

# Indiana sees a small gain in ISTEP scores

*IPS scores were mostly flat, Wayne Township makes gains, wealthiest districts again come out on top*

by Scott Elliott on August 4, 2014

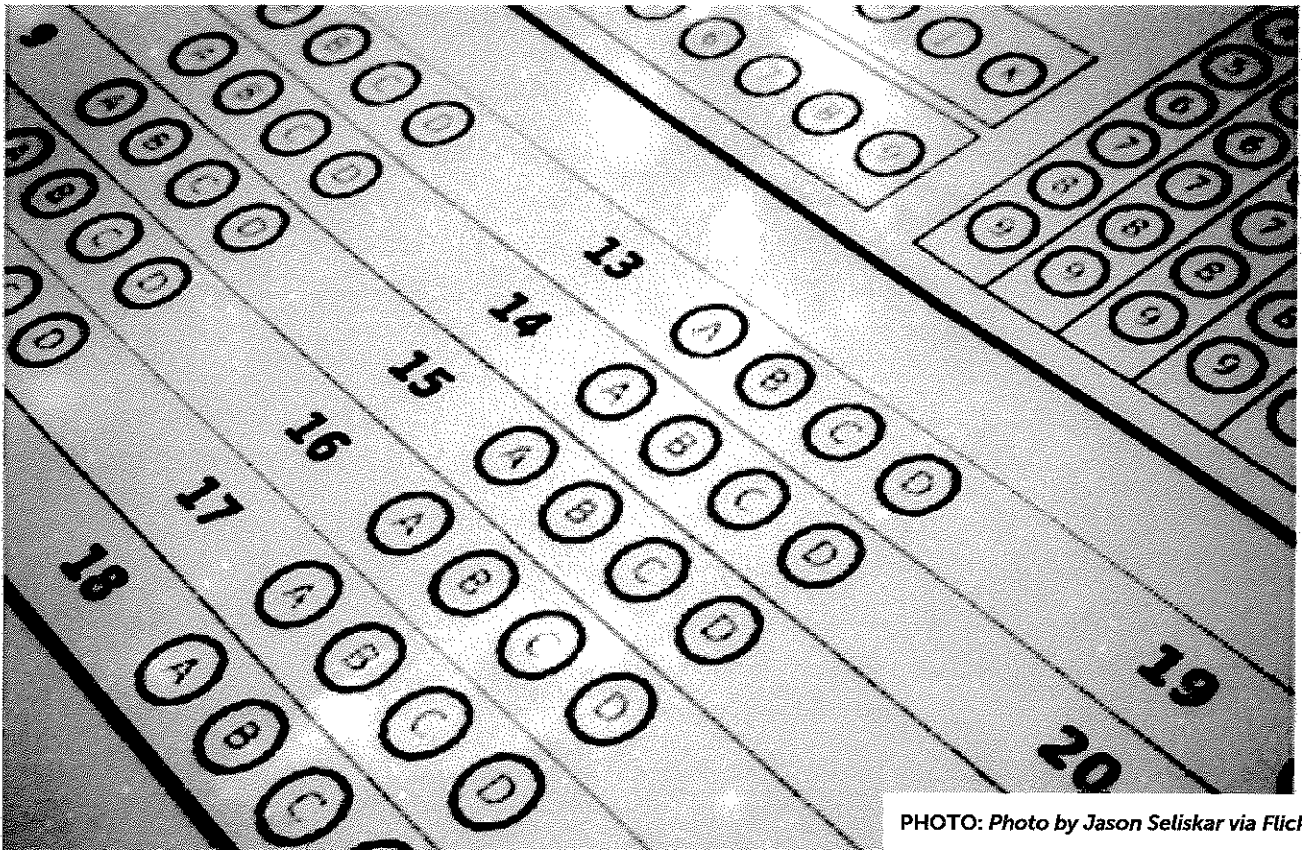


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Hoosier kids in grades 3 to 8 collectively made the smallest gain on ISTEP in five years in 2013-14, gaining just one percentage point over the prior year.

Statewide, 74.7 percent of test-takers passed both the English and math portions of ISTEP, according to data released today by the Indiana Department of Education. Find your school's scores [here](#).

In a statement, State Superintendent Glenda Ritz focused on the good news of another gain. Indiana students haven't lost ground on ISTEP since 2009.

