ASSESSMENT TO ACTION:

REDESIGNING INDIANA'S STATE ASSESSMENTS FOR INSTRUCTIONAL IMPACT

Reflections from Indiana's ILEARN Through-Year Assessment Pilot Year

educationfirst

INDIANA DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report was authored by Tara Czupryk, Dr. Chawanna Chambers, and Senna Lamba of Education First as part of a multi-year partnership with the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) to support the redesign and implementation of the ILEARN assessment system. Research and analysis support was provided by Shweta Tatkar.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Across the nation, education leaders are exploring new models of state assessment systems that more intentionally connect to students' day-to-day classroom learning. Through-year assessments (TYAs)—administered multiple times throughout the year—offer a promising approach for strengthening the connection between state assessment and instruction. Unlike traditional end-of-year summative tests, through-year models give educators timely data they can use to inform teaching during the year and better align assessments with the curriculum students actually experience, helping strengthen instruction and improve student outcomes.[1]

Launched as a large-scale pilot in the 2024–25 school year, Indiana's Learning Evaluation and Assessment Readiness Network (ILEARN) reimagines state assessments as integral tools to support student learning throughout the year. The assessment system's design and its pilot year results provide an example for states interested in aligning their assessment and instructional systems.

ILEARN's design is grounded in **two core goals:**
(1) providing educators with more actionable data throughout the school year and (2) strengthening coherence between curriculum, instruction and assessment.

The redesigned systems also elevates the innovative role of API (Application Programming Interface) technology as a strategy to bridge the gap between state assessment data and locally adopted instructional materials.

Learnings from the pilot year offer systems-level and technical design considerations for other state leaders and policymakers seeking to strengthen the instructional value of their assessment systems.

SYSTEMS-LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

Break down internal silos within state agencies to ensure curriculum, instruction and assessment teams work in concert.

Support districts in decluttering local assessments to create space for purposeful use of state-aligned assessments and reduce assessment fatigue.

Position school leaders as a critical link in implementation by equipping them to integrate assessment use into their instructional leadership practices.

Develop a clear roadmap for family engagement to build understanding and trust in the redesigned assessment system.

TECHNICAL DESIGN RECOMENDATIONS

Invest in clear, actionable guidance that links assessment data to instruction and helps teachers determine instructional next steps.

Design data reporting to be actionable and instructionally useful, with clear connections to standards and instructional resources.

Ensure interoperability of state assessment data with locally used high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) programs, maximizing the ability for educators to act on data quickly and effectively.

Together, these considerations reflect practical lessons from Indiana's pilot year that can inform any state's effort to design an assessment system that is coherent, instructionally useful and focused on improving student learning.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS FROM THE PILOT YEAR INCLUDE:

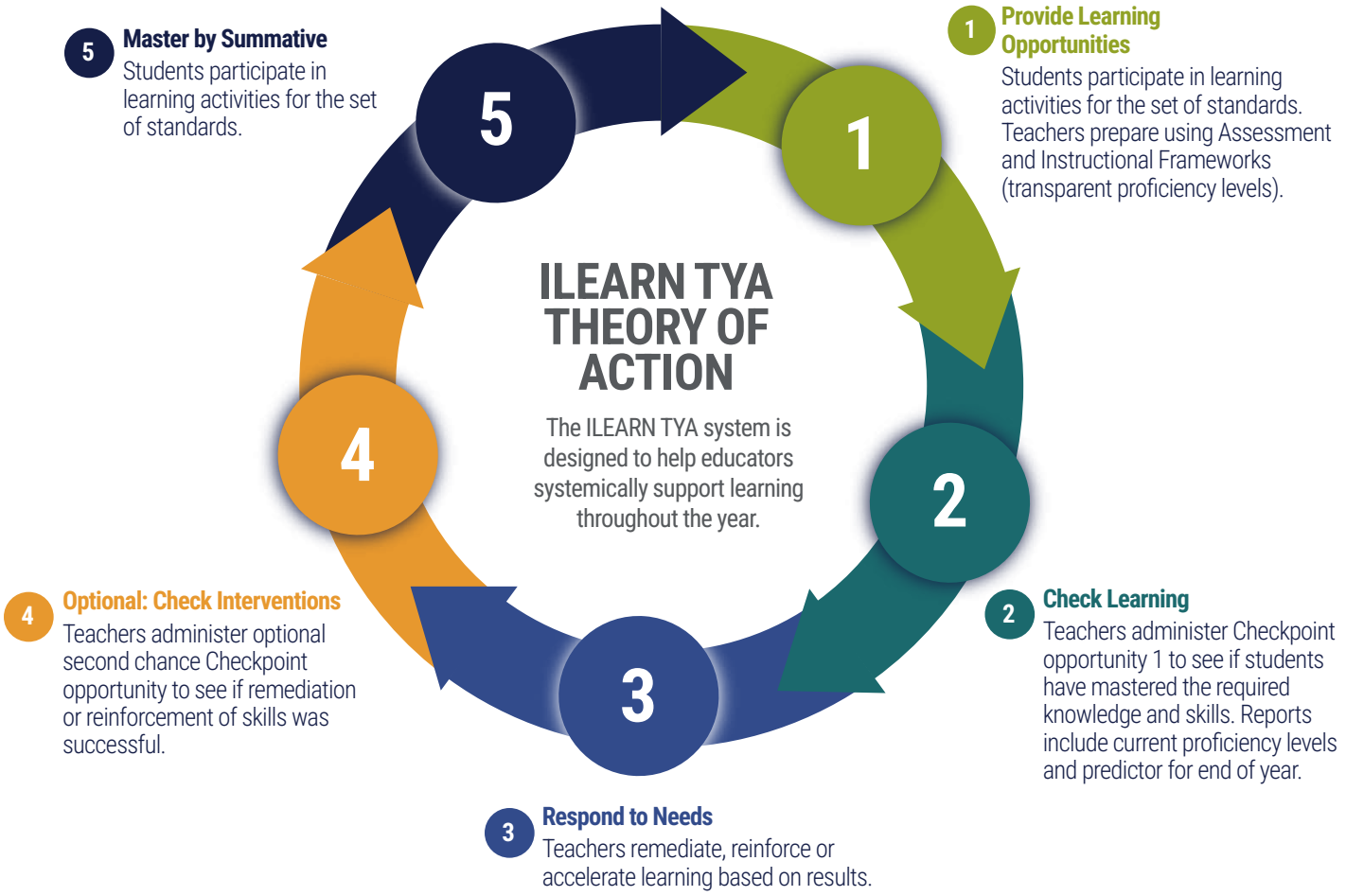
- **Over 75% of Indiana school districts opted in to participate.**
- **85% of district and school testing coordinators[2] reported participating in Indiana Department of Education (IDOE)-sponsored professional development, and 90% reported confidence in preparing for and overseeing test administration.**
- **A majority of teachers reported being able to teach all relevant standards before each assessment opportunity—evidence of alignment between the TYA system and local curriculum pacing.**
- **Teacher confidence in using assessment data increased from 60% during the first assessment window to 68% by the final assessment window, reflecting improved familiarity and perceived value over time.**

