

LEARN MORE, EARN MORE

Brad Chambers' Plan to Prepare Students for a Successful Future

We must aspire to build an education system that maximizes the potential of all Hoosier students and prepares them to excel in an economy of the future so they can build a great life right here in Indiana.

Our current education system is simply not producing enough well-educated Hoosiers. We leave too many behind who cannot read, who are allowed to receive a high school diploma without fully earning it or who lose interest and simply drop out altogether. Our state's economic future depends on addressing these issues with urgency and aspiration.

We must rethink and redesign every aspect of how we teach students and it must be based on sound science regarding how young people learn and how to design programs that support our students' different learning styles; we must dramatically increase the number of Hoosiers who are getting a great education; and we must invest more than we do today, because nothing can replace the value and opportunities that come from a great education.

That is why I am proposing my **Learn More, Earn More** plan, which will bring about the transformational change to meet these objectives.

1. Require All Students to Pass IREAD3 Before Moving Beyond Third Grade

We must stop the social promotion of students and significantly reduce the use of "Good Cause Exemptions" that allow schools to move students who fail the IREAD 3 exam multiple times to the fourth grade.

Compelling evidence indicates that students who cannot read by the end of third grade will struggle throughout the entirety of their academic career, if they even remain in school, as third graders who cannot read are more likely to later drop out of school altogether. In turn, their earning potential and quality of life are diminished, as is Indiana's productivity and overall competitiveness.

2. Ensure Funding Truly Follows the Student, Giving Parents Ample Choices for Their Children’s Education

Any state-certified entity that provides an education, whether that be a traditional public school, charter school, private school or magnet school, should receive the same level of funding for each student it enrolls. Of course, the level of funding per student will and should vary, as students with special needs or those from disadvantaged backgrounds require more resources to educate — but that level of funding should be the same regardless of what type of school the student attends.

Moreover, that funding should follow the student to their specific school rather than being allocated to the school district.

3. Develop Clear Career Pathways for Endless Opportunity

It is imperative that we help students understand that they can earn a good living and build a great life right here in Indiana, and that there are a number of pathways available to help them do it.

There have been many worthy efforts to prepare students for a pathway to college — an important pathway no doubt — but we know that a four-year degree does not fit every student’s individual needs. We need to ensure Hoosier children understand and have access to technical education programs that become available to them beginning in the seventh grade. We also need to prioritize entrepreneurship education programs for students so those with a dream of starting their own business can do so successfully.

HEA 1002 (2023) requires schools to provide more opportunities for career counseling and create “career awareness” courses so students can learn about the range of careers available to them, along with the educational or industry-approved credentials required for them. Pathways for careers in public service, such as a law enforcement officer, firefighter, EMT or member of the National Guard, where they can serve their local communities and gain skills and experience that are highly valued in the private sector should be established, as should pathways in trades, life sciences and manufacturing-related career education.

Additionally, all educational and industry-approved credentials should be “stackable,” meaning they have unique value in demonstrating competency or mastery of a skill but can also be combined with other credentials to create a “portfolio” that displays a student’s ability to step into a specific industry-defined job.

4. Allow for Individualized Education to Best Fit the Needs of Each Student

Hoosier students are bored with an education system that has not fundamentally changed its teaching methodologies in the past 50 years, while a new generation of the iPhone is released every year. As in other parts of their lives, education can and should leverage technology to make learning fun, interactive and individually paced to the progress of each student.

Education must modernize so that it is more individualized and prepares students to thrive in an economy of the future.

Rapid advancements in digital technologies, especially artificial intelligence (AI), create the opportunity to develop curricula, lesson plans and assessments that are designed to meet the learning needs and styles of each individual student. These programs can enable students to learn at a pace more in accordance with their individual strengths. In turn, they should be permitted to advance to a higher grade level based on their performance on assessments and other notable measures of progress that these programs can monitor and report on in a real-time basis, rather than just on “seat time.”

These digital technologies and AI also make possible new ways of educating students that also give parents more control over how their students are taught and what they learn; “micro schools” are such an example that are now thriving across the country. These small, multifamily learning environments can be organized as a shared learning experience for homeschooled children, as licensed private schools or even within traditional public schools or charter schools. Indiana should pilot new school models and provide state funding to those that are deemed to meet defined quality and performance standards.

We must also ensure that our schools of education are able to prepare our teachers to use these new technologies effectively, which will require them to change their curricula and instructional methodologies and to hire faculty who can teach future teachers how to harness these new technologies to best assist them in the classroom.

5. Increase Focus on Skill-Based Learning

Current school standards, curricula and assessments are designed around mastery of academic content, from English to history, chemistry and more. While it is important for students to acquire this fundamental knowledge, it is arguably as, or even more important, to ensure they leave the K-12 system able to demonstrate mastery of skills that will prepare them for future employment and a lifetime of success.

Students cannot develop skills in a vacuum — it is knowledge that gives them a foundation for learning. But students need the time and opportunity to practice the skills that will help them use their knowledge effectively.

Ultimately, knowledge and skills are both essential foundations for a robust education that challenges students and pushes them to achieve their maximum potential.

6. Combat Chronic Absenteeism Which Hinders the Ability of Students to Effectively Learn and Develop

Students who are absent from school are not learning. And if they are not learning, they are denying themselves the ability to earn a good living, support a family, establish financial security and enjoy a good quality of life.

To combat this, we must leverage new technologies to make going to school and learning more fun, interactive, future-focused and relevant.

We must also ensure that parents are engaged, as is the community, including churches, businesses and other local organizations, to deliver the message that getting a good education is essential to building a great life.

7. Treat Teaching as the Profession It Is and Increase Teacher Compensation Based on Performance and Demand

Teaching is a noble profession — one that is essential to our social and economic futures.

Teachers must be paid more than they earn today, and their pay should be based on their performance in the classroom and the outcome of their efforts. We should also be able to offer teachers in high-demand subjects, such as STEM subjects, higher salaries to compete with other employment opportunities.

8. Ensure That All Students Have Secure, Reliable Broadband Access

Every Hoosier student should have access to secure, reliable and high-speed broadband connectivity, as it opens an infinite range of educational resources. Although much progress has been made on this, there are still too many places across the state without adequate internet access, especially in our rural areas. With the recent federal award of \$858 million to support broadband expansion, we must use it to ensure that every Hoosier has access to internet.

Even with these efforts, the cost of broadband access can be prohibitive, especially for low-income families. Just as the state pays for student textbooks, it should also provide financial support to enable low-income students to access the internet at little to no cost.

The Gist

My **Learn More, Earn More** plan will bring bold, transformational change to our education system and prepare all Hoosier students to build a successful future no matter what pathway they choose.

The Pillars

1. Require All Students to Pass IREAD3 Before Moving Beyond Third Grade
2. Ensure Funding Truly Follows the Student, Giving Parents Ample Choices for Their Children's Education
3. Develop Clear Career Pathways for Endless Opportunity
4. Allow for Individualized Education to Best Fit the Needs of Each Student
5. Increase Focus on Skill-Based Learning
6. Combat Chronic Absenteeism Which Hinders the Ability of Students to Effectively Learn and Develop
7. Treat Teaching as the Profession It Is and Increase Teacher Compensation Based on Performance and Demand
8. Ensure That All Students Have Secure, Reliable Broadband Access

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