Indiana: Aligning Education to Better Prepare Students for the Future

October 14, 2026

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TODAY'S AGENDA

Data Level-Set: Our WHY

How Indiana Is Rethinking High School



Data Level-Set: Our WHY

PREPARING STUDENTS FOR COLLEGE

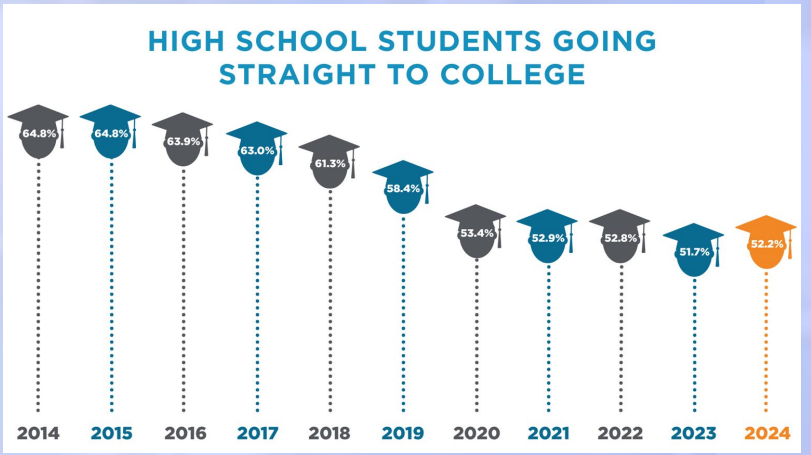
Fewer Indiana students were **enrolling** in higher education, and even fewer are *completing*.

76% of Hoosier high school graduates say they intend to go on to some form of higher learning...

52% actually do...and of these students...

27% who enroll in a 2-year college or university graduate on-time.

57% who enroll in a 4-year college or university graduate on-time.



PREPARING STUDENTS FOR CAREERS

Students were graduating without the skills needed to secure **rewarding careers**.

Indiana ranks **#1 nationwide** in terms of students *completing at least one college course* in high school.

- **58% of Indiana jobs** require skills training *beyond high school*, but not a four-year degree.

Our OPPORTUNITY ahead....

- **Nearly 65% of Indiana students** earn college credit, graduating high school with an average of **14.1 credits**. A short-term credential can be earned with **15-18 credits**.
- **8% of students** earn a credential before graduation, *opening doors of future opportunity*. *Thousands more* are just a **few credits away**...and many aren't even aware.

PREPARING STUDENTS FOR ENLISTMENT & SERVICE

Students who dream of **enlisting** were finding out they are disqualified when it's *too late*.

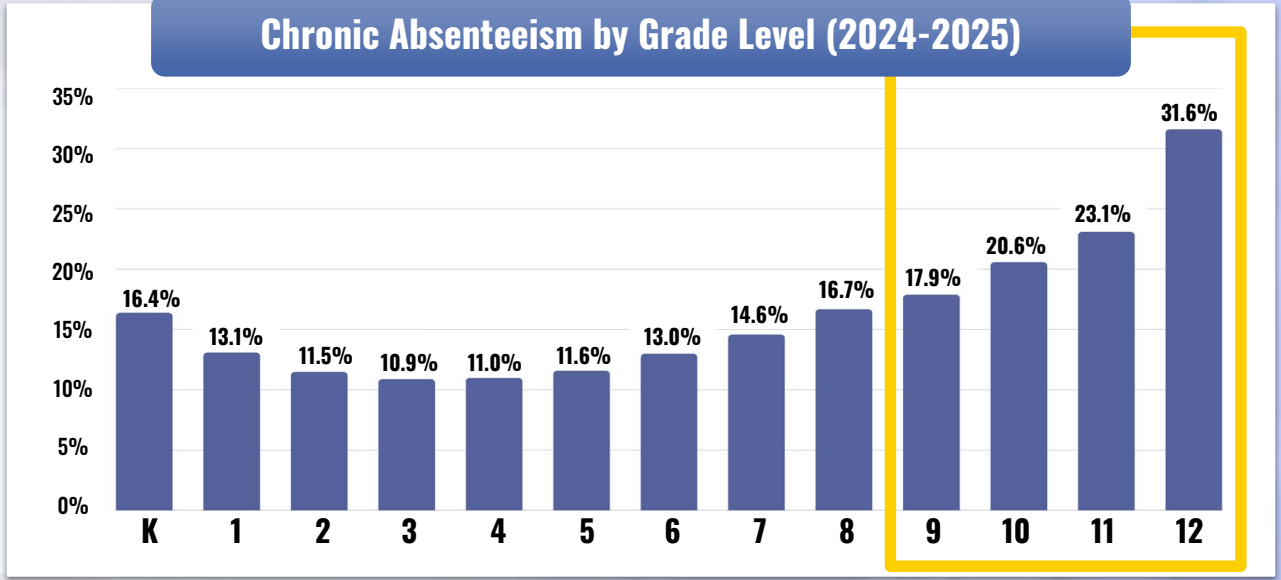
- 2022 was the **worst recruiting year** in the history of the military's all-volunteer force.
- Enlistments into the military from the state of Indiana **declined by 41%** from 2018 to 2022.
- Indiana National Guard enlistments over the same period **declined 38%**. The rate of decline is **worse in Indiana** than in other states.