[1] Source: What are Through-Year Assessments? [2] 85% of those surveyed

A NEW DIRECTION FOR STATE ASSESSMENT: DESIGNING THE NEW ASSESSMENT SYSTEM AND PILOT

The ILEARN TYA Pilot was born from a simple but urgent premise: when it comes to driving instructional decision-making, traditional summative assessments provide too little, too late. Educators across Indiana had long voiced frustration with results from summative assessments that arrive after the school year ends—too late to adjust instruction or intervene meaningfully for students. At the same time, the need for coherence across the teaching and learning systems—where curriculum, instruction, assessment and intervention are aligned—has increased.[3] In response to this feedback, Indiana undertook a multi-year effort to thoughtfully redesign the ILEARN system and tested its key features through a statewide pilot in SY 24–25.

This redesigned system reflects IDOE's bold transition from compliance-driven testing to a learning-centered measurement, positioning assessment as a vital, integrated part of the instructional cycle. Its underlying theory of action is clear: if assessments given during the year reflect high-priority standards, align with the scope and sequences of locally adopted HQIM and provide educators with timely and actionable data, then educators are more likely to use that data to tailor instruction, target student needs and improve outcomes.



[3] Source: The State of Instructional (In)Coherence

REDESIGNING THE ILEARN ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

From the outset, IDOE centered continuous stakeholder feedback in the redesign process. Through focus groups, design sessions and item reviews with teachers, principals and local test coordinators, IDOE gathered insights that built trust, promoted buy-in and shaped the final design. Through this inclusive, iterative process, IDOE redesigned the following areas:

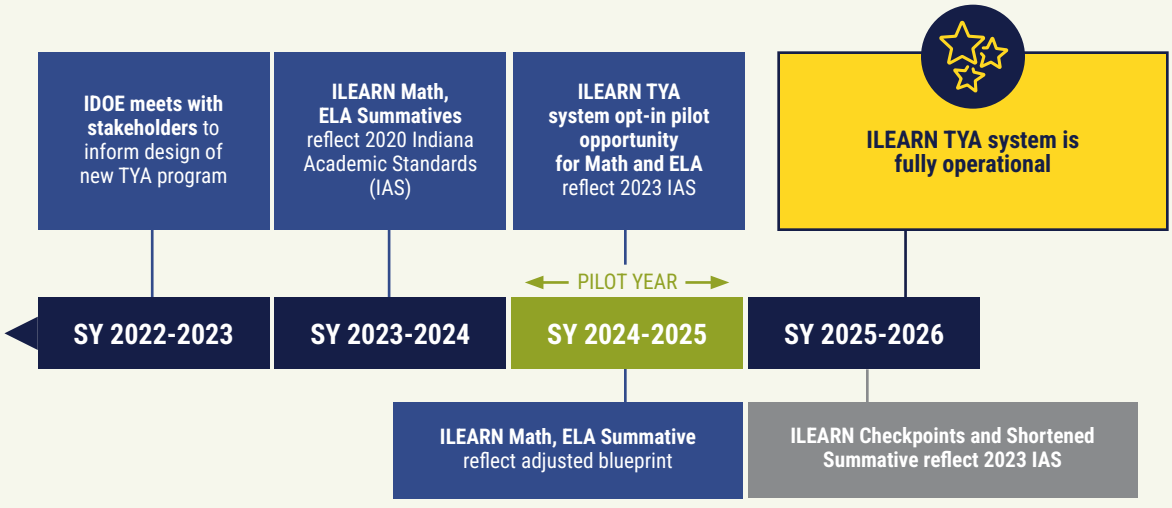
1 **Streamlined the Indiana Academic Standards:** The first step was to streamline the Indiana Academic Standards, which served as the foundation for all other changes. By identifying the most critical standards for student learning, IDOE aimed to reduce instructional overload and ensure that instruction and assessment were anchored in a shared understanding of what matters most.[4] These refinements were essential to building a system where assessment directly reflected and supported the core goals of instruction.

2 **Aligned the assessment scope and sequence to locally used HQIM:** Following the standards revision, IDOE conducted a statewide landscape analysis to identify the HQIM most frequently used across Indiana school districts. The findings informed the development of an assessment scope and sequence aligned with the structure and pacing of these HQIM programs. This alignment connected the new assessment system directly to the instructional resources most widely in use, supporting better integration into daily teaching, smoother adoption and more actionable insights for educators.[5]

3 **Established flexible assessment windows:** Educator feedback drove the decision to set large assessment windows, typically 9–12 weeks. This flexibility allowed schools to schedule assessments at points that aligned with the pacing of their locally-used HQIM, ensuring sufficient time to teach the breadth of standards on each assessment and reinforcing coherence between instruction and measurement.

4 **Created optional second-chance assessments:** Educators requested a way to know if the actions they took based upon Checkpoint data were working. To address this, IDOE created "Opportunity 2," an optional second-chance assessment after each Checkpoint that gave students another opportunity to demonstrate growth or mastery of the standards assessed after targeted support. Opportunity 2 was intended for targeted use with students who were most likely to benefit, helping educators gauge the impact of specific instructional adjustments and interventions.

