



## KEY FINDINGS

### School Corporation Size & Student Performance: Evidence From Indiana

#### School District Size

- This research clearly identifies statistically significant performance differences across school corporations that are directly attributable to size.
- In many counties with the smallest school corporations, the level of educational attainment is among the lowest in the state (even when factoring in socioeconomic differences).
- The percentage of high school students planning to enroll in college tends to increase with the size of the school corporation. High school graduates in larger school corporations are more likely to take AP exams, SAT/ACT college entrance exams and meet the SAT/ACT college readiness benchmarks.
- In 2014, 154 of Indiana's 289 school corporations had total enrollments of less than 2,000 students. Among school corporations with fewer than 1,000 students, 81% had enrollment decreases between 2006 and 2014. A detailed examination revealed 94% of Indiana's small corporations (fewer than 2,000 students) are contiguous with another small corporation.

#### Student Performance

- Because performance on college entrance examinations and high school science and mathematics performance are closely aligned with post-secondary success, attending small school corporations acts as a significant drag on the economic and career opportunities of students and the broader community.
- Average SAT and ACT scores are lowest for students attending the smallest school corporations and are highest for students attending school corporations with enrollment between 2,000 and 2,999 students.
- The percentage of students passing the 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade 2014 ISTEP exams is lowest in the small school corporations, indicating that school corporation size affects not only outcome indicators for high school students but also primary school students.
- Significant impacts on educational outcomes occur as school corporations approach an enrollment level of 2,000 students. For school corporations of this size, average SAT composite scores are 20 points higher. There is a 15 percentage point increase in

the number of AP students passing AP exams, a 4 percentage point increase in students passing the algebra and biology ECA, and a 5 percentage point increase in students passing the 8<sup>th</sup> grade ISTEP exam.

- The percentage of students passing AP exams is lowest in the small school corporations at 22.6%, and the passing rate increases to more than 50% in the largest school corporations.
- Across almost all our measures, and most importantly those that are most likely to be associated with post-secondary scores and opportunities (such as SAT and ACT test scores, honors diploma and AP pass rates), school corporation size matters. In particular, growing enrollment from the smallest corporation to roughly 2,000 students – is associated with significant gains across almost all our measured areas.

### Course Offerings/STEM Opportunities

- Larger school corporations may be able to employ specialized labor such as science, math and technology instructors and offer more specialized classes.
- The lower portion of students in small school corporations who pass the biology end of course assessments would suggest that students from these corporations may not have the same level of science preparation as students from large corporations, which may affect the choice of college major or other certification (and ultimately income opportunities).
- The average number of AP courses offered by small school corporations (enrollment below 1,000 students) is 2.69 AP courses. In contrast, school corporations with enrollment of 2,000 to 2,999 students had an average of almost six AP course offerings.
- Many of the STEM majors in college require calculus as a prerequisite for upper-level courses. Math skills are also a strong predictor of success in economic principles courses, which are gateway courses to all business degrees. The likelihood of offering a calculus course tends to increase with the size of the school corporation.
- Physics 1 is offered by 55% of the smallest school corporations. This increases to almost 83% of school corporations with enrollment between 2,000 and 2,999.

Ball State University Center for Business & Economic Research  
[www.bsu.edu/cber](http://www.bsu.edu/cber) and [www.cberdata.org](http://www.cberdata.org) | (765) 285-5926

Indiana Chamber of Commerce and Indiana Chamber of Commerce Foundation  
[www.indianachamber.com](http://www.indianachamber.com) | (317) 264-3110