

Do local schools make the grade?

STUDY YOUR SCHOOL

Look for your school district's report as a special insert in the Daily Journal on Monday. For extra copies of the performance reports, visit your school administration office. For more information, you can go online to www.doe.state.in.us and clicking on the Accountability System for Academic Progress link.



By JO ELLEN WERKING WEEDMAN
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Most Johnson County schools are serving more students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch and more students who don't speak English. While the percentage of county students who are not proficient in English remains low, the number is growing. This demographic information, as well as test scores and attendance data, is available in the Annual Performance Reports schools are required to publish in the newspaper this month. Local school districts will publish reports in the Daily Journal on Monday to let the public know how their schools measure up in a wide

variety of categories, including funding, classroom size and test scores. Most readers will get only the report for the district they live in. A glance at a couple of charts will give parents an idea of how safe their schools are and how well high school students perform on college entrance exams such as the SAT and the ACT. The districts report corporation information as well as information on each school in the district from the past four years. The data are from the 2004-05 school year, except for ISTEP scores and enrollment, which reflect this fall's testing and enrollment. The purpose is to hold schools accountable to parents and taxpayers. While parents can compare their child's school to state averages on the report, making comparisons

with other districts requires using the Department of Education Web site. In addition to information about how many students passed ISTEP or average SAT scores, the reports also include a profile of each district. For example, the charts include demographic data such as what percentage of students are enrolled in special education or gifted and talented programs. Class sizes and the number of students receiving free or reduced-price lunches are also included. In Johnson County, every school district with the exception of Center Grove is serving more students who qualify for the free or reduced-price lunch program this year than it was last year. Four of the county's six school districts have more than 25 percent of their students qualify for free or reduced lunch. Edinburg has the highest

percentage at 46 percent, while Center Grove has the lowest at 10 percent. Most schools are also serving more students whose primary language is not English. About 2 percent of Greenwood and Edinburg students are considered not proficient in English, up from 1.7 percent the year before at Greenwood and .3 percent at Edinburg. Schools must also inform residents what percentage of students graduated, how many were suspended or expelled, how many graduated with a Core 40 or Academic Honors diploma and how much the average teacher in their district is paid. Most teachers in Johnson County start out making about \$30,000 a year, nearly \$3,000 more than the state average of minimum salaries. Clark-Pleasant has the highest

paid teachers at a range of \$33,408 to \$64,879. Reporting on the number of suspensions and expulsions at each school and how many were for drugs, weapons or alcohol gives parents an idea of how safe the county's schools are. In 1996, the General Assembly required the school performance reports be separate from the financial reports and include data for years past so readers can see whether the district is making gains in test scores. More complete reports and charts can be found at www.doe.state.in.us by clicking on the Accountability System for Academic Progress link. There the public can find more sophisticated charts that include data on how certain groups of students scored on tests. They can also compare their school or district with others in the state.

College kids to have say on city

Residents will hear how Greenwood could be designed

Daily Journal staff report

Greenwood residents will get a chance to learn what development and architecture students say about what types of homes and businesses should be where in the city. Ball State University students will present their proposal for a city comprehensive plan at 7 p.m. Monday in the Greenwood city building, 2 N. Madison Ave. The plan is a rough draft, but in its final form it will guide new housing, business and park requirements throughout the city. Greenwood's current plan is nearly 20 years old.

IF YOU GO

What: Greenwood city planners meeting
When: 7 p.m. Monday
Where: Greenwood city building, 2 N. Madison Ave.
Why: To discuss a rough draft for the city's new comprehensive plan, which sets guidelines for homes, businesses and parks across the city. Ball State University architecture and development students spent the fall semester working on the proposal.

Greenwood paid Ball State about \$30,000 for students' work during fall semester. Students drafted ideas for city developments after speaking with Greenwood residents and getting input through surveys. City planners will take the proposal and work with consultant HNTB Corp., which is being paid \$50,000 by the city, to finalize the comprehensive plan for city council approval early next year. The city will have more public meetings to get input from residents and businesses as the proposal is finalized.

