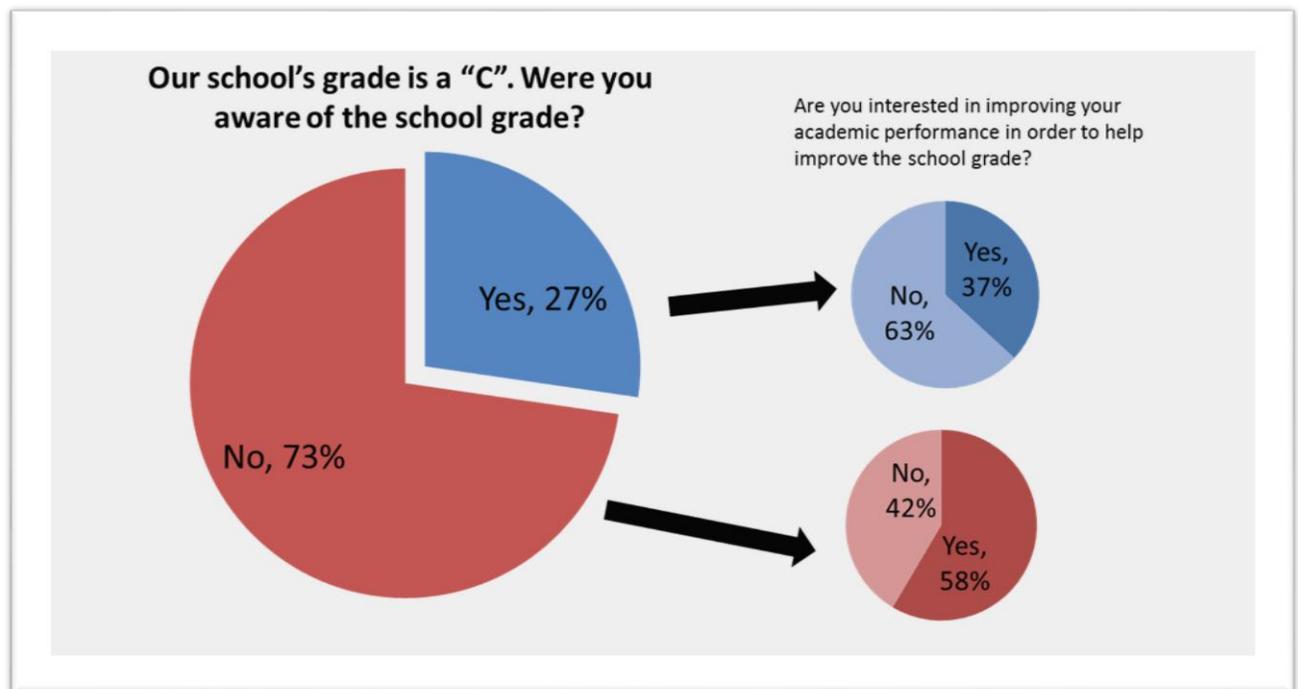
**Recommended Grading Criteria:** Bring in outside observers into each of the schools to evaluate teacher performance and school learning procedures in order to gather information for a formative assessment.

To provide high-quality feedback to improve a schools' practice, teachers need to be "observed by the right people, with the right skills, and a sufficient number of times to produce trustworthy results."<sup>6</sup> We would like to see the Department of Education bring in outside observers to evaluate not only the schools but the teachers so information can be gathered for the formative assessment at the end of each year. The reason we want to bring in outside observers is we do not want observer judgment from other teachers as stressed in the Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) Project. The MET Project also stressed that "observers must be well trained and assessed for accuracy before they score teacher lessons." In other words, we would like all schools in the state to receive a formative assessment on the progress of their school by using outside observers to record teacher and student performance during the school year.

## Part 5: Student Knowledge of the School Grade

**Recommendation for School-Level Administrators:** We believe student involvement plays a factor in the school's overall grade. We surveyed students at Ben Davis High School in order to catch a glimpse of the number of students who were aware of the school's grade and whether that knowledge motivated them to work harder. Before the survey took place, we predicted that the students who knew our school's grade would have more motivation to help improve it. It turns out we were wrong.

