

Common Core and ISTEP Standardized Test Background Information – Indiana
Submitted by LWV-BrownCounty

Studies as early as 1983 under the Reagan administration brought attention to the lack standards in education, the disparity in curriculums, tests, and student achievement [among] schools and [among] states. Over the next couple decades, legislative action and organizations promoted development of standardized curriculum and assessments. In 2008/9 the National Governors Association and state education commissioners from 48 states plus the District of Columbia committed to developing the Common Core standards “to provide a clear and consistent framework to prepare our children for college and the workforce.” (Reference Indiana State Impact Website: <http://indianapublicmedia.org/stateimpact/tag/common-core/>).

Indiana signed on to Common Core in 2010. The Common Core standards were implemented in Indiana schools over the next few years, with teachers familiarizing themselves with the standards, developing and improving appropriate lesson plans, etc., with an expectation to begin the associated test in 2014-2015. The test, PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers), was developed in 2011-2012 by a consortium of states [that had adopted] Common Core, including Indiana. It was field-tested in the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years.

Opponents of the Common Core led to a suspension of Common Core Standards, and then Indiana became the first state to withdraw from the Common Core in March 2014, intending to replace Common Core with Indian-specific standards. Indiana Standards were developed and given to schools spring/summer for implementation the 2014-2015 school year.

Concerns were raised that this did not allow sufficient time for meeting the new standards. Schools had already 3 spent years, time, and money, becoming familiar with the Common Core standards, developing lesson plans, modifying text books and materials to meet Common Core. Adoption of the new Indiana-specific standards caused the process to start over, as new standards had to be reviewed and incorporated into the curriculum with only months to prepare for the new test to start in the 2014-15 school year. “*The result: students were tested on topics that were changed by the state after the beginning of the school year, giving our teachers an impossibly short time frame to change the entire curriculum and sequence of instruction.*” (Excerpt from an Open Letter from Superintendents of La Porte County. Reference <http://wsbt.com/news/local/more-controversy-for-last-years-istep>).

Results from 2014-2015 spring tests were not released until January 2016. Statewide, scores dropped (by about 20%) across the board in all subjects. In March 2016, Legislators scrapped ISTEP. Governor Pence [named] a panel of 23, with members to be [selected] by the Governor, legislative leaders, and Education Superintendent Glenda Ritz. The panel is to recommend a substitute test by December 1, 2016. Students will continue taking the existing ISTEP until spring 2017. A new test is expected to begin the 2017-2018 school year. (Reference article: <http://www.indystar.com/story/news/education/2016/03/27/indiana-scraps-istep-but-its-replacement-face-political-test/82205196/>)