TIMELINE OF THE REDESIGN PROCESS



The ILEARN TYA system launched with a phased, multi-year rollout to ensure fidelity of implementation and manage change.

[4] Source: Indiana education officials finding ways to cut down, revamp state education standards
[5] Source: In Search of the "Just Right" Connection Between Curriculum and Assessment

PILOT COMPONENTS

The pilot year served as the proving ground for the redesigned system. Building on the new streamlined standards, scope and sequence and flexible administration model, IDOE tested several components of the new system. The five components were:

- **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SUPPORTS**
- **CHECKPOINT ASSESSMENTS**
- **OPPORTUNITY 2**
- **TIMELY AND ACTIONABLE DATA REPORTS**
- **API (APPLICATION PROGRAMMING INTERFACE) INTEGRATION**

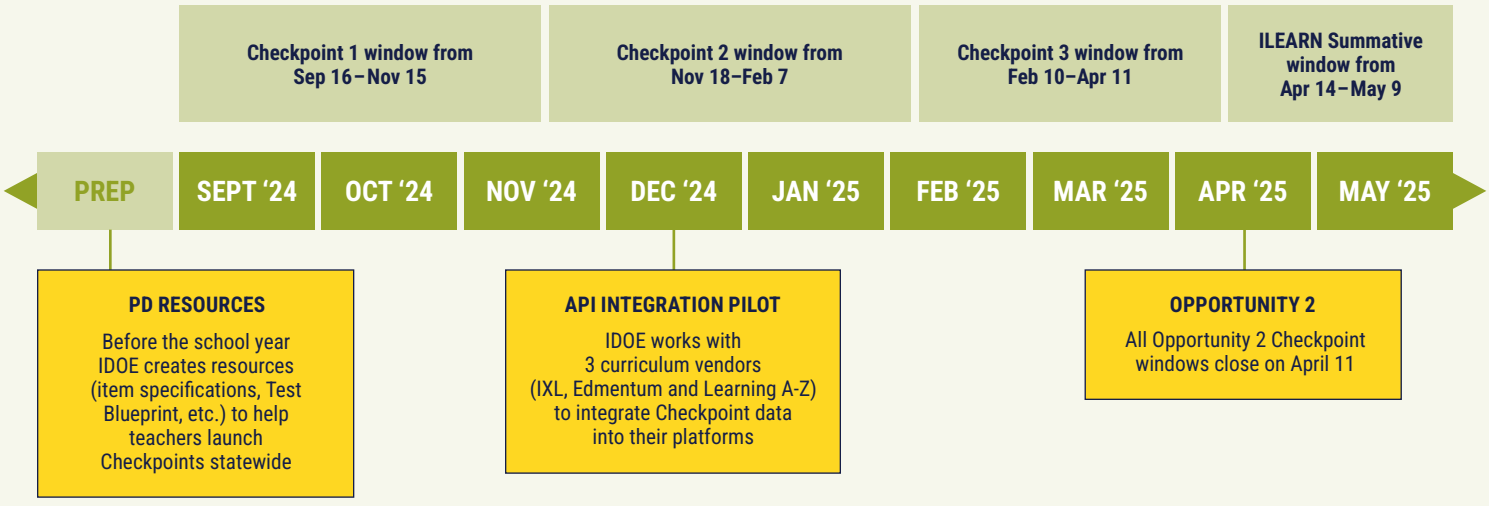
Professional development supports included state-led on-boarding sessions for district and school test coordinators, school leaders and teachers, along with robust TYA support resources tailored to different roles.

Checkpoint assessments were administered three times a year in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics for grades 3–8. They measured recently taught standards and were designed to reflect streamlined Indiana Academic Standards. Each Checkpoint assessed 4–7 state standards with 20–25 test items.

Opportunity 2 allowed students to demonstrate growth on items measuring the same standards after targeted supports, reinforcing a growth-oriented approach.

Timely and actionable data reports provided educators quick access to Checkpoint results structured to inform instruction and guide student groupings.

TIMELINE OF THE PILOT YEAR



API (Application Programming Interface) integration enabled automatic syncing of student performance data from Checkpoints into locally adopted enterprise intervention programs, increasing the immediacy and relevance of assessment data for instructional planning. Three vendors participated in the pilot and integrated Checkpoint data into their platforms to personalize instruction for students.

WHAT IS API INTEGRATION AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

API (Application Programming Interface) integration is a technical strategy that allows digital platforms to communicate directly with one another and share data. In the context of the ILEARN TYA pilot, API integration enabled student performance data from Checkpoints to be entered into locally adopted intervention programs like IXL and Edmentum. This allowed educators to view and use assessment results in the same systems they already use to plan intervention supports, with the systems creating Checkpoint-informed recommendations and supports for individual students.

This seamless connection between assessment and instructional systems is designed to increase the usability and immediacy of data, ensuring that teachers can act more quickly on student performance insights. Looking ahead to SY 25–26, this integration will expand to include Tier 1 instructional programs, further strengthening alignment between assessment and core instruction. For states seeking to build more coherent and instructionally relevant assessment systems, API integration represents a foundational infrastructure investment.

How the ILEARN API feature works

Students take ILEARN Checkpoint assessments, and the resulting data is made available in the assessment vendor's reporting system

Curriculum vendors use the assessment vendor's API feature to securely request and receive data from the reporting system.

IXL integrates data into their curriculum and creates individualized study plans for students

Edmentum integrates data into their curriculum and creates individualized learning paths for students

Teachers in the pilot programs use these curricula to supplement their instruction in full classroom settings (tier 1) and in smaller group instruction (tier 2) for students

Note: Learning A to Z also participated in the pilot, but their integration was not live until the end of Checkpoint 3, limiting available feedback.

Cambium Assessment, Inc., IDOE's assessment vendor, provides the reporting system and ClearFrame API that support ILEARN data sharing.

EARLY IMPACT AND INSIGHTS FROM THE PILOT YEAR

Throughout the pilot year, IDOE collected data from surveys, interviews, focus groups and technical feedback sessions with educators, school leaders, district and school testing coordinators, families and vendors. These sources provided a comprehensive picture of how the pilot functioned on the ground, where it delivered value and where there was room for improvement.

