

# Superintendent News

WARRICK COUNTY SCHOOL CORPORATION  
ADMINISTRATION CENTER

This Edition:

Education Agenda  
More Money for Charters  
and Vouchers Proposed

2015 Legislative Session Underway

January 14, 2015

The 2015 Legislative Session is underway. Governor Pence has declared education will be a priority this year. The 2015 session started on a positive note, as state officials announced state revenues actually exceeded predictions for the first time in a long time. With that news the Governor proposed a 200 million dollar increase for K-12 funding, which was a pleasant surprise. Unfortunately, the proposal earmarked 41 of the 200 million dollars for charter schools and vouchers. That is disappointing, since that equates to 20% of the increased funding going to 3% of Hoosier students. Charter supporters lauded the announcement and argued it will “equalize” funding with public schools. They correctly state that charter schools cannot raise funds for Capital Projects, Transportation, or Debt Service like public schools can. But they fail to mention that charter schools can purchase any unused public school building for \$1.00, thus eliminating the need to borrow money to build a school. Charter school advocates also fail to disclose that in the last state budget, lawmakers at the midnight hour, slipped in legislation that forgave 93 million dollars of charter school debt. Hoosier taxpayers paid off 93 million dollars of debt accumulated by charter schools, many of which are for-profit schools and headquartered in Florida and other states outside Indiana. (Yes, that’s your tax dollars exiting our state.) Given those facts, the Governor’s proposal to further increase funding is a slap in the face to our public schools.

It’s also disturbing given the performance of these charter schools. 37% of Indiana charter schools earned a D or an F for the 2013-2014 school year. Politicians want to point a finger at Indianapolis Public Schools and Gary Public Schools and decry their poor performance, yet the same politicians remain silent on the fact that charter schools perform worse than the majority of our public schools. This is especially difficult for school officials to swallow. We are forced to make difficult decisions every day as to what programs we fund, how many teachers we can afford, and how to best spend our monies. School budgets are stretched to the limit, REQUIRING us to spend our limited resources in ways that maximize the educational services we provide. I think it only fair then to ask our elected officials to do the same. Research and statistics support my claims, yet our politicians are dead set on supporting charter schools and vouchers. It’s fair to ask them - why?

I encourage all of you to pay close attention to this year’s legislative session. If it is indeed going to be the year of education, then stand up and have your voice heard. Our public schools are working extremely hard to educate children to the very best of our and their ability. It’s time our elected officials support our work and legislative laws, and a budget that will allow our public schools to better educate our students. Ask them to vote no on any legislation that ties our hands or expands high-stakes testing this session. Believe it or not, there is already a proposal to move the I-Read test down to 2nd Grade! I must assume the author of that bill thinks 7-year olds are ready for high pressure testing! Ask your legislator to support public education, and end the giveaways to for-profit, out-of-state charter schools. I encourage you to be informed, be active, and be heard this legislative session!

Brad Schneider, Superintendent