United States House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education

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Written Testimony of
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Chairman Hunter, Ranking Member Kildee, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you this morning on the role of the federal government in education and its impact on states, districts, and schools; especially when examining the need for data collection and reporting.

The Huntington County Community School Corporation (HCCSC) is a *rural*, county-wide preK-12 school district consisting of 5,986 students in 11 schools. We are an extremely socio-economically diverse district. Our individual schools' free/reduced lunch percentage ranges from a low of 27% to a high of 80%. The mission of HCCSC is to create world-class learning results by focusing on literacy, academic standards, a safe learning environment, stakeholder satisfaction, and career and life readiness. Our school district has been in corrective action for the past seven years. Through a process of aligning and adjusting to federal accountability requirements; developing a strategic plan focused on SMART goals, data, and results; holding administrators and teachers more accountable for implementation of key strategies; and partnering with and making our data transparent to the community and parents; HCCSC has made Adequate Yearly Progress two out of the past three years. HCCSC has also successfully pulled two elementary schools out of corrective action by targeting instruction on the special education subgroup, and is about to pull the third and final elementary out of corrective action for improving results in the special education and free/reduced lunch subgroups.

Sadly, there are many school districts, educators, and stakeholders that would argue that federal accountability and reporting requirements, including the use of data, are overly burdensome. While I would argue that many of the reporting processes should be streamlined to remove redundancies to be more efficient, the Federal requirements in this area are extremely important to driving student achievement.

States, districts, and schools need to use existing data more efficiently and effectively to drive the school improvement process and to inform daily instruction. HCCSC is a firm believer in *"what gets measured gets done"* (Peters, 1987), and has successfully organized its school improvement efforts around this philosophy. As Congress looks to improve Federal education law, any federal requirements for reporting or data collection, should be carefully analyzed to reflect first and foremost what will benefit the students. The focus should be on outcome or performance data instead of overly burdensome compliance regulations.

Author Jim Collins states that, *"Organizations only improve where the truth is told and the brutal facts confronted."* Federal education policy has forced this concept to the forefront, and refocused school districts on valuable student data and emphasized results. This focus ensures that all students' civil rights are met. The data collection and analysis helps educators retool and reallocate valuable, and often diminishing, resources and services to those most in need; thus ensuring that *all* students are provided a high quality, free, and appropriate education.

Educational reformist, Mike Schmoker (1999), states, *"Data are to goals what signposts are to travelers; data are not end points, but are essential to reaching them – the signposts on the road to school improvement. Thus, data and feedback are interchangeable and should be an essential feature of how schools do business."* I cannot stress enough the importance of using data to drive improvement efforts, to support best practices, to create efficiencies, to monitor and evaluate results, and to provide information to parents and community stakeholders. Because federal law has demanded that we look more closely at which students are achieving and which are struggling, HCCSC has been vigilant in its data collection, analysis, and transparency in the following ways:

- Created a strategic plan with the School Board that includes key indicators we want to monitor and action steps to help us move forward. See attached HCCSC Strategic Plan.
- Use Elementary Literacy Data Walls to monitor the performance of every student during the fall, winter, and spring assessments. See photo on page 6.
- Conduct ongoing data meetings among and between all areas of school leadership and the public.
- Teach students to track their own performance (e.g. attendance, reading levels, NWEA scores, etc.) in Student Data Folders.
- Invested in a data warehouse and Response to Intervention (RTI) documentation program with Pearson Inform to create efficiencies, improve daily instruction, and minimize the burden for school, district, state, and federal data reporting. It has allowed HCCSC to work smarter rather than harder.
- Give parents "real time" access to their child's grades, assessment data, RTI academic or behavioral goals, and RTI interventions. This access to their child's grades, scores, and goals allows us to truly *partner* with parents to provide the best possible education to *all* students, including those with an IEP or English Language Learners.

