

Indiana State Teachers Association

ADVOCATE

Volume 43, Issue 1

Summer 2013



Looking
Forward

Teresa Meredith
ISTA President

A Commitment to Quality



ista-in.org

We can't wait for you to visit our recently launched, redesigned and updated ISTA website to find resources, ideas and information that will help you in your daily work to create great learning experiences for your students.



Bookmark the ISTA website at: www.ista-in.org as a reliable resource for ideas and information related to public education for you and your colleagues.

Teacher Professional Development at The Children's Museum

Listen to guest speakers, take a field trip with fellow educators and museum staff members, participate in hands-on activities and spend time exploring the museum. Summer institutes correlate to both Indiana Academic and Common Core Standards. <https://ista-in.org/teacher-professional-development-this-summer-at-the-childrens-museum>

Parents agree — better assessments, less high-stakes testing

Educators aren't alone in being fed up with narrow, punitive student accountability measures. Parents also want well-designed, timely assessments that monitor individual student performance and progress across a range of subjects and

skills. That's one of the key findings in a new study by the Northwest Evaluation Association. <http://www.nwea.org/every-child-multiple-measures>.

Hoosier family of readers: Who is your reading family?

State School Superintendent Glenda Ritz has announced Hoosier Family of Readers, a statewide literacy initiative that collaborates with public libraries, non-profit organizations, religious organizations and companies. This new program encourages families to spend time each day reading together over the summer and during the school year. Learn more: <https://ista-in.org/superintendent-of-public-instruction-glenda-ritz-announces-statewide-literacy-initiative>.

ISTA ADVOCATE

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The Indiana State Teachers Association Advocate, 150 West Market Street, Suite 900, Indianapolis, IN 46204-2875 is the official publication of the Indiana State Teachers Association, the state level of the United Education Profession. The content of the Association's publications will be consistent with the mission, strategic objectives and policies of the Association.

ISTA PHOTOS: KATHLEEN BERRY GRAHAM, 2013



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Let's take back public schools

As I sit in my new office and look across the street to the Statehouse, my view is much different than this time last year—and I'm not just talking about the literal view. Last year I was milling through hallways filled with students, looking for ways to deal with reforms that felt like they were done 'to' me not done 'with' me in order to get to what really mattered for my students. Last year there was a feeling of lost hope, oppression and doubt about the future of public education.

What a difference a year makes. Now as I look to the Statehouse, I see Superintendent Glenda Ritz's car in the Statehouse parking lot and I am reminded of what we did together. We decided we'd had enough of 'done to' and we were successful in making a key change with the election of a new State Superintendent of Public Instruction. And while that is a reflection of the hard work of many, the work has just begun.

It is now time for all of us to begin to be the drivers of change—to be the voices of what it takes to really transform our public schools. We are the ones who know the multiple professions involved in the education of a child—of every child. Reforming the work that we do and the outcomes it produces must happen with the cooperation of all involved parties.

That's what I want for the future of public education. I want transformation driven by those who know what is really needed.

I have seen far too many Facebook posts, blogs, columns, letters and emails detailing why educators are leaving their roles in public education because they've reached their breaking points. And I, like many of you, played the 'Isn't it awful?' game and shared, reposted and felt sorry for all of us in the profession.

I am ready to shed the coat of despair, to look into the arena of public education and proclaim that I will no longer be the victim of the reform movement. I will no longer be the victim of change for the sake of change.

Instead, I choose to be a voice in the transformation movement—after all, if students can't depend on me to fight for what they really need in order to succeed, who can they count on? Students depend on their school staff members, from the support professionals to the teachers in the classroom, to get it right and to push back against those who don't.

Mahatma Gandhi said, "You must be the change you wish to see in the world." So, I've decided to change my view this year. No more sad letters about why someone is leaving the profession or what's wrong with all the reforms. I get it. I don't like it. But now it's time to change it.

I hope you will adjust your focus and join me in this movement to take back public schools from those who wish to trade it like a commodity and bring the voice of the public school educators back to the discussion table. It's time to have member-led, student-centered transformations for our schools. The real transformation starts with us, each and every one of us. We must remember what it took to get Superintendent Ritz elected and let that energy drive us in our work for true transformation.

Yes, my view is much different this year. My hope is restored in what can happen when we remember that "Together We Can" for we can make a difference.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Teresa Meredith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Evansville Priority Schools Project continues

In 2010 the Evansville Teachers Association joined forces with administrators to start conversations about three schools that were struggling in the Evansville area—Glenwood Leadership Academy, Evans (Howard Roosa) Elementary School and McGary Middle School. That same year NEA launched an effort to get America's struggling schools closer to the Association's vision of great public schools. The collaboration was called the Priority Schools Campaign. It targets organizational resources to schools that need extra support and attention.

