



ILEARN Scores Expectedly Dropped ... Now What?

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It is no surprise to anyone that ILEARN scores dropped. Prior to 2021, the last time ILEARN was given was in 2019. The standardized test was canceled in 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic. Only 37.1% of Indiana students passed both the English and math portions of the assessment in 2019, and 47.9% passed English and 47.8% passed math. In 2021, 28.6% of students passed both portions, and 40.5% passed English and 36.9% passed math. Although there were drops in both subjects, the dip was greater in math.

This was expected due to the pandemic. The pandemic interrupted instruction, and when instruction resumed, teachers were learning how to navigate e-learning, a skill many educators had not developed strongly prior to the pandemic. Even if students did attend school back in person, they could have been quarantined one or more times due to either testing positive for COVID-19 or being a close contact. The multiple instructional challenges weren't the only aspect that impacted students.

During the pandemic, each day the death toll was shared, but for some students, there were faces behind those numbers that they knew. Death of loved ones, isolation due to learning at home, and parent job loss were just some of the additional factors that impacted instruction. Even though people are getting vaccinated and schools are striving to get students back into the building ready to learn, there has to be a plan because it is known that students missed out on learning they would have had if the pandemic did not happen.

As my colleague Andrew Pillow stated, teachers need to take professional development seriously, and schools need to have targeted professional development and cut out any fluff. Teachers need work time to update their plans. Any activities that can wait until later in the year should. We have all sat through sessions before the school year began that were not necessary.

Next, teachers have to have a solid understanding of monitoring learning, identifying when they need to reteach, implementing interventions, and tracking the data. This upcoming school year is not the year to avoid the data. Teachers need a system, and they need to know the skills that are critical for students to learn to be successful next school year and beyond.

School administrators and teacher coaches must be supportive and be ready with strategies teachers can use. They should also be in attendance at any PD their teachers are attending. This will help ensure they are not contradicting the knowledge teachers receive.

Parents and students need to be kept in the loop about where students are academically. Hiding data does not help anyone. Parents can't support teachers if they are missing information. Students should have an active role in their education and that includes the skills that they have mastered and the skills they have yet to master.

Teachers will feel a lot of pressure to close academic gaps, but they will have no chance in doing so without a solid plan and support from administrators and parents.