In all of our work, the privacy of the student is fully protected and only parents and educational personnel can access this information. Just as we believe in the importance of data informing and driving instruction, we also ensure it remains secure and individual student privacy is not compromised.

State and federal data collection requirements are not the final destination in the improvement process. We routinely go above and beyond the federal collection requirements in order to

maximize improvement efforts and identify those groups or individual students that need more support or further academic challenge. With the use of tools like the data warehouse, we are able to filter and disaggregate data to view overall trends or understand granular instructional information such as which state standard sub-skills or concepts an IDEA eligible or Title I student is struggling to master. Also, through the collection and analysis of our ongoing formative assessment data, administrators and teachers can identify those students most in need of support and successfully target interventions for students and professional development needs for teachers. Our data show the success we're having in all grades.

Therefore, as stated earlier, the current federal reporting requirements are sufficient and we must use the current data in more efficient and effective ways to guide school improvement and daily instructional decisions. I do have several recommendations I'd like to offer. They are:

1. Carefully examine existing requirements and any new regulations through the lens of what best benefits students and drives reform within the school.
2. Work to streamline and fine tune the reporting process while removing redundancies. We are often required to report the same information several different times to several entities (i.e. IDEA, Title I, and our own state divisions). The data should be able to be managed more efficiently with technology through the use of Student Testing Numbers (STN) collected and managed by the state. Therefore, through the STN, the information should be able to be transferred through the state DOE to the federal educational agencies more efficiently without requiring local districts to duplicate its efforts.
3. Provide support for states and districts to utilize data warehouses that reduce collection and reporting burdens.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I have submitted our academic outcome data for the record. I would be pleased to take any questions.

Additional Information:

1. HCCSC's performance on ISTEP+ (Indiana's state accountability test) in English/Language Arts and math. As you can see in the charts, HCCSC has improved its performance in the past several years by focusing on our data and implementing best practice instructional strategies. This data includes students with disabilities and English Language Learners.
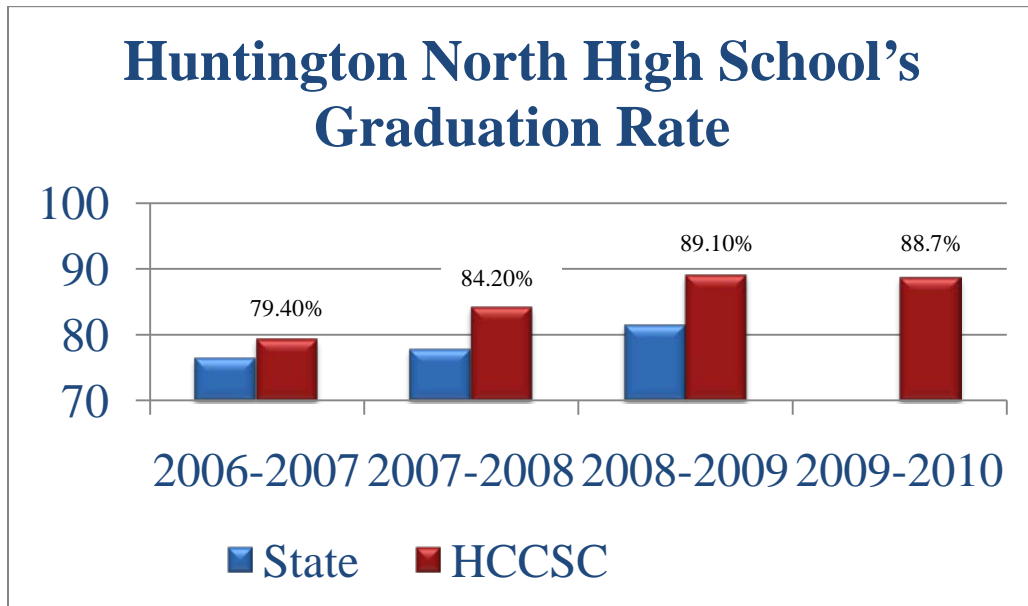
ISTEP+ ELA, Percent Passing Grades 3-10
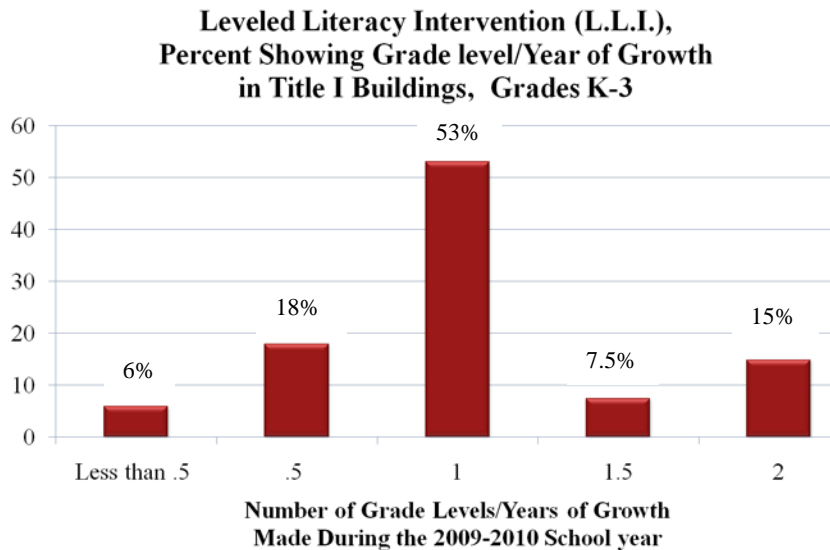**(Beginning Spring 2009 – grades 3-8)**

