

2022 ISBA Legislative Foundational Statements

The Indiana School Boards Association (ISBA) is dedicated to improving the quality of education provided by public schools throughout the state of Indiana. ISBA recognizes the role of the General Assembly in enacting legislation that impacts public education and is committed to representing the interests of its member school corporations when addressing legislative initiatives. ISBA has adopted the following foundational statements to formalize its position as it advocates on behalf of Indiana school boards and public education on present and future legislation.

Support Exceptional Learning Opportunities for Hoosier Children

The ISBA supports programs and policies to provide exceptional learning opportunities for Hoosier children. Given that more than 94 percent of all K-12 students attend a public school, the parents of more than 1 million students have spoken and have made public schools the “schools of choice.” We believe that through local control, we have created a rich and diverse public education system that provides a multitude of learning environments, programs, and curricular offerings to students. Through these opportunities we are preparing a new generation of students to be college and career ready that will in turn help drive the economic growth and prosperity of the state.

Promote Equitable Funding of Public Schools

The ISBA supports the funding of public schools that is annually adjusted to keep ahead of inflation and that improves Indiana’s ranking on per pupil funding. This will allow local boards of education to support the ongoing improvement in the quality of public education. ISBA supports the equitable funding of public schools, recognizing that schools may need additional funding to educate economically-disadvantaged students.

Empower School Board Authority

The ISBA supports empowering local boards of education with the authority to govern the educational and financial matters, including health and safety measures for students and employees, of individual public school corporations.

Maintain Nonpartisan School Boards and Local Control of Reorganization Plans

The ISBA supports continuation of the election and/or appointment of school board members on a nonpartisan basis. School board elections should be based on local educational needs and solutions, not political affiliation. Candidates should be elected for their qualifications and their commitment to student success, without regard to political party allegiance.

The ISBA supports limiting the authority to make changes to local reorganization plans, including consolidation and disannexation of school corporations, to school boards and the voters who reside within the particular public school corporations affected and does not support the General Assembly enacting legislation that mandates such changes.

Maintain Safe & Secure Learning Environments

The ISBA supports local control—with state support, broad policy, and appropriate funding—to implement comprehensive strategies of a school safety plan that are developed with insights of a threat assessment and in collaboration with local law enforcement and public safety agencies. ISBA opposes funded or unfunded mandates for implementation of specific school safety equipment, devices, or technology. Policies and funding pertaining to school safety should be holistic and include addressing the social and emotional needs of students and staff, including

resources for guidance counselors, social workers, and mental health therapists to support student and staff wellness.

Promote High-Quality Teachers and School Leaders

The ISBA believes that effective educational achievement outcomes depend on a high-quality teacher and administrator workforce. We support legislation that respects and values the teaching profession as an honorable, noble profession. We support state policies and laws that enable “teachers to teach” without burdensome regulation or policies that diminish or demean the profession (e.g., licensure policies that do not require pedagogy training and knowledge). ISBA seeks support for teacher recruitment strategies that both address critical shortage areas and attract a pipeline of diverse teacher candidates into the classroom, such as promising “Grow Your Own” partnerships between schools and postsecondary institutions. ISBA is a proponent of initiatives that improve the retention of excellent educators, including enhanced support for mentoring and leadership development.

Support Professional Development

The ISBA supports professional development opportunities that provide evaluation, training, and mentoring that enhance and elevate the teaching profession. We support state funding for professional development and in-service programs that may be conducted beyond the 180-day school year. ISBA also supports enhanced teacher training on e-learning instruction strategies that reflect best practice and proven methodologies to engage students in a virtual environment.

Protect School Calendar/Instructional Time

The ISBA supports the current legislative mandate to conduct a minimum of 180 student instructional days and believes the local governing body should retain the authority to determine the school calendar.

The ISBA supports the current flexibility to adjust the beginning and closing hour of the school day due to student safety concerns.

The ISBA supports the current legislative mandate to conduct a minimum of student instructional time and believes the local board of education should retain the authority to determine the best method for meeting the instructional day requirements. The ISBA supports the current flexibility to use virtual instruction when deemed appropriate by local school officials.

Seek Rigorous Financial and Academic Accountability Measures for All Schools

The metrics used to grade school corporations and individual schools should be transparent and easy to understand. ISBA supports the use of multiple measures to judge the quality of schools to reduce the over-reliance on summative assessment scores.

Regardless of which metrics are used for the school accountability system, all schools (public and private) receiving state tuition support dollars should adhere to the same academic and financial accountability metrics. The public has a right to expect transparency and compliance with the public notice requirements, record keeping and audits needed for financial accountability, and access to public records from all state-funded schools. Dollars flowing to each school system type should be itemized separately in the state budget. Taxpayers deserve full transparency on the level of their tax dollars being spent on these programs.

ISBA recognizes and commends the efforts of public schools to fulfill the unique constitutional duty to educate every child. The ISBA supports requiring all schools that receive state tuition support funding to admit students on a nondiscriminatory basis.

Expand K-12 Tax Credit Programs

The ISBA supports expansion of the tax credit laws that fund school scholarships for enrollment in private schools to include an income tax credit for charitable contributions to public education foundations. In addition, ISBA supports a tax deduction for parents of public school students for educational expenses, including curricular material fees.

Support Career and Technical Education (CTE)

ISBA believes career and technical education (CTE) should enable and empower students to move directly into employment upon graduation and/or complete a postsecondary credential more quickly. All students should have the opportunity to engage in career exploration.

Secondary CTE courses should expand focus from filling short-term needs of business and industry that are entry-level and low-wage basic jobs to creating career pathways that lead to transferable skills and certifications to foster life-long learning. Policymakers and state agency leaders should support fiscal and administrative policies to incentivize cooperation between school corporations and employers, as well as to help with the purchase of new equipment.