

## Other Comments & Recommendations

LWVIN Interviews on High-Stakes Standardized Testing, 2016

### Legend of School Corporations (and associated LWV groups) interviewed:

BrnCo	Brown County School Corp	LWV-BrownCo
Elkhart	Elkhart Community Schools	LWV-ElkhartCo
EVSC	Evansville Vanderburgh Schl Corp	LWV-SouthwesternIndiana
LCSC	Logansport Community Schl Corp	LWV-CassCo
LSC	Lafayette School Corp	LWV-GreaterLafayette
IPS	Indianapolis Public Schools	LWV-Indianapolis
MCCSC	Monroe County School Corp	LWV-BloomingtonMonroeCo
MCS	Muncie Community Schools	LWV-MuncieDelawareCo
Mishawaka	City Schools of Mishawaka	LWV-SouthBendArea
MSD-Law	Metropol Schl Dist Lawrence Twp	LWV-Indianapolis
MSD-Pike	Metropol Schl Dist Pike Twp	LWV-Indianapolis
MSD-Wash	Metropol Schl Dist Washington Twp	LWV-Indianapolis
NM	North Montgomery Co Schl Corp	LWV-MontgomeryCo
RBB	Richland Bean Blossom Schl Corp	LWV-BloomingtonMonroeCo
SBCSC	South Bend Community Schls	LWV-SouthBendArea
TSC	Tippecanoe Co School Corp	LWV-GreaterLafayette
WLCSC	West Lafayette Community Schl C	LWV-GreaterLafayette

