

Superintendent News

WARRICK COUNTY SCHOOL CORPORATION
ADMINISTRATION CENTER

This Edition:

2013 Legislative Session
Support for Public
Education

Public School Students Lose Out

May 3, 2013

The Indiana General Assembly concluded the 2013 legislative session at 1:25 am on April 27, 2013. While the full impact of this session will not be known for several years, it is clear that students in our public schools once again lost out. The 2013 General Assembly began with such high hopes. Administrators and teachers alike hoped that the steep budget cuts of 2010, flat-lined funding of 2011, and minimal increases of funding in 2012 and 2013 would come to an end. Since 2010, school corporations throughout our state have slashed teaching positions, cut programs, eliminated transportation, and initiated other cost-saving measures to stretch our budget. We understood the economy was struggling and we did our part to share the load. Teachers, parents, administrators, support staff, and students all accepted the fact that we had to do more with less. And in Warrick County, we did! During this time Warrick County schools and students continued to excel academically. That is why the 2013 legislative session is so disappointing.

State leaders publically boast that Indiana is in a strong financial position. The state revenue forecast was increased by \$290 million dollars on April 16, providing optimism that additional funding to schools was possible, and schools could once again start lowering class size, add curricular offerings, and increase funding of technology. The budget adopted by this year's legislators fell well short of those dreams. Public schools will realize a minimal increase in funding, as the newly adopted budget provides a 2.0% increase in FY 2014 and a 1% increase in FY 2015. Unfortunately inflation is predicted to be 1.6% in 2015. Therefore students, parents, supporters, and public school educators are left to wonder why. Why did legislators vote to approve forgiving \$91 million dollars in loans made to Charter Schools? (\$91 million equates to a 1.5% increase on the school funding formula.) That's your public tax dollars being spent to forgive loans to several Charter Schools that are now closed due to poor academic performance. Why not spend that \$91 million on schools we know are performing at a high level? Why did legislators "sneak" an increase to vouchers into the final budget bill? Legislation was introduced to expand vouchers and increase funding of said vouchers. When voucher proponents learned they didn't have the votes to increase funding, they made deals to get the voucher expansion bill (HB 1003) passed without the increased funding. Yet, in another last second deal, they inserted a \$300 increase to the vouchers in the final budget bill. Vouchers will increase from \$4,500 to \$4,700 per student in 2014, and \$4,800 in 2015. Hoosiers have voiced their opinions on vouchers. Please see the results of the 2012 State Superintendent of Public Instruction race if you've forgotten. Pro-voucher, pro-privatization of education incumbent, Tony Bennett, was soundly defeated. While many legislators have taken notice, too many still refuse to acknowledge the people's voice on this issue. Please, bring on the 2014 elections. The same wave of support that elected Glenda Ritz in 2012 will rise up and elect representatives that will support public education in 2014. So while the 2013 legislative session was a huge disappointment, in the long run it may be a blessing. I'm hopeful the disappointment in 2013 will fuel the support of public education in our next election cycle, and we can get back to making kids and education a priority in Indiana.

Brad Schneider, Superintendent, Warrick County School Corporation