■ State Average   ■ HCCSC
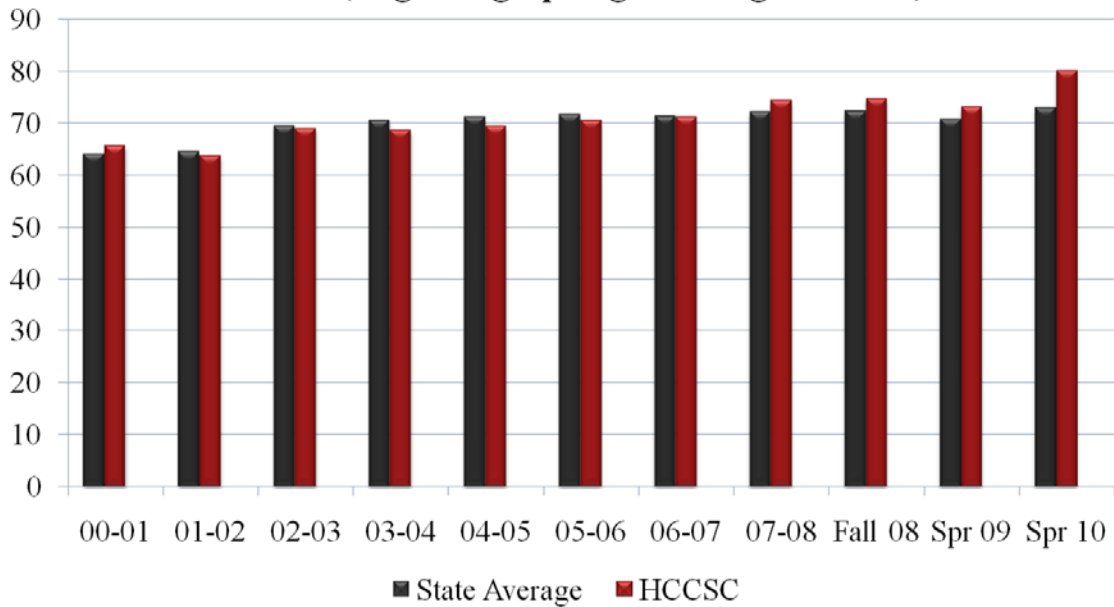
ISTEP+ Math, Percent Passing Grades 3-10
(Beginning Spring 2009 – Grades 3-8)