Given the data collected in Figure 6, it is safe to assume that the majority of students at Ben Davis do not know that their school's grade is presently a "C". Those students were also the ones who felt motivated to improve their academic performance in order to help improve the grade. We recommend that students be informed of their school's grade. This may be a driving force for some students, and may ultimately lead to an "A" for schools with poor grades. If such an achievement is reached, schools should be willing to reward students that have shown adequate growth. If students and staff work together to improve a school's grade, it will show that they care not only about their grades, but about the school's, too. When students and staff work together, they can make a change.



**Figure 6: Responses by over 300 Ben Davis High School students in Math, Science, English, Art, World Language, and Military Science classes. Surveys were given to teachers who administered them to their students. Responses were collected anonymously.**

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup>"A-F Accountability." *IDOE Home*. N.p., n.d. Web. 24 May 2013.  
<<http://www.doe.in.gov/improvement/accountability/f-accountability>>.
- <sup>2</sup>"AP and College Readiness." *Advanced Placement (AP) and College Readiness : Rice University Center for College Readiness*. N.p., n.d. Web. 24 May 2013.  
<[http://collegeready.rice.edu/AP\\_and\\_CR\\_Main.aspx](http://collegeready.rice.edu/AP_and_CR_Main.aspx)>.
- <sup>3</sup>"Academic Performance of IB Students Entering the University of California System from 2000-2002." *IB Global Policy & Research Department*. August 2010.  
<[http://www.ibo.org/research/programmevalidation/documents/CADDataReportReportSummary\\_tempweb.pdf](http://www.ibo.org/research/programmevalidation/documents/CADDataReportReportSummary_tempweb.pdf)>
- <sup>4</sup>"Most Middle Schoolers Plan to Attend College but Don't Know How to Get There, Report Says" *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Lipka, Sara. 23 May 2007  
<<http://www.calstate.edu/pa/clips2007/may/23may/middle.shtml>>
- <sup>5</sup>"College Enrollment and Work Activity of 2012 High School Graduates." *U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 17 Apr. 2013. Web. 31 May 2013.  
<<http://www.bls.gov/news.release/hsgsec.nr0.htm>>.
- <sup>6</sup>"Research & Results | Transform Schools | National Math + Science Initiative." *Research & Results | Transform Schools | National Math + Science Initiative*. N.p., n.d. Web. 24 May 2013.  
<<http://www.nms.org/programs/ResearchResults.aspx>>.
- <sup>7</sup>"Ensuring Fair and Reliable: Culminating Findings from the MET Project's Three-Year Study." *MET Project*. Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, n.d. Web. 31 May 2013.  
<[http://www.metproject.org/downloads/MET\\_Ensuring\\_Fair\\_and\\_Reliable\\_Measures\\_Practitioner\\_Brief.pdf](http://www.metproject.org/downloads/MET_Ensuring_Fair_and_Reliable_Measures_Practitioner_Brief.pdf)>.

**MEMORANDUM**

DA: June 4, 2013

TO: The Department of Education and State Board of Education

FR: Ben Davis Senior IB Math Class

RE: Indiana’s A-F School Accountability Model

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The purpose of HB1427 is to find a method that accurately measures student achievement and growth in elementary and middle school level children. Student growth rates, or lack thereof, are indicative of a school’s achievement. By knowing the level of achievement of each school it is easier to propose changes and implement plans in order to raise school grades, achievement, and student growth. Growth at EMS levels are presently measured solely on ISTEP testing scores and this recommendation will propose additional methods of measuring success at the EMS levels.

**Previous Grading Method**

Adopted in the beginning of the 2011-2012 school year, the Board of Education has placed in order a system for grading each elementary and middle school’s proficiency. Scores on ELA and Math ISTEP tests were the sole components of this grading system. For each school a grade has been assigned which reflects the level of student performance (A, B, C, D or F).

**2012 Grade Distribution**

(Source: Indiana Department of Education, Presentation for School Accountability)

Grades	Number	Percentage
A	856	41.0%
B	420	20.1%
C	426	20.4%
D	242	11.6%
F	146	7.0%
Total	2090	100%

After seeing the current grade distribution, we noticed a few things that could be revised so that the current model would be a more accurate reflection of how well schools are preparing students for future success. The current system could be adjusted to achieve this task by including:

- quarterly testing
- reading level assessments
- student and staff attendance

**ISTEP/Standardized Testing Methods**

We as a team have decided to reorganize the ISTEP process. We recommend using a quarterly system for testing. The tests would be taken at the end of every nine weeks. Each

test would cover all the English and math standards for a particular grade level. The test that is graded for state progress will be the end of year exam--a full length ISTEP.