~77% of students are ***disqualified*** because they do not meet the **aptitude**, **medical**, **fitness**, or **character standards** necessary for service.

PREPARING STUDENTS FOR THEIR UNIQUE NEXT STEPS

Student apathy was high, leading to high rates of **chronic absenteeism** in grades 9-12.



WHAT HOOSIERS VALUE MOST

Hoosiers consistently agree that these **five characteristics** are most important to a student's lifelong success.

- ACADEMIC MASTERY
- CAREER & POSTSECONDARY READINESS: CREDENTIALS & EXPERIENCES
- COMMUNICATION & COLLABORATION
- WORK ETHIC
- CIVIC, FINANCIAL, & DIGITAL LITERACY

How Indiana Is Rethinking High School

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LEARNER-CENTERED, FUTURE-FOCUSED EDUCATION

OUR SHARED VISION: The K-12 experience prepares every student for success, helping them to maximize their educational attainment, regardless of their unique goals and aspirations for the future.

- **Enrollment**
- **Employment**
- **Enlistment & Service**



OUR DESIGN PRIORITIES

Maximize *flexibility* for students to *personalize* their journey while maintaining rigor

Increase *simplicity* for students, parents, and schools

Increase access to work-based learning and credentials of value



FINAL DIPLOMA RULE

The final rule maintains:

- **One base diploma**
  - Minimum, flexible requirements for all students
- Opportunities for students to earn **readiness seals**
  - Aligned with their unique path



*Note: The federally-required **alternate diploma** for students in special education with a significant cognitive disability is still available.*



THE NEW INDIANA DIPLOMA: ELIGIBLE COURSES FOR SY 25-26

The new Indiana diploma, effective for all students beginning with the class of 2029, includes a base (minimum requirements) for every student, plus the opportunity to earn readiness seals aligned with their unique path. Students are encouraged to seize this flexibility by personalizing their high school experience. The new seals provide additional intentionality to maximize readiness and are designed to be permeable, allowing students to update their graduation plan and pivot, if their original interests and goals change. Students who do not earn a seal must still complete components 2 and 3 of Graduation Pathways.

		REQUIRED CREDITS	FLEXIBLE CREDITS

ENGLISH	8 CREDITS	• 2 credits: English 9	• 1 credit: Communications-focused course
			  ○ Ex. Speech, Journalism, Visual Communication, etc.
			• 5 additional English credits
			  ○ Ex.: English 10-12, American Literature, World Literature, Expository Writing, etc.

MATH	7 CREDITS	• 2 credits: Algebra I • 1 credit: Personal Finance	• 4 additional math credits ○ Ex. Geometry, Algebra II, Pre-Calculus, Probability and Statistics, Business Math, etc.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND ENGINEERING	7 CREDITS	• 2 credits: Biology I
		• 1 credit: Computer Science
			• 2 additional science credits
			  ○ Ex. Biology II, Chemistry I, Physics I, etc.
			• 2 STEM-focused credits
			  ○ Ex. Plant and Soil Science, Principles of Engineering, Software Development, etc.

SOCIAL STUDIES	5 CREDITS	• 2 credits: U.S. History • 1 credit: U.S. Government	• 2 credits: World Perspectives ○ Ex. Geography and History of the World, AP World History, French III, etc.
PE/HEALTH	2 CREDITS	• 1 credit: Physical Education • 1 credit: Health & Wellness	
PERSONALIZED ELECTIVES	12 CREDITS	Students are encouraged to utilize the new readiness-seals to align these personalized electives with their unique goals. Personalized electives can include a variety of courses, such as Career and Technical Education (CTE), Performing or Fine Arts, and World Languages.	
COLLEGE & CAREERS	1 CREDIT	• 1 credit: Preparing for College & Careers	Preparing for College and Careers can be offered in middle school to provide additional flexibility in a student's high school schedule.

A complete list of eligible courses for the 25-26 school year is can be found here.

Note: The federally-required alternate diploma for students in special education with a significant cognitive disability is still available.

BLUEPRINT FOR SUCCESS: READINESS-SEALS

Readiness seals are designed to be permeable, allowing students to update their graduation plan and pivot, if their original interests and goals change. Although seals are optional, students are encouraged to utilize the blueprints below to focus their flexible credits into a connected pathway that aligns with their future goals. Students may earn one or multiple seals. Graduation Pathways requirements will be satisfied through completion of any seal.