The U.S. Department of Education began to fully fund the School Improvement Grant to help Priority Schools Campaign schools meet high-academic standards. The grants delivered billions of dollars to 5 percent of the lowest-performing schools across the country, but the first round of SIG funding is now in its last year.

So what will happen to the Evansville schools? **KEITH**

GAMBILL, former president of the Evansville Teachers Association and vice president of ISTA said, "The SIG grants definitely helped during some rough economic times, but only one of the three Evansville schools will lose that funding this year. The SIG funding is short-lived and so it's hard to count on or to track its success.

"The NEA Campaign has really focused more on making the schools look internally to determine what would be most helpful for these three schools and that," says Gambill "allows the schools to look further down the road than the short-lived funding of the SIG grants."

For more information about the Evansville Priority Schools Project, go to: <http://neaprioritieschools.org/engaged-families-and-communities/indiana-school-becomes-the-heart-of-a-community> or <http://bit.ly/14Nq3yl>.



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It's time to add ISTA's mobile app to your smart phone. Search now for ISTA's new member-only mobile app for your iPhone, iPad, BlackBerry, Android and Windows mobile device. Visit the Apple app store, Google Play, BlackBerry App World or Windows Store and look for "ISTA mobile." Then scan the QR code!

Stay up to date. Get important information, real-time action alerts and Member Benefit offers. Plus be in the know about ISTA events, link to social media and have access to the ISTA websites. And you will have an electronic copy of your membership card at your fingertips. Get ISTA's free mobile app today!



Dates to Remember

June 28-30, 2013

NEA-Retired Annual Meeting

July 1-6, 2013

NEA Representative Assembly
Atlanta, GA

September 21, 2013

All ISTA Committee Meetings
Indianapolis

October 25, 2013

ISEA Fall Conference
Indianapolis

November 11-15, 2013

American Education Week

November 13, 2013

Education Support Professionals Day

February 21, 2014

ISEA Representative Assembly
Indianapolis

May 5-9, 2014

Teacher Appreciation Week

May 6, 2014

National Teacher Day

Be sure to check the winners!

To see all of the award winners at the 2013 ISTA Representative Assembly—from the Pacesetter winners to the Young Activists recipients—visit: <https://ista-in.org/2012-13-award-winners>.

IFIE offers student and teacher scholarships

The ISTA Foundation for the Improvement of Education provides financial support for education programs including college and university scholarships to children and grandchildren of ISTA members. IFIE also offers National Board Certification scholarships of up to \$500 for teachers who apply for national certification. Deadline for application is



January 1. For more information go to: <https://ista-in.org/ifie-scholarship>.

And remember that IFIE accepts various planned gifts. All IFIE contributions are tax deductible for federal income tax purposes. For information about making a donation to IFIE, contact Jennifer Clutter at 317-263-3350 or 800-382-4037 or jclutter@ista-in.org. Online donations may be made at: www.istafoundation.com.

Thinking retirement?

Don't wait. Keep your membership up-to-date. Pre-retired subscribers can join ISTA Retired now and will not pay future retired dues increases. It's also a way to guarantee no lapse in your NEA Member Benefits.



You can join online or by contacting Becky Koerner at bkoerner@ista-in.org or 800-382-4037. Other benefits of retired membership include opportunities to serve in governance positions, participate in local chapter activities and continue your involvement and commitment to public education and ISTA.

Members of Recognition

Fort Wayne Education Association member **ED KING** was surprised at North Side High School's music recital in May. The music instructor was honored by community and family members for 40 years of teaching when many students and alumni both performed. But the real surprise came in the form of a new, black Ford Mustang. The gift was possible thanks to \$20,000 raised by King's family and community donations.

"When he first laid eyes on the car, it took a minute to sink in. He legitimately didn't think it was happening," Mike King said of his father's reaction.

Why join



ISTA IS THE STATE'S LARGEST SCHOOL EMPLOYEE ORGANIZATION.

It exists to protect and advance the professional and economic interest of teachers and public school employees.

ISTA membership works to provide protection, competitive salaries and better working conditions for you and all members. As your new ISTA president, I want you to be one of the 43,000 ISTA members who are dedicated professional educators and education employees who work to support public education. I welcome the challenges in public education today and if we can work together, we will be successful. Do it for the students. I cannot think of a better cause. Thanks for all you do for education.

— Teresa Meredith,
ISTA President

ISTA MEMBERSHIP gives you a combined voice with more than 43,000 teachers and Education Support Professionals in Indiana. United members have a far greater impact on local issues, school conditions and legislation.

ISTA MEMBERSHIP works for you locally through collective bargaining for better teacher and ESP contracts and working conditions.

ISTA MEMBERSHIP gives you a voice when issues arise with the Indiana State Department of Education.

ISTA MEMBERSHIP gives every member \$1 million in liability insurance plus legal protection against harassment by parents, intimidation, defamation, allegations of child abuse and unsafe working conditions.