STATEWIDE ENGAGEMENT

Across Indiana, over 366 districts and 1,350 schools (75%) engaged in the pilot. This broad adoption reflected strong early confidence in the model's design, implementation supports and instructional value. Participation spanned urban, suburban and rural contexts, offering diverse perspectives on how the system worked across different settings.

LOCAL TEST COORDINATORS LEADERSHIP

Implementing a redesigned state assessment system was no small feat, demanding a major operational shift for districts and schools. Local test coordinators were the backbone of all operational aspects of pilot implementation, ensuring smooth administration. Approximately 85% of testing coordinators attended IDOE-led professional development, and a majority reported that onboarding resources, technical guidance and job-embedded tools were critical to their confidence in managing the pilot's demands. The investment by the state in training paid off with teachers overwhelmingly reporting that test-day logistics went smoothly, attributing this success to the leadership of their local testing coordinators.

INSTRUCTIONAL RELEVANCE OF CHECKPOINTS

Most teachers reported that Checkpoints aligned closely with recently taught content and instructional pacing, with the majority of teachers noting they were able to introduce or teach all of the relevant standards before each Checkpoint administration. This enabled them to use the results to get a strong check on progress on key standards and concepts.

The flexibility of the Checkpoint assessment windows was frequently cited as a critical factor that allowed schools to align assessment timing with their locally adopted HQIM and pacing guides. This alignment positioned assessments as supportive of, rather than disruptive to, daily instruction and gave teachers timely insights to guide planning and student supports. Teachers at Columbia Elementary School in Logansport, Indiana shared, ***"We're using it [Checkpoints] to decide what we're going to be working on, what our curriculum is going to look like from week to week. We are emphasizing the things that are listed as standards and all of that so that we can make sure that we're hitting those and working on those throughout our lesson."***

The pilot by the numbers

1,350
SCHOOLS

Over 75% of schools across Indiana opted in to pilot the through-year assessment system in the 2024-2025 school year

720,000
CHECKPOINTS

720,000 ELA and math Checkpoints were administered for each checkpoint administration

360,000
STUDENTS

Approximately 360,000 students participated in the Checkpoint administrations

6,500
EDUCATORS

Over 6,500 educators provided direct feedback through surveys, focus groups and committees

EARLY USE OF DATA

Teachers primarily used Checkpoint data to adjust lesson plans and provide targeted supports to students. Teacher confidence in using Checkpoint data also increased from 60% at Checkpoint 1 to 68% by Checkpoint 3, reflecting improved familiarity and perceived value over time.

Beyond individual classroom adjustments, several districts reported integrating Checkpoint data, state-provided testing blueprints and item specifications into their broader professional learning structures—like Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), intervention planning and data meetings. In Wawasee Community School Corporation, Assistant Superintendent Shelly Wilfong described the pilot as a turning point and said, ***"I felt like this year with those Checkpoints, we had more data conversations than ever before…It kind of kicked off what I've been trying to do for years. I hadn't been able to do it, and this came along and really I think just lit a fire under everyone."***

School leaders also created tools to support the use of data. At Triton School Corporation, Director of Curriculum and Assessment Melissa LaShure developed spreadsheets that auto-grouped students by performance level to guide additional support planning. ***"We did data analysis meetings after every checkpoint"*** she shared, ***"but for the most part, after cycle 1 they [teachers] had already dived in even before those meetings."***

API FEATURE

In districts piloting API integration, Checkpoint data was automatically synced with their locally adopted intervention programs—such as IXL or Edmentum—enabling faster, more targeted responses to student needs. Confidence in using API-generated resources was highest in schools where vendors provided hands-on training and resources.

Teachers described the integration as a time-saver that made data easier to act on. A teacher shared, ***"It just took a lot of the work out of it on my end, which is really nice…the ILEARN system is talking to IXL and back and forth. That just takes so many steps out of the equation for me."***

Leaders also highlighted how API integration deepened the connection between assessment and instruction. For example, some schools used the data to drive weekly remediation plans or support extended day programs. A school leader explained, ***"Before the rollout, teachers created manual trackers. With the integration, students could automatically see their personalized plans—eliminating extra work and offering more detail than the Checkpoint reports alone."***

Students were also more engaged when they saw their Checkpoint data reflected in the learning platforms they already used. These early results reinforce IDOE's vision for a more coherent, instructionally meaningful assessment system—one that supports real-time classroom practice and improves student outcomes.

USE OF OPPORTUNITY 2

Districts adopted and implemented Opportunity 2, the optional second-chance assessment after each Checkpoint, in varied ways during the pilot year. Around a quarter of teachers reported consistent use of Opportunity 2, with decisions about its use typically made at the local level and left to the discretion of individual schools, principals or teachers. When it was used, Opportunity 2 was most often leveraged to assess the effectiveness of reteaching and interventions, especially for those who narrowly missed demonstrating mastery. Some schools began by using Opportunity 2 with all students but later refined their approach to focus on those most likely to benefit, in part due to concerns about test fatigue.

90%

Teachers who reported student growth on Opportunity 2

Educators who administered Opportunity 2 generally saw positive results, with 90% reporting that students showed growth on the second assessment. Teachers also described Opportunity 2 as a tool that reinforced growth-mindset messaging and gave students a clear chance to show progress.

Several school leaders shared examples of how Opportunity 2 contributed to instructional ownership and student confidence. At Avon Intermediate East, all students participated—an intentional decision aimed at building a schoolwide culture of accountability for growth and a way for leadership to ensure all students were growing or maintaining proficiency between the initial Checkpoint and Opportunity 2. ***"It was a big confidence booster for teachers to see growth in Opportunity 2… They're watching their students' results come in and they're like 'I had five kids jump two proficiency levels,'"*** shared Principal Stephane Bordelon.

At Madison-Grant Jr./Sr. High School, Principal David Retherford emphasized how teachers' targeted use of Opportunity 2 built their instructional ownership and students' motivation. He described how ***"some kids wanted to know their scores immediately—it became a motivator."*** Triton's Melissa LaShure also emphasized that students who took Opportunity 2 "showed the most growth" throughout the year and grew in their confidence.