<b>School Corp</b>	
BC	<p>a. Standardized testing can minimize differences between various teachers' assessments, improve accountability and provide beneficial comparative measures. But use of standardized testing has gotten out of control.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Educators in the field are not given sufficient input to develop the tests.</p> <p>Testing has become very political, losing sight of its true purpose. Politicians think they know more than educators in the field, making excessive and frequent changes without allowing sufficient time for schools to incorporate changes and preparation, making the tests unrealistic and losing potential benefit.</p> <p>b. Schools should be allowed to use Paper/Pencil tests, not mandated to use online tests. Other high stake tests such as AP tests and SAT tests are Paper/Pencil. Results at a BC school using only Paper/Pencil vs. a school using computerized testing were significantly higher. The rationale for computerized testing in ISTEP is that it makes students "college and career ready." However, assessing computer skills should not be co-mingled with assessing knowledge because the results will not be accurate. Computer skills should be separately taught and assessed.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. The number of problems attributed simply to taking tests on computer raise serious questions about the validity of test results<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Computer delays are common, often causing students to wait 30 seconds <b>or</b> longer after answering a question before the next question is even available. On a one hour timed test, this can be 25% to 50% of the time lost, significantly impacting a student's ability to complete the entire test on time and invalidating results.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Computer problems add stress to an already stressful situation. Students' performance will not represent their true ability when they are stressed.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Reams of paper would be needed to print out all the emails the technology department received reporting computer problems with administering the ISTEP.</li></ul></li><li>d. Even without technical problems of the computer, taking tests on computer does not accurately assess a student's knowledge of the subject matter. Online testing limits student's abilities to apply strategies learned in the class room. Lack of computer skills will interfere with test performance, even when a student has subject mastery.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Kids have to scroll to see all the possible answers to a single question. They have to drag and drop boxes. Some questions require clicking on various features, where teachers report it took them a while to figure out what was expected. These requirements are testing a student's ability to use a mouse, and navigate a computer screen, not their knowledge. One 3rd grade teacher said the biggest consequence is seeing the kids' faces when they start the tests excited and confident, but become frustrated when they experience these challenges.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Excellent writers may fail the writing portion of the test if their keyboard skills are not up to par. Some students hand write the writing portion, then struggle to re-type their response in the time limit.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Some math problems take 4-5 steps to solve. The computer doesn't provide a system to work out the problem, so students hand write the solution, then have to transfer the answer to the computer – another opportunity for error. Some questions have more than one correct answer. Students must write a justification for the answer they select. These questions are difficult to manage on a computer. Having to scroll back and forth to review information adds unnecessary difficulty.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Reading strategies teach kids to annotate, take notes, and to highlight phrases and key points while they read. Taking tests online prevents kids from using these strategies. Handicapped by these limitations, results do not represent results with pencil/paper where these strategies could be applied by students.</li></ul></li><li>e. The language used in many test questions and prompts are different than the standards and different than the way subjects were outlined for teaching;<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Some of the prompts appear completely inappropriate for the test age targeted, and teachers couldn't find any reference to them in the standards.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Some prompts completely mystified the teachers, giving the feeling that even the Reading teachers would fail the Reading test.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Wording is often very ambiguous.</li></ul></li><li>f. Standardized tests have caused the curriculum to be driven by test content, where it should be the other way around. Assessment results should help educators determine where students need additional instruction.</li></ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>g. The frequency of testing is out of control. Some tests are beneficial, but the excessive amount of testing wears out staff and students. One person said the students are becoming numb to testing.</li><li>h. Educators do not have enough say in development of the tests. Selected personnel are given superficial opportunities to review questions and provide input, but are not truly involved in the development.</li><li>i. The tests attempt to measure deeper thinking but it is not realistic to expect deep thought in a timed test. Deeper thought and learning requires the opportunity for discussion, time to digest material, seek other opinions, research further information for comparison. This can't be duplicated on a test.</li><li>j. Last year's tests were set aside because they did not test the standards that had been set.</li><li>k. One administrator said, "Lots of money is being made on testing." There are concerns that due to the amount of money private businesses can make on assessments, the test companies are given too much input into developing tests, rather than allowing educators in the field to develop the tests that will be most useful.</li><li>l. Some suggestions to improve the use of standardized tests might be:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Assessment has to be purposeful. Results should be immediate. Feedback that is not timely is not useful.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Take the test in the fall, on the prior year's curriculum, and have results available to teachers by November.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Alternate tests, giving some tests every other year instead of all tests every year.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Stop changing the tests on political whim.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure Educators have sufficient say in test development and time to vet questions. Allow sufficient time for teachers to become familiar with tests so they can align teaching appropriately.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> The Iowa Test of Basic Skills given in Grade 2 is useful, as it does inform instruction.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Teachers report that Screening tests, quick assessments of actual skills, can be more useful to teachers to determine student proficiencies and deficiencies, rather than spending inordinate amounts of time on lengthy standardized tests.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> The new Indiana test should review the tests selected locally for use by individual school districts to attempt to make the state test results beneficial, and help school districts reduce the total number of standardized tests required of students.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Decrease the frequency of tests. Splitting the test into two sections has increased the administrative burden on schools. Some have suggested breaking the test into a quarterly test. This would require schools to hire personnel specifically for administration of the test to have any chance of keeping track of meeting various test requirements for the students.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Use only Educators to score the tests. Questions that are not multiple choice (writing, commentary) require scoring by people. The people who do the scoring are often NOT Educators. They are provided cursory training and provided rubrics for scoring. Yet local schools spend a very long time teaching teachers how to assess complex skills such as writing, calibrating teacher capabilities to promote standardized assessment. The accuracy of scoring by non-educators is questioned.</li></ul></li></ul></li></ul>
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	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Decide the purpose of the test. ISTEP is purported to be meaningful at the child level, but without provision of immediate results, it is not! Results received long months after the test can provide composite trends, but are not useful as individual assessments.</p> <p>Invest in teachers. Train teachers how to assess learning for different kids and grade levels. Teach self-assessment to teachers and students. Imagine the progress that could be made in education outcomes if the expense of testing (development, materials, administration, scoring, etc.) was spent on teacher and student development instead.</p>
TCS	<p>In general, the TSC committee believes the <u>local school corporations</u> should be in charge of the type of testing for their students, not the legislator in Indianapolis. Many of their students, especially 2015-16 year, were overwhelmed with the number of required tests, in addition to their class final exams and their college placement exams. Out of a 36 week school year, 3 to 4 weeks of instruction time is lost due to mandated testing.</p> <p>The TSC members believe that Indiana government is misusing the ISTEP results when evaluating teachers to determine merit pay. ISTEP does not measure teacher effectiveness or school quality. It is believed, a better way to measure student achievement, is by measuring student learning over time.</p> <p>Teachers have no problem being accountable. There are better tests available that can capture data that assesses teacher competence.</p> <p>The question “Why” was reiterated during the course of the interview. “Why” are these test implemented in the schools using bad technology? “Why” does the state allow poorly created test be given? “Why” does Indiana spend so much money for testing that does not provide usable information for teachers or parents? “Why” is the state of Indiana putting children through the anxieties created by this mandatory testing? “Why” are the pass/fail cutoffs determined after all testing is completed and decided on by the testing company and the legislator?</p>
IPS	<p>Rally support for our local public schools</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Engage legislators</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Demand local control</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Demand that standardized test scores not be used to evaluate teachers or grade public schools</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Allow locally grown accountability models to be considered (instead of a one-size fits all model)</p>
IPS	<p>A. Assessment should drive instruction.</p> <p>B. The tests should be brief and given every other year in the elementary and middle years and possibly use a test like the PSAT at the secondary level. The PSAT would help indicate if the students were in line for post high school opportunities.</p> <p>C. Constructed responses should still be part of all State tests.</p>
MSD-Law	<p>MSD-LT has more than one thousand teachers. Not enough college students are joining the profession, though. There <i>will be a teacher shortage</i>. Right now, this district competes</p>

