

Greenwood Community School Corporation

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To our Greenwood educators, parents, and community stakeholders:

As you are probably aware, ISTEP+ results will be released in the upcoming days, and school letter grades are scheduled to be approved by the Indiana State Board of Education at its December meeting. I am certain that I will not be able to be as articulate as my superintendent colleagues in addressing concerns surrounding ISTEP+ and the A-F accountability system in Indiana. I will just say quite simply, I acknowledge little credibility in both the ISTEP+ results and the A-F school letter grades.

Significant changes have been made to the ISTEP+ exam. The rush to make these changes and the lack of time given to districts to prepare for those changes have resulted in lower test scores across the state. As I write this, I do not know where our district will stand in comparison to the state of Indiana as a whole after the 2015-16 school year. I can tell you that after the 2014-15 school year, the Greenwood Community Corporation surpassed 42 public school districts (to move into the top 25% of all Indiana districts) in the percentage of students passing both the Language Arts and Mathematics exams when compared to results after the 2012-13 school year. This is obviously great success, and we are proud of our students and staff for this overwhelming improvement. With that success noted, in so many respects this has become a broken measure of our students' academic progress. It is even more frustrating that almost one year after an assessment committee was commissioned by the Indiana General Assembly to "fix" ISTEP+, it doesn't appear that Indiana is any closer to changing this failed testing system.

A-F school accountability grades are a function of ISTEP+ results. So, it logically follows that I also place little credibility in the impending school letter grades as well. Over the last several years, the Greenwood Community School Corporation has been labeled an "A" district. With that said, I have joined superintendents across the state in imploring our legislators and State Board of Education members to pause the A-F accountability labels for the 2015-16 school year. Our parents, schools, educators, communities, and most importantly students deserve better.

Let me be clear that I, as well as my fellow superintendents and teachers, want accountability. Our parents, students, and taxpayers are entitled to this. However, we also want a system where educators and students know that the expectations will not change constantly and a system that acknowledges that school grades represent more than just student test scores.

Most important to me is that our students and parents grade our district every day. Students and parents are the people I most care about, not some arbitrary grade published by the State of Indiana. I am proud of our teachers, our support staff, and our students. Can we continue to improve? Certainly! We work every day to get better to meet the needs and desires of our stakeholders. This mess with ISTEP+ and student accountability hasn't changed our mission. Thank you for choosing Greenwood Schools!

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kent DeKoninck".

Kent DeKoninck, Ph.D.
Superintendent