“This year, we saw yet another increase in student performance indicated through ISTEP,” she said. “These increased scores are just one sign of the great learning that is happening in Indiana Schools.”

The annual release of scores for nearly 500,000 students in the past was released in June but last year was delayed to September after problems with online exams required a review of the results. This year, there were no major problems with ISTEP online. Ritz said in a radio interview last month that a decision by Fort Wayne schools to administer the exam entirely on paper this year slowed scoring and delayed the release of results.

ISTEP is the backbone of Indiana’s school accountability system, playing central roles in A to F grades assigned to schools, expected to be out later this fall, and evaluation scores for teachers. Scores have not yet been released for high school end-of-course exams in Algebra and English.

Statewide, preliminary reading scores made a solid 1.2 percentage point gain over last year to reach 80.7 percent passing. In math, students gained a half point to 83.5 percent passing.

Carmel (93 percent), Zionsville (92.8 percent) and West Lafayette (92.1 percent) were the top three districts for percent of students passing ISTEP for the second straight year. Brownsburg (sixth best with 90.5 percent passing) was also in the top 10. All of those districts are among the state’s wealthiest communities.

On the other end of the spectrum was Indianapolis Public Schools, serving one of the poorest communities in Indiana, again ranked fourth from the bottom out of 290 school districts, tied with Medora at 51.6 percent passing. While last year the district could point to IPS as having one of the strongest gains in passing rate in the state, the news was not as good this year — a modest 0.5 percent gain.

All but 10 of the 58 IPS schools that took the test were ranked in the state’s bottom 25 percent for passing rate. Eight IPS schools were in the bottom 50 out of more than 1,800 schools that took ISTEP statewide.

But the news was not all bad for the district. Sidener Gifted Academy, an IPS magnet school for students that are identified as gifted, again was the top-rated school in the state, this time with 100 percent of its students passing ISTEP. This year two other schools joined Sidener at the top — Flaget Elementary School in Vincennes and St. Wendel School in Posey County.

Elsewhere in Marion County, Franklin Township again has the highest passing rate with

82.8 percent passing, up about one point from last year.

Wayne Township had by far the biggest ISTEP gain in the county: up 5.8 points to 64.4 percent passing. Two Wayne Township schools were ranked among the top 30 in the state for the biggest gains over last year: McClelland Elementary School (up 19 points) and North Wayne Elementary School (up 15 points).

Meanwhile, Warren Township (down 1.1 points) and Lawrence Township (down 0.4 points), were the only Marion County districts that saw their passing rates drop.

Much awaited results for four schools taken over by the state in 2012 and handed off to be run independently by charter school organizations showed some solid gains, but all four remained among the lowest-scoring schools in the state.

Seventh and eighth graders at Arlington High School, formerly of IPS, had an 11-point gain to 35.5 percent passing. Howe High School, also from IPS, gained eight points to 37.7 percent passing for its middle school students. That was the best of the group but still ranked in the bottom 1 percent of all Indiana schools.

Also in state takeover from IPS is Donnan Middle School, where scores were mostly flat at 24.9 percent passing, up 0.5 percent. Roosevelt High School, a Gary school in state takeover, gained 4.6 points to 20.3 percent passing.

Roosevelt is run by Tennessee-based Edison Learning and Arlington by Tindley Accelerated Schools of Indianapolis. Howe and Donnan are managed by Florida-based Charter Schools USA. Manual High School, formerly of IPS and also run by CSUSA, only serves grades 9 to 12, so its students don't take ISTEP. Arlington, Howe and Roosevelt serve grades 7 to 12.

This is the second year of test results for the takeover schools. Gains exceeded last year's, which were considerably smaller at all four schools.

Arlington appears headed for an exit from state takeover after its operator, Tindley Accelerated Schools, told the Indiana State Board of Education it wanted to end its contract early because managing the school had become too costly. A committee that includes officials from IPS, Tindley, Mayor Greg Ballard's office and the state forged a deal to keep Arlington operating under Tindley this year and is working on a transition plan for next year.

Tindley's move raised questions about whether state takeover was working. Today's scores were mixed as evidence for the program's effectiveness. While the gains at some

schools could be seen bolstering the argument that takeovers can make a difference, the persistently low passing rates have been cited as demonstrating the idea is ineffective.

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