Educators did identify two key challenges that limited Opportunity 2's use and impact. In systems where local interim assessments remained in place, crowded testing calendars made it difficult to find time for a second administration—particularly when district assessment expectations did not shift. Additionally, many leaders noted that the timing of the third Checkpoint window was too close to the summative assessment and made it hard to use Opportunity 2 meaningfully. For many, this compressed timeline prevented teachers from planning or delivering adequate remediation for the third checkpoint.

DISTRICTS SHIFT AWAY FROM COMMERCIAL INTERIM ASSESSMENTS

One of the clearest indicators of the Checkpoint's instructional utility came from multiple districts' decisions to discontinue their previous commercial interim assessment programs. These programs had long been used to support formative data collection but were increasingly seen as less actionable or misaligned with classroom practice.

Wawasee's Shelly Wilfong described their prior interim as offering "the illusion of specificity," noting that Checkpoints instead allowed teachers to zero in on precise skill gaps tied to recently taught content. Melissa LaShure in Triton School Corporation agreed that the Checkpoints provide "actionable data that actually aligned to our state standards." Similarly, Madison-Grant Jr./Sr. High School phased out its former interim program after finding that the Checkpoints better aligned with summative assessment expectations and provided more refined insight for instructional planning. An assistant principal at another school explained that the Checkpoint data enabled teachers to focus on more refined information aligned to state standards and summative tasks, unlike the information produced from their previously used commercial interim product.

FROM PILOT TO PRACTICE: LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FIELD

IDOE supported implementation across pilot sites and evaluated the system through the lens of an implementation chain. This concept maps the key actors, actions and behavior changes required to enact a program meaningfully and improve the student experience.[6] Using this lens helped the state focus its levers (resources, training, communications) to clarify where additional guidance was needed and how different stakeholders could reinforce one another's efforts.[7]

THE IMPLEMENTATION CHAIN:

States set a vision, define the implementation chain and use their levers to create focus, coherence and alignment.

IMPLEMENTATION CHAIN RECOMMENDATIONS: BUILDING CONDITIONS FOR COHERENT, SYSTEMWIDE IMPLEMENTATION

What follows are key recommendations for states based on Indiana's pilot year experience, starting with system-level implementation guidance, followed by technical considerations for assessment program design.

1. To build an instructionally relevant state assessment system, state agencies must break down internal silos

Most state agencies maintain separate instructional and assessment teams, with only moderate collaboration levels. **To ensure the success of the new ILEARN system, IDOE made the deliberate decision to reorganize these teams under a single leadership structure, creating the conditions for deeper cross-functional collaboration.**

This new structure allowed the teams to work together from the outset to design and implement the ILEARN TYA system. Early in the pilot, IDOE convened a working session to map the full implementation chain—from the SEA to the classroom—in order to assess the clarity of key roles, messaging and supports at each level.

As a result, the state was able to provide more unified support to the field and address challenges more effectively throughout the pilot year.

What States Can Do:

- Realign assessment and instructional teams under shared leadership structure to support collaboration, alignment and coherence.
- Map out the full implementation chain for your state assessment program—from SEA to classroom—and assign clear goals and responsibilities at each level.
- Stand up cross-functional teams to co-develop guidance, training and tools for each level of your implementation chain.

[6] Source: State Implementation Partnership, August 2024. [7] Source: Our answer to "Why didn't this policy work?"

2. Help systems declutter local assessments to make room for purposeful use

Many districts already administer multiple local assessments. Without support to reflect on what's necessary, a new state assessment tool can feel like one more add-on rather than a replacement or improvement. In places where there was inconsistent use of Opportunity 2, teachers pointed to overlapping local assessment requirements and unclear expectations as barriers to implementation.

States can reduce this tension by helping districts determine what they can stop doing, making space for more purposeful use of high-quality, state-aligned tools.

What States Can Do:

- Provide guidance and tools to help districts audit and prioritize local assessments.
- Model how Checkpoint data can replace or consolidate existing diagnostic or benchmark assessments.
- Encourage district leaders to involve educators in decisions about what gets removed or streamlined.

3. Leverage school leaders to drive effective implementation

Indiana effectively leveraged local testing coordinators, and their role was essential to the pilot's operational success. However, the emphasis on testing coordinators was not matched by a similar focus on building leaders—particularly principals—who play a key role in translating the new TYA system into instructional action.

Through stakeholder feedback and the fall implementation chain audit, IDOE identified principals as a critical link in schoolwide implementation that had not received sufficient attention. This gap risked disrupting coherence at the building level and, in certain cases, limited instructional follow-through.

Looking ahead, IDOE plans to create a school leader toolkit for SY 25–26 to better equip principals as they support operational implementation and instructional use of data.

What States Can Do:

- Develop training modules and guidance specifically for principals and instructional coaches.
- Help school leaders align existing school-level systems, such as walkthroughs, PLC agendas and intervention planning to maximize Checkpoint data's instructional usefulness.

4. Plan a roadmap for family engagement

During the pilot year, IDOE delayed a full-scale family engagement strategy, prioritizing thoughtful system design and educator-facing tools first. While some districts developed their own materials, the lack of a coordinated approach created created inconsistencies in how information was shared with families.

In the next phase of the program, IDOE will implement a comprehensive family engagement plan, including statewide communication templates and multilingual materials.

What States Can Do:

- Build a statewide family communication toolkit that districts can localize.
- Include families in feedback loops to understand how they interpret reports and what support they need.
- Align communications with what's actually happening in classrooms—emphasizing how assessment supports learning, not just compliance.

TECHNICAL DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS: ENSURING THE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM SUPPORTS INSTRUCTIONAL ACTION

As critical as the implementation chain is, states must also attend to the technical design of their assessment system so that results lead to meaningful instructional action.

Three design priorities emerged from Indiana's pilot year: investing in robust standards and assessment guidance, educator-friendly data reports and interoperability of data through API integration.

