Doors to School

How educational opportunity changed for Hoosier students

IS.5.6 "Examine the educational opportunities available for all Hoosier students throughout history."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three laws or policies that expanded access to education, and circle two barriers that could keep students from receiving that education.

A Place in the Classroom

1 In 1816, Indiana's first constitution called for a system of schools, from local classrooms to a state university. It said education should be free and open to all, as soon as conditions allowed. That promise was easier to write than to keep. In many early settlements, families lived far from a school, and children were needed to work at home or on farms. A school might meet for only part of the year. Indiana's 1851 constitution required a statewide system of tuition-free common schools. Public funding made school possible for more children, but a place in the law did not always mean a place in a classroom.

2 For Black Hoosier children, legal access lagged behind the state's broad promises. An 1869 Indiana law provided for separate public schools for Black children, rather than equal access to the same classrooms as white children. Separate schools could mean longer travel or fewer resources. In 1949, Indiana passed a law to end segregation in public schools. Changing a law did not instantly erase differences in resources or the effects of where families lived. These shifts show why it matters to ask two questions about any era: Who could enroll, and what kind of education could they actually receive?

3 Access also changed for students with disabilities. A school for deaf students began in Indiana in 1843, and a school for blind students opened in 1847. These schools offered instruction when many local schools did not serve these children, but attending a specialized school could mean leaving home. A federal law passed in 1975 required public schools to provide a free appropriate education to eligible students with disabilities. That expanded the responsibility of neighborhood schools across Indiana. Over time, new laws and programs opened doors, yet distance, unequal resources, and the support available in each school still shaped students' choices.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Indiana's 1851 constitution build on the education goal in its 1816 constitution?

2. How did the opportunities available to Black Hoosier children under the 1869 law differ from those promised by the 1949 law?

3. How did the specialized schools of the 1840s and the federal law of 1975 offer different paths to education for students with disabilities?

4. Choose one barrier from the early settlements and one from a later period. How could each limit a student's opportunity even when a school was available?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you are advising a present-day Indiana school board. In 80 to 110 words, propose one specific way to make educational opportunity more equal, and use two different historical examples from the passage to explain why your proposal matters.

ANSWER KEY

Doors to School

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three laws or policies that expanded access to education, and circle two barriers that could keep students from receiving that education. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Indiana's 1851 constitution build on the education goal in its 1816 constitution?	**The 1816 constitution called for free, open education when conditions allowed. The 1851 constitution required a statewide system of tuition-free common schools.**
2	How did the opportunities available to Black Hoosier children under the 1869 law differ from those promised by the 1949 law?	**The 1869 law provided for separate public schools for Black children. The 1949 law sought to end segregation in public schools.**
3	How did the specialized schools of the 1840s and the federal law of 1975 offer different paths to education for students with disabilities?	**The specialized schools offered instruction that many local schools did not, but students might have to leave home. The 1975 law required public schools to provide eligible students with a free appropriate education.**
4	Choose one barrier from the early settlements and one from a later period. How could each limit a student's opportunity even when a school was available?	**For example, a child in an early settlement might live too far from school to attend regularly. Later, a Black child assigned to a separate school might face a longer trip or fewer resources.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would ask every Indiana district to publish a yearly school access report showing travel times, available courses, and services for students with disabilities. Indiana's 1851 constitution promised tuition-free schools, yet distance could still keep children from attending. In 1869, separate schools for Black children showed that a school seat did not guarantee an equal experience. A public report would help communities spot barriers that laws alone may not reveal. Districts could then decide where transportation, courses, or services need more support.

Accept other passage-supported comparisons that distinguish legal access from students' actual opportunities. For Part 3, look for one specific proposal supported by two distinct historical examples.