	<p>successfully by luring professionals from other districts, but a concerted effort is under way to “grow their own” future faculty.</p> <p>Legislation has forced every district to rework how teachers are paid. Based upon education and years of service, there is no longer any “ladder.” About 16% of a teacher’s evaluation is tied to the ISTEP test scores of his/her students. An individual teacher cannot know until near the end of the year whether s/he will be retained nor what the offered salary will be.</p> <p>Within the MSD-LT boundaries, there are no charter schools.</p> <p>Though legislators may say, “Poverty doesn’t make a difference,” it definitely does. There are a million poor students in public school but many fewer in private and parochial schools.</p> <p>The good news is that many people are asking questions, and legislators now seem to be listening</p>
MSD-Wash	To get another (non-central office) viewpoint, LWV might talk to the head of guidance at North Central High School, Kim Dickerson
MSD-Pike	Are accommodations made for Title 1 and ESL students? Accommodations are only made for students who receive special education services. English language services or have a 504 service plan. Accommodations are based on the academic needs of the student and are determined by committee meetings.(see report for further detail, also details on demographics and testing schedule)
Elkhart	<p>Issues with testing administration – District Testing Coordinator          New testing vendor, packaged materials (paper) not delivered by school, requiring 8-12 hours to sort into separate school lots, for each of the two test periods. After testing it took 3 full days by 4 people (one specially hired) to resort into return boxes to test company.          New testing vendor, online tests (ISTEP) were a new system requiring training of 4 meetings by 21 people done after school and on weekends. Each of these building coordinators spent approximately 50 hours in meetings, reading test materials, and individual building readiness activities. IREAD for the 5 schools using paper exams took district people a full day to get ready for distribution and a full day to package for return.</p> <p>Informal interviews with other staff –          Middle School Principal – Our students with language proficiency testing miss so much instruction time – ISTEP with extra time (missing instruction), NWEA (ditto), and then the 4 sections of the ACCESS testing. There is test burnout.          Elementary Principal – Similar comments on ESL students. Third grade students in particular have IREAD, ISTEP, NWEA (3 times), regular classrooms tests in spelling and math, etc. It is a big burden to put on these little kids.          Elementary Teacher – Similar to principal’s comments. Some students had trouble using different computers to take the test. We have PC’s in the classroom and they took the test on Chrome Books. Are we measuring the curriculum or how familiar students are with the technology or how fast they can keyboard? Some students started the test on the computer and when it crashed they then took it on paper. The time started over, but the questions were the same on the part of the test they had already seen. Doesn’t that give them an advantage?</p>