ISTA MEMBERSHIP works for you in the halls of the Statehouse on school funding, state takeover of schools, school vouchers and state-mandated testing issues.

ISTA MEMBERSHIP offers you discounts and services, educator resources and professional development plus retirement options for all public education employees.

HOW TO JOIN?

You can join as a new member or renew your membership online by going to: www.ista-in.org or call 800-252-6510.

HOW TO PAY?

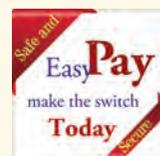
ISTA has changed the way it collects membership dues. Beginning with this school year your dues will be paid through Easy Pay and are withdrawn directly from your bank account or paid by

credit card or personal check. All ISTA members will be asked to make this change.

Education associations across the country are making similar changes and in some cases have been forced to do so by state legislative action. Rest assured that your financial information will be secure and that payment options are available.

For more information about Easy Pay, call ISTA at 800-382-

4037 and select the Easy Pay option or email easypay@ista-in.org or go to the ISTA website at: www.ista-in.org and log in. Easy Pay information is listed under the member info tab.



Q and A with Teresa Meredith



Teresa Meredith started her teaching career in 1990 at an urban, private school in Indianapolis because there were few teaching jobs available in public schools in Indiana. Now, 22 years later and after teaching in public schools for 18 years, she has built an unshakeable support for students, parents and the teaching profession. As she takes over to lead the Association in times when public education faces relentless challenges, she sets before members some of her goals for the future.

— Editor

Teresa Meredith steps into role as ISTA president

What are your goals for this first year of taking office?

As vice president I've met with countless members and heard what is happening in their schools. I count those conversations as the best experience possible. It tells me that I need to listen to our members, to work toward greater awareness of reform efforts and to remain positive in the face of change. I will count on our members to guide me through this next stage and to help me and their local schools by leading the way through discussion to positive transformation for our schools.

What's the best reason for someone to join ISTA?

I think membership allows you to have a voice in your profession. So many things have been taken away from educators over the last decade. The Association gives members the opportunity to drive the change that's best for teachers, students and the entire community. Education is constantly being dissected but the Association is there to help members know their rights and how to get assistance.

What's the most important education issue on your mind today?

Our public schools are starved for funding and we continue

to fight that battle but I am confident to say that most of our schools have dedicated professionals who care deeply about education and their students. However, many teachers feel pressured and under extreme scrutiny and I worry that they must work so hard to be seen as the well-trained professionals that they are. I am concerned, too, about our support staff members, who are vital to the functions of every school, as they battle with privatization issues.

You've traveled the state for six years as ISTA vice president and seen many changes in the education landscape. What do you think is important to members today?

Members want their experience and their voices to be heard. And I encourage each and every member to step up to the task. We can all be a part of the solution in the education debate. More than 40 percent of teachers in the state of Indiana have more than 20 years of classroom experience. You are the experts in your field. Use your voice to make positive changes. Use your voice to advocate for what's best for Indiana's students. I look forward to working with you on this mission as your ISTA president to improve public education for every student in Indiana.

HOT TOPICS: Evaluations



Technology isn't infallible—neither is standardized testing

ISTA members across the state well remember this year's spring ISTEP+ testing because of the frustration and confusion that came with it. On the first day of testing, and for several days following, the Department of Education (IDOE) suspended testing because of computer issues that kicked thousands of students off the high-stakes exam. Because of "school reform" laws passed during the Daniels' administration, ISTEP+ scores are now tied to school letter grades, merit pay and individual teacher evaluations, adding to the pressure for students and teachers.

ISTA members reported that computer screens froze for up to five minutes and students were repeatedly forced to log back on to computers. Many students were reduced to tears because of the frustration.

"In order for students to do well, they need the opportunity to take this 'high-stakes test' without interruptions," West Lafayette Schools Superintendent Rocky Killion told the *Lafayette Journal & Courier*. "My students were already over an hour behind the testing schedule because of having to shut off the computers, turn them back on and then logging back in."

McGrawHill, the Illinois-based company that has the ISTEP+ contract, is in the third year of a four-year \$95 million contract with the state.

Fort Wayne's public schools responded to the ISTEP+ problems in late May by refusing to accept the ISTEP+ results, good or bad. School officials called on state lawmakers to re-evaluate the state's accountability system that is centered on standardized test scores.

Fort Wayne will not use the data from the test in its evaluations and will not distribute results to parents or teachers "unless they can be validated by a legitimate, independent third party."

In June State School Superintendent Glenda Ritz called for an investigation to review data gathered during the testing.

Ritz said that there's "no question" the state will have to review any data gathered during the testing. "After we get everybody assessed, we're going to have to look at the validity of the assessments themselves."

According to Fair Test, the national center for fair and open testing, there are much better ways to evaluate student achievement and ability than by using standardized tests: Good teacher observation, documentation of student work and performance-based assessment, all of which involve the direct evaluation of real learning tasks.