5. Invest in clear, actionable guidance that links assessment data to instruction

To ensure ILEARN Checkpoint data could be used to guide teaching and learning, IDOE created Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs)—learning progressions for each standard organized into four performance levels: Below, Approaching, At and Above Proficiency. Each level describes what students can do, building on the skills in the prior levels and reflecting the natural progression of knowledge and skills for that content area.[8] The PLDs are designed to make assessment data genuinely useful by showing teachers exactly where a student is in the progression and what the next instructional steps should be.

When used alongside ILEARN Checkpoint and classroom data, the PLDs give teachers a clear, shared roadmap for moving students forward. School leaders and teachers in the pilot consistently emphasized that this resource strengthened teachers' ability to analyze data and translate it into effective instruction.

What States Can Do:

- Develop clear, publicly available learning progressions for each standard, aligned to assessment performance levels.
- Include concrete "can do" statements at each level to make expectations transparent for educators and families.
- Provide guidance on using both state and local assessment data to identify students' current level and plan next steps.

6. Make data reporting actionable and instructionally useful

Educators consistently valued the clarity of the PLDs and Checkpoint data, but many found the Checkpoint data reports too broad to easily inform instruction. A lack of standard-level reporting in the pilot year made it harder for teachers to connect reports to the PLDs and identify the precise skills students needed next.

In response, IDOE is prioritizing improvements to the reporting suite that will include access to standard-level data and more intuitive, user-centered design. New tools like the forthcoming "Standards Spotlights" from the state will also help teachers interpret results and identify strategic ways to support students.

What States Can Do:

- Involve teachers in co-designing reporting tools to ensure formats are user-friendly and usable.
- Focus early data reporting upgrades on clarity, granularity (e.g., standard-level views) and embedded instructional guidance that aligns with performance level descriptors (PLDs).
- Pair rollout of new reports and resources with educator-facing walkthroughs or exemplars.

[8] See the full Indiana Assessment frameworks: English/Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies

7. Interoperability of state assessment data can be transformational—if done right

Indiana's API pilot demonstrated strong early success: participating districts reported greater ease in applying data insights due to the seamless syncing of Checkpoint data with their locally adopted intervention and instruction platforms. Teachers in these districts were more likely to report confidence in using data and described faster, more effective instructional responses to student needs.

However, achieving this level of alignment requires deliberate planning and oversight. ***States must define clear data mapping expectations and establish a rigorous quality assurance process to ensure vendors align their platforms with state standards.*** This work is technically complex and requires sustained cross-team collaboration to implement and maintain at scale.

IDOE plans to publicly release its API quality assurance process in the coming year, creating a transparent model for other states and vendors.

What States Can Do:

- Set clear interoperability standards for vendors, including defined data-mapping protocols aligned to state standards and frameworks.
- Develop a quality assurance process to review and approve vendor data integration and ensure it supports instructional use.
- Ensure cross-team collaboration between tech, assessment and curriculum departments to monitor and manage vendor alignment.

CONCLUSION

As Indiana prepares to operationalize the ILEARN Through-Year Assessment system statewide in 2025–26, its pilot year offers powerful lessons for state leaders and policymakers seeking to better align assessment and instruction. From the system's coherent theory of action grounded in teaching and learning to its innovative use of APIs that make state data usable at the classroom level — Indiana is demonstrating what is possible when assessments are built for instructional utility, not just accountability

Looking ahead, IDOE is enhancing its system through new API vendor partnerships, user-centered data reports, expanded educator supports and the public release of its API and quality assurance frameworks. These improvements are designed not just to scale the system but to sharpen its value in real classrooms.

In an era when "assessment" too often signals compliance and complexity, Indiana is offering a new model—one in which the state's assessment system is an ally to instruction, a resource to educators and a catalyst for student learning.

DISTRICT SUCCESS STORIES

WAWASEE'S ILEARN JOURNEY: EMPOWERING TEACHERS, IGNITING DATA

WAWASEE COMMUNITY SCHOOL CORPORATION

THE BASICS[9]

Location	Syracuse, Indiana
Locale	Rural
District Size	2,759 students
% of Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch	52.6%
Pilot Best Practices that Align with IDOE's Theory of Action	• Aligned curriculum pacing • Eliminated previously used interim assessments • Supported teachers with data analysis • Used Checkpoint data to respond to student needs • Monitored student progress using Opportunity 2 • Leveraged state-provided resources strategically

Wawasee Community School Corporation, under the leadership of Assistant Superintendent Shelly Wilfong, actively participated in Indiana's ILEARN through-year assessment pilot, motivated by a desire to strengthen teacher use of assessment data and replace locally created interim tests with the state-provided Checkpoints. The pilot became a turning point for the district's data work, with Dr. Wilfong noting, ***"I felt like this year with those Checkpoints, we had more data conversations than ever before . . . It kind of kicked off what I've been trying to do for four years. I hadn't been able to do it, and this came along and really I think just lit a fire under everyone."***

Wawasee utilized Checkpoint data primarily to inform Tier 1 core instruction and Tier 2 in-classroom reteaching during a dedicated "WIN time." Decisions about Opportunity 2 use were left to teachers, who used the data to guide classroom instruction. Dr. Wilfong contrasted the Checkpoints with the district's previous interim assessment, which she described as giving an "illusion of specificity" and being less instructionally useful.

The district also leveraged state-provided resources, including assessment blueprints and item specifications on the Indiana Learning Lab, which

NOTABLE PRACTICE: EMPOWERING TEACHERS TO BUILD BUY-IN

A cornerstone of Wawasee's implementation strategy was empowering teachers. Rather than imposing rigid testing windows, the district allowed principals and teachers to determine the optimal timing for the Checkpoints based on their curriculum pacing. As Dr. Wilfong noted, ***"I really wanted to empower the teachers to use this as a tool, not a mandate that the district was going to say, Hey, you have to do it this way."*** This flexibility fostered buy-in and reduced anxiety among staff. Dr. Wilfong also modeled a supportive approach to data, framing it as "a flashlight, not a hammer," to guide improvement rather than assign blame.

[9] Sources: NCES & Indiana GPS

Dr. Wilfong described as highly valuable for teachers. One middle school teacher began engaging students in one-on-one data conversations, increasing student ownership and understanding of their growth. These changes, alongside other initiatives, coincided with notable gains in ILEARN summative scores, particularly in Grades 3–5, where some classes saw increases in proficiency of 10–18 percentage points.