By implementing the smaller tests, we hope testing can become more of a habit for students and not such a daunting task. We also think that this system will provide students with more opportunity to show progress because, for scoring purposes, both year to year growth and quarterly growth will be tracked. By tracking the progress from the first nine weeks to the last nine weeks, the effectiveness of teachers could be analyzed. Also, schools can see where their students are with their skills at the beginning of the year and actually track their progress toward learning the standards. This seems better than comparing a test with the standards from the year before to the current test over new standards.

In order to determine the range of values for high growth, low growth, and typical growth, we recommend using the average score increase for all students in the same grade across the state of Indiana from the previous year. The average score could then be multiplied by a predetermined quantity in order to classify high, low, and typical growth. For example, if we took the average growth of math scores from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> grade to be 30 points, to determine who is high growth we could multiply the average by 2 (or some other reasonable quantity), and if a student increased their score by 60 or more they are then classified as high growth. To determine low growth we could multiply the average by 0.5 (for instance), and if a student increased their score by less than 15 points then they are classified as low growth. Thus, anyone in the range created between the low growth and high growth (between 15 and 60 points in this example) would be considered typical growth. This method of creating standards would be used for all grades and tests. The rationale for this approach is to create predetermined score expectations that students and teachers can be made aware of in order for students to obtain high, low, or typical growth.

### **Assessing Reading Levels**

If we look at only ISTEP+ scores to judge success rates, we will not find an accurate mark. Reading is one of the most important things necessary for the success of our students, not only in school, but in life as well. If we battle illiteracy at a younger age, it is more likely that students will have a much higher chance of success. "Academic failure by a student in high school (including dropping out) is almost always preceded by academic failure in middle school or junior high. In turn, academic failure in the mid-levels is generally preceded by failing to learn to read at or near grade level by third grade."<sup>1</sup> Making sure that students are maintaining a reading level at *least* at their own grade level is critical. Reading is the fundamental knowledge necessary for complete comprehension of everyday subjects.

In order to ensure that reading levels can be effectively assessed, there are a plethora of reading assessments available to be utilized. One test that could be used is the Developmental Reading Assessment® from Pearson Education, Inc. The test claims to be able to effectively evaluate each student's reading ability with a research-based assessment with demonstrated reliability and validity. The test gives educators the tools they need to observe and document student reading abilities as well as inform instructional practice. Also the data should be easy to analyze, should communicate results, and should group

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.readingfoundation.org/schools.jsp>

students based on a report available on paper and electronically<sup>2</sup>. Development of the test was based on what the educators who created the test considered to be characteristics of good readers. Another test that could be utilized is the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI). This is a program which provides immediate, actionable data on students' reading levels and growth over time<sup>3</sup>. This assessment should help educators to differentiate instruction, make meaningful interventions, forecast growth, and demonstrate accountability. The Scholastic Reading Inventory test is administered by the school and is a Lexile measure test, which evaluates books for difficulty. Teachers and schools could use this test to help students prepare for further reading tests because it will be able to give educators a gauge for where their students are at in order to track growth.

No matter what reading test is used, the test should be criterion-based, and schools should be assessed on what percent of students are reading at least at their grade level. In addition, schools should be given credit for students showing significant growth, regardless of whether they are at their grade level or not. Growth could be assessed similarly to how it is assessed for ISTEP scores.

### **Student and Staff Attendance**

ISTEP testing and other standardized testing cannot represent a whole year's learning for an elementary or middle school level student. Tests do not take into consideration those who are bad testers or who have skills in subjects other than reading or math. Because of these reasons and more, we should consider other methods of assessment for schools. Attendance is a valid measurement for current and future success of students. Both student and staff attendance should be taken into account to achieve a well-rounded factor for the model. In order for students to learn normal, uninterrupted lessons in class, the teacher must be present and able to maintain a structured plan for the whole school year. When a substitute teacher is in a class, the teacher usually gives them an unplanned lesson for the day, interrupting the previously taught subjects.

Statistics have shown that good attendance early on in elementary school is better for the success of a child. In California third graders who had no attendance risk in both kindergarten and first grade scored, on average, 50 points higher on English and Language Arts examinations than those with high attendance risks in kindergarten and first grade (Figure 8)<sup>4</sup>.