	<p>High School Principal – Students struggling with passing in grade 10 have to test 5 times a year. If they didn't pass Algebra in Grade 9 and they are retaking the class, why should they have to take the ECA again before Fall Break? Graduation requirements and testing are changing yet again. Algebra ECA will be replaced by ISTEP – Math which will include more Geometry concepts.</p>
<p>MCS</p>	<p>Miscellaneous comments:          It would be nice to teach to the students in my class and not to the test that will determine my employment status.          I don't believe the state standards are developmentally appropriate.          [asked why she continues to teach]: There's a family feeling here at Longfellow. Most of us started around the same time and are about the same age, so we have a lot in common besides our work. That collaborative spirit takes some of the sting out of things like poor salary and difficult parents. It's difficult to leave work at work, so we have become a social group as well. Also, for many of our students, school is the most stable part of their lives. This is a sobering reality, putting petty issues in their place and cementing our resolve to be their advocates in an unfair world.</p> <p>From Lydgia Quinn, 3rd Grade teacher, Longfellow Elementary (finishing 11th year, all at Longfellow)</p> <p><b>What has the effect of high stakes testing been on the curriculum? What, if anything, is being squeezed out of the annual curriculum by the need to prepare for and administer standardized tests?</b>          Our entire year is based on getting ready for a test. We aren't just teaching skills, we are spending much of our year teaching students HOW to take a test. We are sacrificing projects and fun learning activities.</p> <p><b>What, if any, changes in student attitudes does the testing generate? (e.g. eager anticipation, test anxiety, deliberate creation of chaos, high absenteeism, etc.)?</b>          Students can be anxious because of the pressure but many of them just become numb...another test, another practice, another assessment...what 8 or 9 year old gets geared up for this many hours of testing?</p> <p><b>What, if any, changes in families' attitudes does the testing generate? (e.g. greater willingness to volunteer time at school, general support, letters or meetings in opposition, withdrawal of students from school, etc.)?</b>          We don't have enough parent support ever, testing or no testing.</p> <p><b>Is there anything else you would like to say about high stakes testing?</b>          It has taken the fun out of my job. I don't teach...I get students ready for a test and then I am evaluated based on how well they do. It is no wonder no one wants to teach anymore.</p> <p><b>If Indiana is to continue with high stakes testing, which of the following would be the best option to consider?</b>          Use an "off the shelf" norm-referenced model like ACT (for HS)          Self-develop a growth-based model          Continue with a self-developed norm-referenced model like ISTEP          Use an "off the shelf" growth-based model like NWEA's MAP          Other (please specify)          Self-develop a growth-based model</p>