	ENROLLMENT	EMPLOYMENT	ENLISTMENT & SERVICE

HONORS SEAL	• Complete at least 4 World Language and 6 Social Studies credits
	• Complete at least 8 Math credits
	  ○ Algebra I plus Geometry, Algebra II, and Pre-Calculus or any advanced math credits aligned to their course of study
	• Complete at least 6 Science credits
	  ○ Biology I plus Chemistry or Physics or any advanced lab science credits aligned to their course of study
	• Earn a C or higher in all courses and earn a cumulative B average
	• Complete one of the following:
	  ○ Earn 4 credits in AP, IB, or Cambridge courses and take corresponding exams
	  ○ Earn 6 college credits
	  ○ Score a 1250 on the SAT or a 26 on the ACT
	  ○ Earn two of the following:
	  ▪ At least 3 college credits
	  ▪ 2 credits in AP courses and take corresponding exams
	  ▪ 2 credits in IB courses and take corresponding exams
	  ▪ 2 credits in Cambridge courses and take corresponding exams
		• Complete one of the following:
		  ○ A market-driven credential of value aligned to a specific occupation
		  ○ 3 courses in a Career and Technology Education (CTE) pathway
		  ○ An approved career preparation experience aligned to Indiana's CSA program, or
		  ○ An approved, locally-created pathway
		• Complete 150 hours of work-based learning (may include multiple experiences that are paid, unpaid, on-site, or simulated)
		• Demonstrate skill development in Communication, Collaboration, and Work Ethic
		• Meet attendance goal:
		  ○ At least 1 school year with no more than 3 days of unexcused absences; or
		  ○ At least 150 hours of work-based learning experience with no more than 3 unexcused absences.
			• Complete one of the following:
			  ○ Introduction to Public Service course or approved locally-created equivalent
			  ▪ Emphasis on developing an awareness of the physical standards and character required for service
			  ○ One year of JROTC or Civil Air Patrol in high school
			• Achieve a score of 31 on the ASVAB and complete one of the following:
			  ○ All three components of the Career Exploration Program
			  ○ A career exploration tool approved by IDOE
			• Meet attendance goal:
			  ○ At least 1 school year with no more than 3 days of unexcused absences
			• Demonstrate skill development in Communication, Collaboration, and Work Ethic
			  ○ Externally vertified through a mentorship experience with current military personnel, veterans, or other public safety professionals

HONORS PLUS SEAL	Earn the Honors Enrollment Seal, **plus**:
	• Earn a credential of value that may include, for example:
	  ○ Associate degree
	  ○ Technical Certificate
	  ○ Indiana College Core
	  ○ AP Scholar with Distinction
	  ○ Cambridge AICE Diploma or
	  ○ IB Diploma
	• Complete at least 75 hours of work-based learning (may include multiple experiences that are paid, unpaid, on-site, or simulated)
	• Demonstrate skill development in the following areas: Communication, Collaboration, and Work Ethic
		Earn the Honors Employment Seal, **plus**:
		• Earn a market-driven credential of value that may include, for example:
		  ○ Associate degree
		  ○ Technical Certificate
		  ○ Indiana College Core; or
		  ○ Advanced industry certificate
		• Complete additional work-based learning (total of 650 hours in one or more experiences) that may include, for example:
		  ○ Pre-Apprenticeship
		  ○ Modern Youth Apprenticeship
		• Demonstrate skill development in Communication, Collaboration, Work Ethic, and any additional skills determined locally
			Earn the Honors Enlistment Seal, **plus**:
			• Complete one of the following:
			  ○ Achieve a score of 50 or higher on the ASVAB
			  ○ Enrollment in ROTC at the collegiate level
			  ○ Acceptance to a service academy
			• Demonstrate excellence in leadership through one of the following:
			  ○ Completion of at least 100 hours of public service;
			  ○ Holding a leadership role in a co/extracurricular activity;
			  ○ Completion of two seasons of a team-based physical sport or activity

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INDIANA'S READINESS SEALS: PROVIDING STUDENTS A DIRECT PATH TO THEIR FUTURE

ENROLLMENT

Guaranteed Currency:
All seven of Indiana's public colleges and universities are guaranteeing **automatic acceptance** into their school for any student who applies and has successfully earned the honors plus seal. This includes:

Ball State University
Indiana State University
Indiana University
Ivy Tech Community College
Purdue University
University of Southern Indiana
Vincennes University

A growing number of satellite campuses, as well as private colleges and universities have also expressed interest.

EMPLOYMENT

Guaranteed Currency:
Through the help of Ascend Indiana, students who earn the honors plus seal can receive **dedicated career support,** helping them get connected through interviews with and potentially being hired by some of Indiana's top employers, such as:

Community Health Network
CFA Staffing
Cummins
Eli Lilly and Company
Parkview Health
Roche Diagnostics

Students who interview and have completed either the honors or honors plus seal will also be eligible for direct entry into the **Central Midwest Carpenters Union** apprenticeship.

State leaders are also actively working with **Operating Engineers Local 150** to offer similar benefits in connection with their apprenticeship.

ENLISTMENT & SERVICE

Guaranteed Currency:
Students who complete the honors plus seal will be uniquely qualified to join the Indiana National Guard and other military branches. Once accepted into the Indiana National Guard, students can:

- **Earn college credits** for completing training and reduce the time and cost required to complete a degree.
- **Gain direct access** to veteran mentors and military career counselors who can provide college and career guidance.
- **Access priority job placement programs** designed for military professionals, offering job interviews for federal employment and private-sector roles where military experience is highly valued.

THANK YOU!