■ State Average   ■ HCCSC
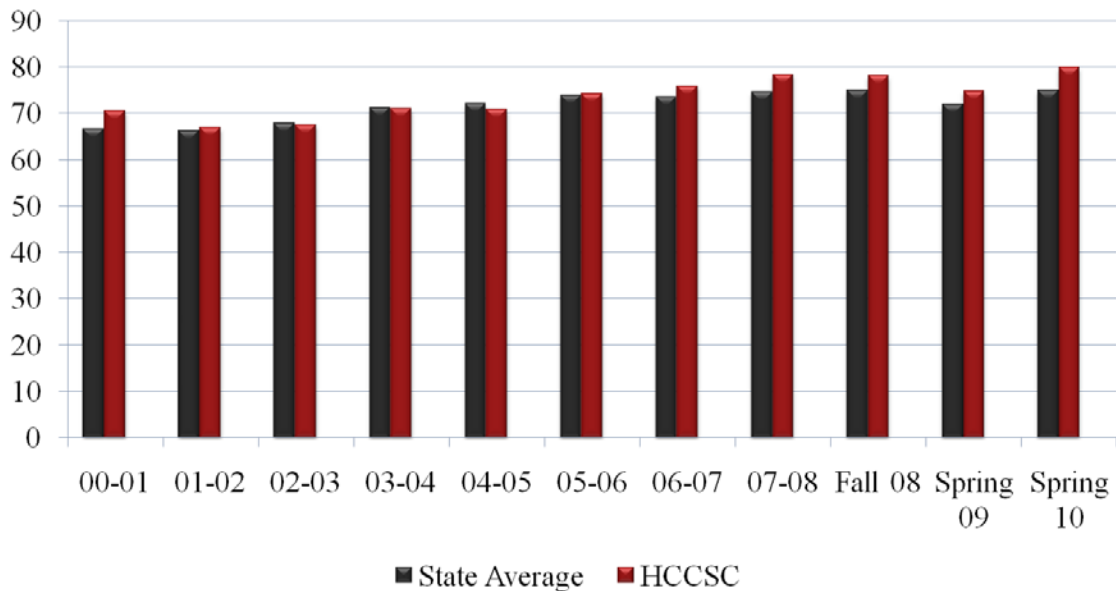
2. HCCSC has one large comprehensive high school, Huntington North High School (HNHS). HNHS has dramatically increased its graduation rate over the past few years by using data to identify and focus on the students most at risk for dropping out of high school. By focusing on this data and implementing best practice strategies in classrooms, a credit recovery program, and an alternative high school setting, HNHS has achieved positive results. The state of Indiana has not yet released its graduation rate for the 2009-2010 school-year. This data includes students with disabilities and English Language Learners.

Huntington North High School's Graduation Rate

Year	State	HCCSC
2006-2007		79.40%
2007-2008		84.20%
2008-2009		89.10%
2009-2010		88.7%

Legend: ■ State ■ HCCSC

3. By using the data to identify those students most in need of support and then implementing effective targeted interventions, like Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI), students are closing the achievement gap. The chart below shows that a majority of the student in LLI during the 2009-2010 school-year made 1, 1.5 or 2 years growth in one year.

Leveled Literacy Intervention (L.L.I.), Percent Showing Grade level/Year of Growth in Title I Buildings, Grades K-3

Number of Grade Levels/Years of Growth	Percent
Less than .5	6%
.5	18%
1	53%
1.5	7.5%
2	15%

Number of Grade Levels/Years of Growth Made During the 2009-2010 School year

4. The photo below shows an elementary principal conducting a data team meeting with his 3rd grade teachers in front of their Literacy Data Wall. The data shows what students are meeting grade level reading expectations based on the fall, winter, or spring assessments, and which students need further support. Through these discussions, the principal can determine if key strategies are being implemented with fidelity.