Dr. Wilfong directly linked these improvements to the effective use of the Checkpoints. "This year I've had more data conversations with teachers in a positive way than I ever have in this district, and it's been refreshing and great. And although I would've loved to have said, oh gosh, I inspired them to look at data differently and everything. No, the Checkpoints came along and that's what did it." Wawasee's experience shows how empowering teachers to own and act on assessment data can improve instructional practice and student outcomes.

IMPACT ON ILEARN SUMMATIVE RESULTS:

	GRADE 3 ELA	GRADE 4 ELA	GRADE 4 MATH	GRADE 5 ELA	GRADE 5 MATH	GRADE 7
NORTH WEBSTER ELEMENTARY	+10 POINTS	+10 POINTS	+10 POINTS		+15 POINTS	
MILFORD ELEMENTARY	+10 POINTS	+15 POINTS	+25 POINTS	+5 POINTS		
SYRACUSE ELEMENTARY				+10 POINTS	+5 POINTS	
WAWASEE MIDDLE SCHOOL*						+5 POINTS

Source: Indiana Department of Education: Data Center & Reports

*Attributed to a teacher who regularly held student data conversations with Checkpoint data.

EMPOWERING GROWTH: TRITON'S ROADMAP TO ILEARN PILOT SUCCESS

TRITON SCHOOL CORPORATION

THE BASICS [10]

Location	Bourbon, Indiana
Locale	Rural
District Size	954 students
% of Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch	49.2%
Pilot Best Practices that Align with IDOE's Theory of Action	• Aligned curriculum pacing • Eliminated previously used interim assessments • Supported teachers with data analysis • Used Checkpoint data to respond to student needs • Monitored student progress using Opportunity 2 • Leveraged state-provided resources strategically

Triton School Corporation, under the leadership of Director of Curriculum and Assessment Melissa LaShure, actively engaged in Indiana's ILEARN through-year assessment pilot, driven by a desire for more actionable, state-aligned data and early experience with the new assessment. Their primary goal was to gain insights into student mastery that directly correlated with their curriculum. For Triton, the pilot offered not only alignment with state assessments but also a chance to have real-time, actionable data to inform instruction.

Triton found that their curriculum pacing with the Checkpoint assessments, especially in math, required only minor adjustments. Participation in the pilot also led Triton to audit and streamline their broader assessment portfolio, discontinuing other interim assessments like NWEA, while retaining DIBELS for reading intervention.

The pilot fostered a culture of data-driven instruction. Teachers, after initial support, became proficient in analyzing the data, establishing a consistent data cycle within the district. Triton

NOTABLE PRACTICE: USING DATA ANALYSIS TOOLS TO SUPPORT TARGETED STUDENT SUPPORT

A key to Triton's success was Director Melissa LaShure's proactive approach to data-driven remediation. She developed custom spreadsheets that automated student grouping based on performance, making it easier for teachers to identify and support students in need of additional help. After the first Checkpoint, LaShure led a training session to walk teachers through how to input their data and interpret the groupings. She described that after the initial support, teachers ***"really took off with it…they dove in before scheduled data meetings and already knew which students needed what."***

Triton also established a clear remediation protocol: if more than 60% of students struggled with a concept, teachers implemented whole-class reteaching (Tier 1); otherwise, students were placed in smaller Tier 2 remediation groups. This structure helped ensure that instructional adjustments were both timely and targeted.

[10] Sources: NCES & Indiana GPS

also extensively utilized state-provided resources, compiling blueprints, Performance-Level Descriptors (PLDs) and item specifications into accessible binders for staff.

They also made strategic use of Opportunity 2, focusing on students on the cusp of proficiency. A targeted three-week remediation period proved highly effective and resulted in significant growth for these students.

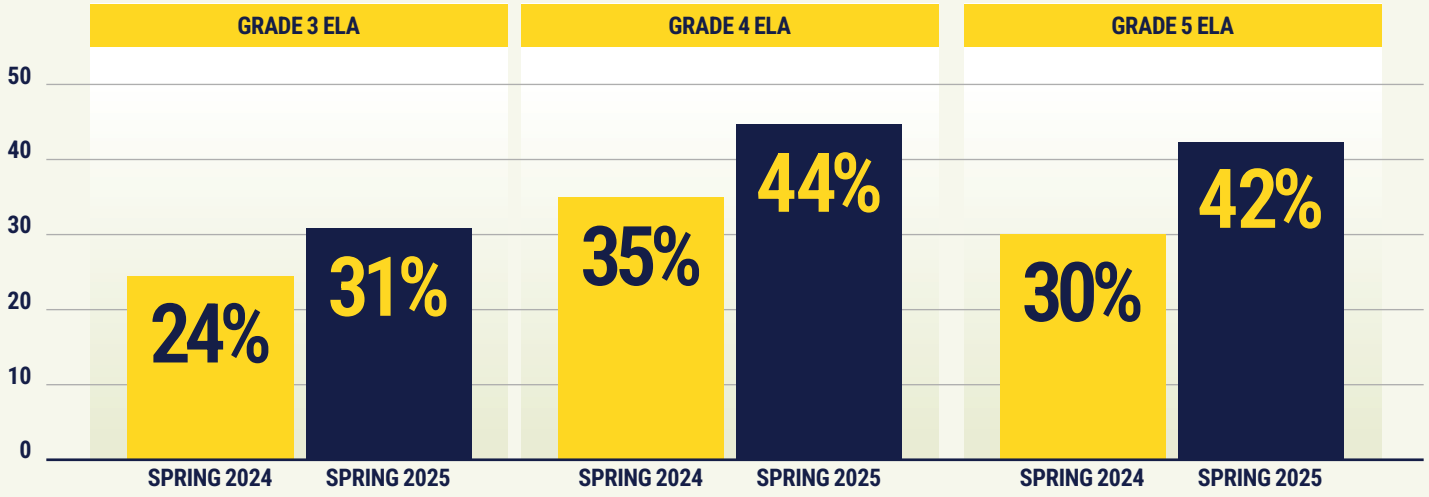
Positive impacts were evident in summative results, with some grade levels achieving their highest pass rates in years. Mrs. LaShure attributed these gains to the checkpoint pilot, stating, ***"We just really feel like no other…interim assessment…has ever produced that kind of result for us within a one year time span."***

Beyond scores, student engagement and confidence surged, particularly among previously low-performing students who became motivated to track their own growth. Mrs. LaShure noted, "They were so eager to see what their score was because they wanted to know did I grow or did I pass?" Teacher buy-in was solidified by the program's emphasis on a growth model, which resonated more positively than solely focusing on proficiency benchmarks.