COVER STORY: AVOIDING RED LIGHTS

Keeping traffic flowing

By adjusting lights' timing, drivers needn't stop as often

By ANNIE GOELLER
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The goal is to help reduce traffic congestion on the busy north side of Johnson County without adding more roads or lanes, saving money to the state and to taxpayers, said Will Wingfield, spokesman for the Indiana Department of Transportation. Changes are being made to traffic lights in suburban areas outside of Indianapolis, such as Greenwood and the Center Grove area. Traffic in those areas has increased along with the population. The state would like to get traffic under control so that problems don't get worse, he said. Stoplights along U.S. 31, near Greenwood Park Mall will be changed this year. But State Road 135 is a higher priority, and work will be done from mid-February through early March, he said. Motorists should see a difference in their daily drives, especially during rush hours, when commuters are headed to and from Indianapolis. The plan: better synchronization of lights so traffic moves in groups through intersections. Here's how it works: When the change is made, stoplights will communicate with each other when they switch to red and green. That communica-



The Indiana Department of Transportation is tackling the issue of too much traffic on roads near suburban areas, such as State Road 135, above, by synchronizing the lights so traffic moves more smoothly. STAFF PHOTO BY SCOTT ROBERSON/sroberson@thejournalnet.com

tion will set off a sequence of greens and reds intended to move as many cars through as possible. Before, the lights worked on sensors that tell the signal to change based on cars waiting at the intersection, he said. One Center Grove mom said

she'll believe the change works when she sees fewer traffic jams. Sara Reynolds refuses to drive on State Road 135 between 4 and 6 p.m. She hates the traffic and can't stand the constant stop and go. She said she doesn't see how changing

the pattern of traffic lights will make a difference when so many people use the road every day. Traffic will move through more quickly and cause fewer backups, but the update is no guarantee against traffic jams, Wingfield said.

More traffic on the roads, such as during rush hour or during the Christmas season at the mall, changes the pattern. When more drivers use side streets and need to cross over or turn onto the main routes, the lights will change to allow them to move through as well, stopping backups on side streets, he said. For example, if 30 percent of the traffic in an intersection along U.S. 31 is coming from a side street, then the light will stay green 30 percent of the time for those drivers, Wingfield said. But to really make the system work, he said, drivers need to do one thing: Drive at the speed limit. The pattern of the lights is intended to work at the posted speed limit. Motorists driving faster will end up at the traffic light faster than expected and miss the intended red-and-green cycle, he said. Timing of the lights also changes at different parts of the day, such as rush hour. The change does not mean motorists will never see a red light, but the goal is to reduce the number of reds. Motorists need to be patient, he said. Throughout the state, the goal is for the longest time a motorist to wait at a red light to be 2½ minutes. The time just seems longer when you're waiting there, he said.

Fifteen file for elective positions across county

By JASON MICHAEL WHITE
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A Center Grove area woman filed to face off against an incumbent serving on the council that controls the county's wallet. And a Franklin woman is running against the current county clerk, a woman she used to work for. Fifteen people filed this week for county offices on this year's election ballot. Most candidates are for Republican precinct committee positions.

But two races have emerged, one for the county clerk and one for a seat on the county council. The clerk organizes elections, and the council controls county finances for everything from salaries to road repairs. Anita Mae Knowles has filed for the Johnson County Council District 4 seat, currently held by Paul Reed, who has filed for reelection. Knowles is active in Center Grove area homeowner and resident groups. Her opponent was elected to the council four years

ago, after narrowly beating a nine-year incumbent for the seat. Christina White, a former employee of incumbent Jill Jackson, filed this week for the county clerk position. Voters will choose between White and her former boss during the May 2 primary election. The winner will advance to general election Nov. 7. People wishing to file have until noon Feb. 17 to do so at the county courthouse. Prominent positions on the ballot include the sheriff, county prosecutor and

state representatives. Other filings this week included: Keith Hardin for White River Township Precinct 27 committee member and White River Township delegate; Charles Canary for county council District 2; R. Kevin Service for Blue River Township Precinct 5 committee member, Blue River Township advisory board and Blue River Township delegate; Danny D. Richards for Franklin Precinct 9 committee member; R.J. McConnell for Hensley Precinct 1 committee member; Norma Deer

for Union Precinct 1 committee member and Union advisory board; Steve Hollenbeck for county council District 1; Russell Ferrill for Needham Precinct 2 committee member; Eric W. Fredbeck for Franklin Precinct 5 committee member; Rawdon Staley for Needham Precinct 3 committee member and Needham advisory board; John Ebert for White River Township precinct committee member; Jack M. Downs for Pleasant Precinct 16 committee member; and Richard Mason for county council District 3.

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