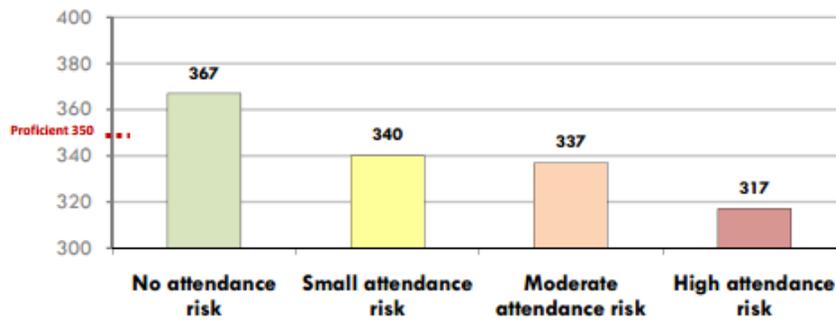
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<sup>2</sup><http://www.pearsonschool.com/index.cfm?locator=PSZ4Z4&pageitemid=1&PMDbProgramId=23661&PMDbSiteId=3761&PMDbSolutionId=27682&PMDbSubSolutionId=27683&PMDbCategoryId=&level=4&prognav=pt&CFID=30114319&CFTOKEN=18714395&jsessionid=5230ef553136522d787e>

<sup>3</sup> [http://teacher.scholastic.com/products/sri\\_reading\\_assessment/index.htm](http://teacher.scholastic.com/products/sri_reading_assessment/index.htm)

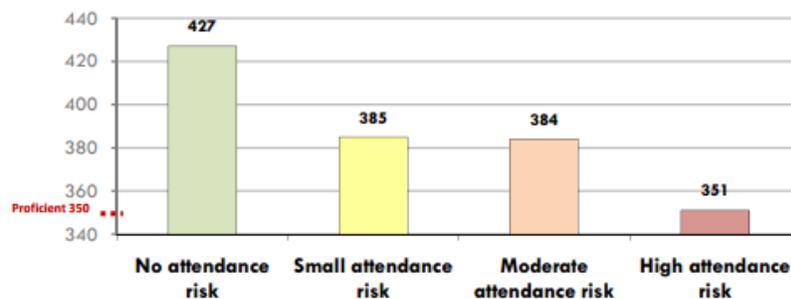
<sup>4</sup> <http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/ASR-Mini-Report-Attendance-Readiness-and-Third-Grade-Outcomes-7-8-11.pdf>

**Figure 8: Third Grade ELA Test Scores, by K/1<sup>st</sup> Combined Attendance**



Statistics also show that students without an attendance risk in both kindergarten and first grade scored on average 76 points better on a standardized math examination than students who were at a high attendance risk in kindergarten and first grade (Figure 9)<sup>5</sup>. The examination was given in third grade, showing that attendance patterns develop early and can affect students later on in their school careers.

**Figure 9: Third Grade Math Test Scores, by K/1<sup>st</sup> Combined Attendance**



Attendance has also been shown to affect students' reading levels. 64% of students with good attendance (9 days or less missed) in both kindergarten and first grade could read on grade level after the third grade. Only 43% of students with at-risk attendance (missed more than 9 days both years), however, were able to read on grade level after the third grade. 41% of students above the third grade level that had chronic absence (18 or more days missed in one year) in kindergarten or first grade were able to read on grade level. Lower still were the reading scores of students that were chronically absent in both kindergarten and first grade (18 or more days missed both years)<sup>6</sup>. These statistics show that attendance early on in the students' school careers is important and can affect their success in the rest of their school careers.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/ASR-Mini-Report-Attendance-Readiness-and-Third-Grade-Outcomes-7-8-11.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/AW-InfographicFINAL.jpg>

Schools could be assessed on attendance using the following guidelines. Based on the overall school population, the average attendance rate for each school would determine a base score for that school. These score categories would be similar to the current base score categories for ISTEP testing. Penalties could then be distributed to schools with above average percentages of students who miss 9 or more days in a school year. A similar penalty could be given to a school with an above average number of teachers who miss more than 5 days of school in a school year.

### **Conclusion**

We recognize that standardized assessments, and in particular ISTEP tests, are still necessary and must be the primary source of assessing EMS schools. However, we encourage you to consider different approaches to how the assessments are administered in order to better track individual student growth, including quarterly testing and reading level assessments. In addition, we believe there are additional quantifiable factors, such as attendance, that greatly impact student achievement in higher grade levels and in their future lives, and thus should be considered when assessing schools. We thank you for your time and for your commitment to improving education in Indiana.