South Bend Empowerment Zone to reunite with South Bend Community School Corporation

The South Bend Empowerment Zone schools—Coquillard, Harrison, and Wilson Elementary, and Navarre Middle School—will be managed by the South Bend Community School Corporation as of July 17, 2024. Warren Elementary was also included in the Zone, before it closed in June 2024 as part of the Corporation’s master facilities plan. The Zone will close as of September 15, 2024.

In 2019, the IDOE partnered with SBCSC to create the South Bend Empowerment Zone to operate the five schools as a school turnaround intervention for a period of five years. During its time, the Zone implemented a number of new policies and programs, several of which the Corporation has adopted based on the Zone’s successes. These have included the use of iReady, high dosage tutoring programs, new data practices, and school culture and safety measures such as clear backpacks and the new code of conduct. Additional examples of Zone accomplishments include:

- Zone-wide ILEARN growth in SY 2022-2023 surpassed the state-wide average growth in Indiana
- Zone-wide iReady growth in SY 2023-20224 increased the number of students at grade level by 20 percentage points in Reading and by 16 percentage points in Math
- Ten percentage point increase in licensed teachers, in just nine months
- Weekly protected time for professional development
- Four annual signature events for students and community: the Black History Month Showcase, Hispanic Heritage Month, West Side Refresh, and Get Ready!
- Family Resource Centers at each Zone school

The Zone’s emphasis on data and a culture of continuous improvement creates opportunities to share best practices to support and improve teacher practice and improve student success across the city. One example is LessonLoop, which enables real-time feedback from students to help teachers adjust their instructional practices, and has demonstrated results in the classroom.

“I am tremendously proud of what our teachers, staff, and building leaders, together with the support of our Board of Directors have accomplished in service to our students and families,” said Zone Chief, Dr. Davion R. Lewis. “The student growth we have achieved would not have been possible without their dedication. I have always believed that the Zone schools should, at some point, be reintegrated to the School Corporation, and while had certainly hoped to continue the work of the Zone for another two years, given the current economic climate, I believe that the Zone and the Corporation are stronger together and we all want what is best for all students in the South Bend community.” He continued, “over the coming weeks, we will work with the School Corporation to ensure a seamless transition and I am confident that we will have a smooth start to the new school year.”

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