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Rich Van Wyk/Eyewitness News

Indianapolis, Dec. 3 - Indianapolis Public School 39 is an inner city school where diversity, adversity and poverty are all high, and success is rampant.

Three out of four third graders passed ISTEP. Since teachers made drastic changes in the way they teach, test scores here have more than tripled.

"You just can't say, open your book to page 38, read the paragraph and answer the questions," says third grade teacher marshi Johnson. "You have to work along with it."

Five years ago IPS adopted the National Urban Alliance literacy initiative, spending millions of dollars training teachers to begin addressing the different needs of different students.

Some kindergarteners begin school knowing the alphabet and ready to begin reading. Some don't even know their colors or how to hold a crayon.

New classroom libraries encourage children to take books home for parents to read with them.

In the higher grades, "I lecture a lot less." But Mary Binnion talks more with students, meeting individual needs as they work on a common curriculum. "Lots of writing, which is what we focus on, comprehension and problems solving, and yes, I think it has changed IPS."

IPS third graders showed the biggest improvement, 54 percent passed ISTEP.

A significant improvement for sixth graders as well, 31 percent passing.

Eighth graders improved slightly to 26 percent passing.

There is no change in the number of tenth graders passing the Graduating Qualifying Exam.

Although IPS test scores are up, some significantly, they are likely still below the state averages. Statewide ISTEP scores are expected next week.



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