NM	<p>The conversation with Ms. Mills (director of curriculum and testing at North Montgomery) yielded the following comments:</p> <p>A variety of formative and summative evaluations long have been administered to students at all levels. Three particular issues are attributed to the extreme controversy and objection by school personnel and parents: 1. The standards movement highlighted by <i>No Child Left Behind</i> drew national attention to school and student performance. 2. The concept of high stakes testing directly ties teacher evaluation and school grading to test performance. 3. Public education has not done a good enough job promoting its successes.</p> <p>Ms. Mills did not see art, music, and p.e. time lessened.</p> <p>Eliminating ISTEP will not address the problems it has promoted. A new test will take its place and the fear is that it will be fraught with the same issues, i.e., too much time spent and too much emphasis.</p> <p>Suggestions for adopting a new test are the following: Teachers, not legislators and business, must have major role in adopting it. We do not have to reinvent. Examples for possible use are Iowa Tests of Basic Skills and NWEA. We hear NWEA mentioned often. This is computer administered and results are immediate. Focus is on the bottom 25%, which helps teacher planning for individual learning. Many schools already administer this test. It is crucial to have more timely feedback to be useful. Testing in March and April, and not receiving results until January, is not helpful. Don't give the tests to the students every year. Track individual progress as opposed to the grade level.</p> <p>Positive results of "high stakes:" Much more grade level collaboration. Work load can be divided. Teachers help each other. They all have a stake in the school's success. The "mapping" of curricula is very helpful. It moves teachers along in the curriculum and principals can walk in the classroom and know exactly what is to be taught. (I see this as having some downsides—individual needs, various circumstances.) But, you don't have to have "high stakes" testing to use "mapping."</p> <p>Negative results are ones previously named throughout the State: Too much time. Too much emphasis. Takes away time from meaningful instruction. Unnecessary stress on teachers and students.</p> <p>Other conclusions:</p> <p>Anecdotal comments:</p>
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	<p>#1. Conversations with two middle school teachers, one from Crawfordsville and one from North Montgomery talked about the complexity of scheduling the ISTEP. When MS teachers teach more than one grade level even more classroom instruction time is lost in order to accommodate complex scheduling. (see appendix) The State tells the specific school and grade level whether they are to use computers or paper pencil. When computers are to be used, with a limited number of computers available and teachers teaching multiple grade levels, the scheduling is a nightmare. Scheduling is not nearly as complex when paper pencil is used.</p> <p>#2. The following is the report of a student teacher in an elementary classroom to her supervisor at Purdue:      What a long week of testing! I know that I'm going to spend my weekend catching up on some much needed rest. The amount of anxiety that built through the week just took it out of me. I learned a lot through this week, especially with regards to the students' feelings and how standardized testing impacts their lives. I was still able to teach some science lessons, which the students enjoyed. While I did not do a lot of "work" this week, I really learned a lot through being in the classroom during testing. It shed a whole new light on how students are impacted. I think that you can read about the negative impacts of standardized testing on students, but you really can't make a meaningful connection until you are trying to calm a student who is sobbing because he/she forgot what perimeter was. I hope that education can start to make progress in finding ways of measuring what students know without applying so much stress on the students. I'm not sure how that can be done, but it is something that I will continue to think about (probably for the rest of my life.)</p>
<p>Mishawaka</p>	<p><b>Test related information</b> (additional information related to question #2)  <u>"British-owned Pearson, another giant testing company, won the state's bid for a \$38 million two-year contract to give the ISTEP test starting next spring over CTB-McGraw Hill, according to awards released today by the Indiana Department of Administration. California-based CTB-McGraw Hill has created ISTEP since the test's inception in 2009. The company had a four-year, \$95 million contract to create ISTEP that expired last year."</u>  <u>"Awards to five other companies would push the price tag for Indiana's testing system to \$133.8 million for the next two years. CTB-McGraw Hill, which has been under fire for repeated testing problems over the past four years, was awarded \$68 million to continue creating practice tests school districts use to prepare for state exams.</u>  <u>"Hill, picks Pearson to create future ISTEP," By Hayleigh Colombo, Scott Elliott and Shaina Cavazos, PUBLISHED: March 11, 2015 - 6:04 p.m. EDT accessed April 23 2016.</u>  <a href="http://www.chalkbeat.org/posts/in/2015/03/11/indiana-dumps-mcgraw-hill-picks-pearson-to-create-future-istep/#.Vxt0s2Nln2Q">http://www.chalkbeat.org/posts/in/2015/03/11/indiana-dumps-mcgraw-hill-picks-pearson-to-create-future-istep/#.Vxt0s2Nln2Q</a></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">"Testing in Indiana is a \$14 million charge in total; up to \$130 billion nationally.      The cheapest tests are those that already exist. The PARCC test, for example, which is also administered by Pearson, costs the states that use it about \$24 per student, according to the consortium's website. If Indiana were still in the consortium, taxpayers would have spent about \$12 million last year for the 500,000 students who were tested. Instead, the <u>state paid roughly twice that</u> — \$24 million — to CTB for its problem-plagued exam.  <a href="http://www.chalkbeat.org/posts/in/2016/02/09/junking-indianas-istep-test-what-might-come-next-and-at-what-cost">http://www.chalkbeat.org/posts/in/2016/02/09/junking-indianas-istep-test-what-might-come-next-and-at-what-cost</a></p>

	<p>Indiana pays student registration fees for PSAT and SAT. Cost to State was \$1.8 Million in 2008. Scores rose 250 points for the State by 2008.  <a href="http://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/state-to-pay-high-school-psat-test-fee/article">http://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/state-to-pay-high-school-psat-test-fee/article</a></p> <p><b>On teacher interest in working in education –</b>          There is a problem nationwide with curriculum in professional preparation in universities and with federal and state regulation. Good teachers leave the profession and those contemplating a career in education are discouraged.          Philanthropists such as Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg have invested hundreds of millions in the model seen here as problematic as if it were merely a matter of funding, and their projects have failed.          Various models of Deeper Learning curriculum and testing have succeeded in public schools nationwide. See Education, Hewlett Foundation for one.  <a href="http://www.hewlett.org/programs/education/deeper-learning">http://www.hewlett.org/programs/education/deeper-learning</a></p>
EVCS	<p>Evaluation, other than classroom tests, throughout the year, rather than just at the end, would help teachers make adjustments for “mandated” concepts or skills sooner</p>