Triton School Corporation's experience demonstrates how a structured approach, coupled with strategic data utilization and teacher empowerment, can lead to substantial improvements in student performance and engagement within the ILEARN pilot framework.

IMPACT ON ILEARN SUMMATIVE RESULTS:

Triton Corporation saw significant gains in ELA proficiency rates



Source: Indiana Department of Education: Data Center & Reports

INTENTIONAL IMPLEMENTATION: AVON INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL EAST'S ILEARN PILOT SUCCESS

AVON INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL EAST

THE BASICS[11]

Location	Avon, Indiana
Locale	Large Suburban
District Size	District: 10,736 students | School 815 students
% of Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch	47.2%
Pilot Best Practices that Align with IDOE's Theory of Action	• Eliminated previously used interim assessments • Supported teachers with data analysis • Used Checkpoint data to respond to student needs • Monitored student progress using Opportunity 2 • Leveraged state-provided resources strategically

Avon Intermediate School East, a 5th–6th grade school led by Principal Stephane Bordelon and Assistant Principal/Testing Coordinator Brad Bates, approached the ILEARN through-year assessment pilot with a deliberate plan to maximize its potential. Their goal was to use Checkpoint data to overhaul their Response to Intervention (RTI) block, WIN ("What I Need Now"), and drive targeted remediation, enrichment and skill-building for all students.

Teachers and leaders integrated state-provided blueprints, Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs) and item specifications into planning and paired the data with IXL software to create gamified, personalized learning paths. A key practice was involving students directly in tracking their own progress—teachers held individual meetings to review data and set growth goals, which were displayed in classrooms. Brad Bates recalled, "They would come to me and tell me I grew 87 points…I think that was a big-ticket item for the kids."

NOTABLE PRACTICE: UTILIZING OPPORTUNITY TWO FOR ALL STUDENTS

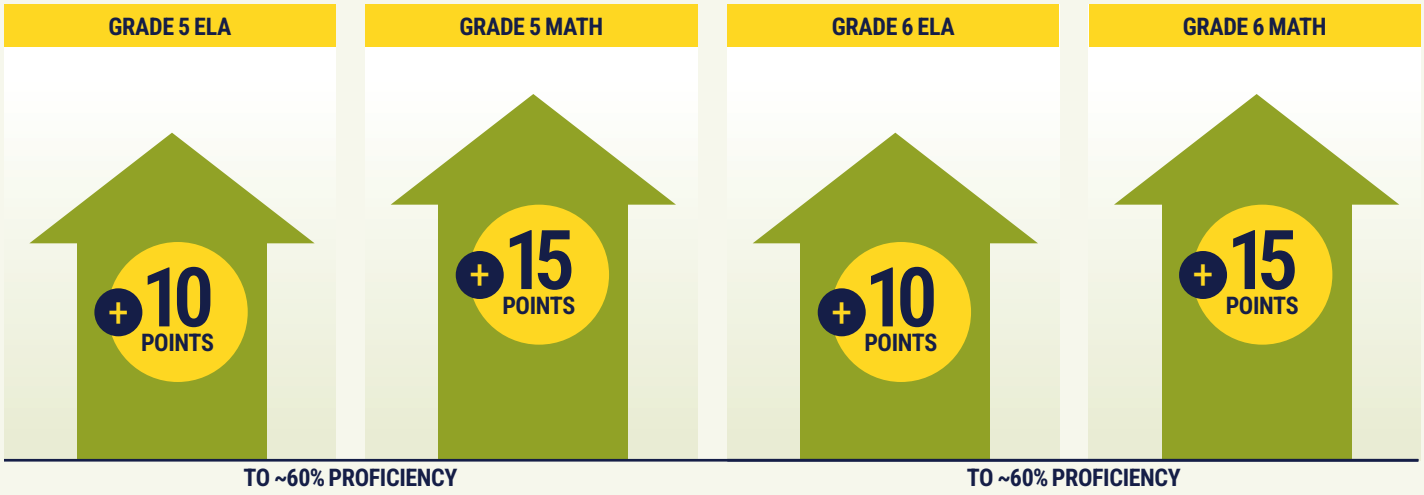
Unlike other schools in their district, Intermediate East made the intentional decision to have all students, regardless of their initial proficiency, participate in Opportunity 2 for the first two Checkpoints. Stephane emphasized this deliberate choice, stating, ***"We were the only school in the district that utilized opportunity two with all of our students, and that was very intentional on our part."*** This universal participation fostered a culture of continuous improvement and accountability for every student. The goal was to normalize reassessment as part of the learning process, rather than something reserved for students who were behind. This process ensured every student had a chance to demonstrate growth after targeted reteaching. Brad described how, even for students who scored proficient on a Checkpoint, "We want to make sure they're maintaining proficiency. . .and we need to make sure we are still growing those students."

[11] Sources: NCES & Indiana GPS

Opportunity 2 retesting was used strategically with students close to proficiency, following targeted reteaching. Leaders found the Checkpoints far more useful and predictive than the previous interim commercial product they used, which often misaligned with ILEARN results. Frequent Checkpoint testing also built student stamina for the summative exam. As Bates summarized, "We took it and used it as a motivator and a point of accountability."

This comprehensive approach, coupled with student ownership, contributed to double-digit gains in ELA, math, and social studies. Stephane Bordelon reflected, "At East, we saw double-digit gains …a big credit to that was how we utilized the Checkpoints and the data coming out from that."

IMPACT ON ILEARN SUMMATIVE RESULTS:



Source: Indiana Department of Education: Data Center & Reports

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