

Illinois & Indiana

PARCC Meets Politics

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KEY QUESTIONS & FINDINGS

How did different approaches to standards assessments lead to different outcomes in Illinois and Indiana?

Achievement outcomes between Illinois and Indiana were a result of different approaches to funding, intense politicization of the CCSS, and setbacks in implementation due to insufficient teacher and school leader preparation. In 2009, Illinois and Indiana felt renewed pressure to ensure their students were college and career ready, and eagerly joined the cause of supporting the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Due to its political climate, Indiana abruptly left the PARCC consortium, hastily created new college and career ready standards and assessments, and they rewrote their accountability system from the ground up. In contrast, Illinois's implementation of new programs aimed at supporting college and career readiness with funds provided by a RTTT grant afforded the state a unique opportunity to close achievement gaps in targeted districts. By 2017, both states seem to have returned to the status quo, despite the upheaval of Common Core. Although each state took a different route to college and career readiness, ultimately, their students are faring only slightly better now than they were in 2009.

ACCOUNTABILITY REFORM IN ILLINOIS & INDIANA

All in for Common Core in Illinois

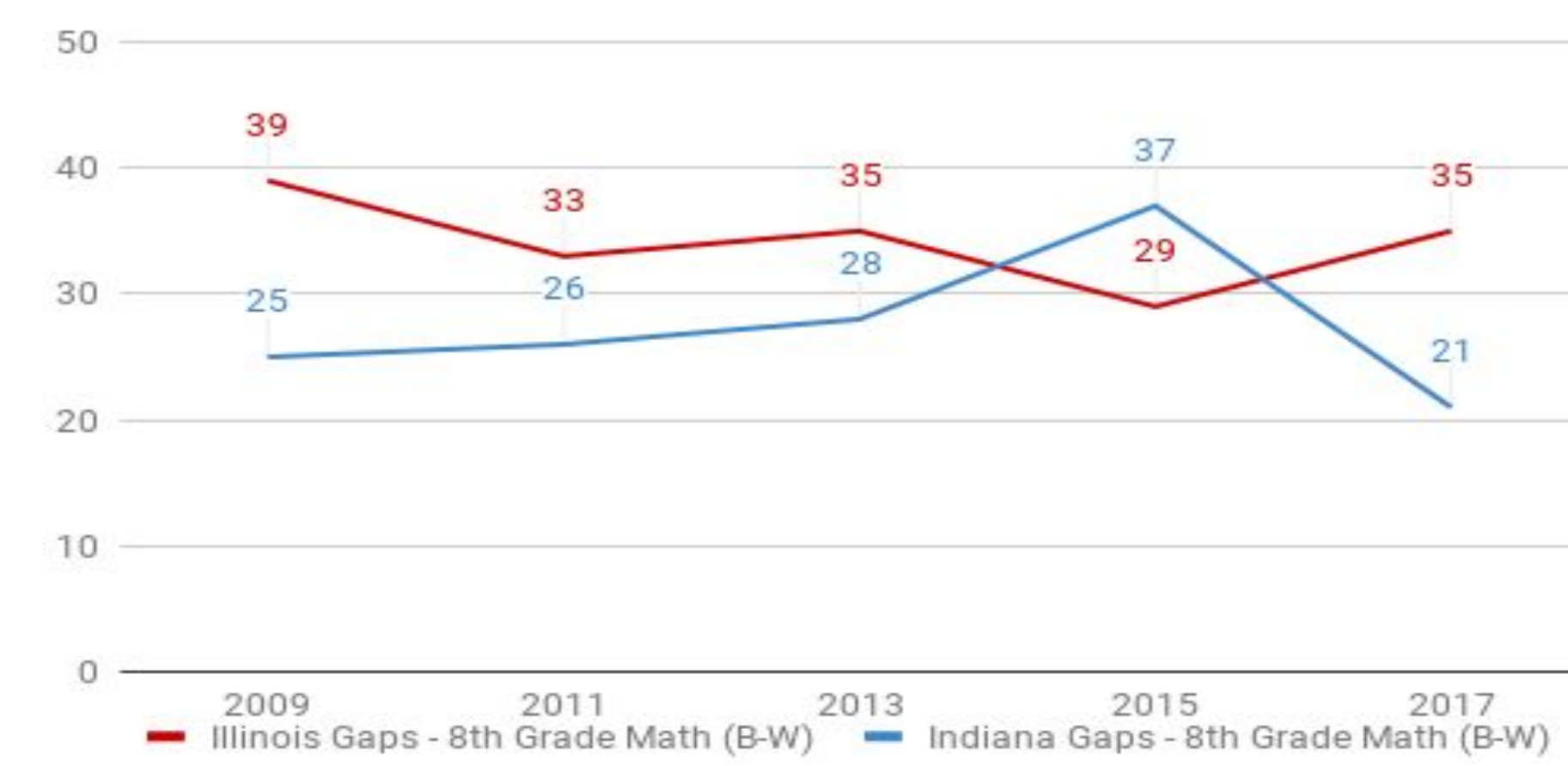
In 2011, Illinois joined the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers Consortium (PARCC) (ISBE, 2018). As part of Phase 3 of Race To The Top (RTTT), Illinois received \$42.8 million in federal funds to support specific programs, many of which supported the adoption and implementation of college and career readiness standards - the CCSS (ISBE, 2018). RTTT allowed Illinois to both expand its charter school system and develop and enact a new teacher evaluation system through the Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA). Race to the Top, the Obama era grant for education reform, allowed Illinois to develop and implement policies and programs to increase CCR for all students and transition CCSS. Based on the states' assessment results, it seems that the state did not use high-quality, evidence-based policies, strategies, and programs to achieve adequate progress towards its' goal.

Common Core and Controversy in Indiana

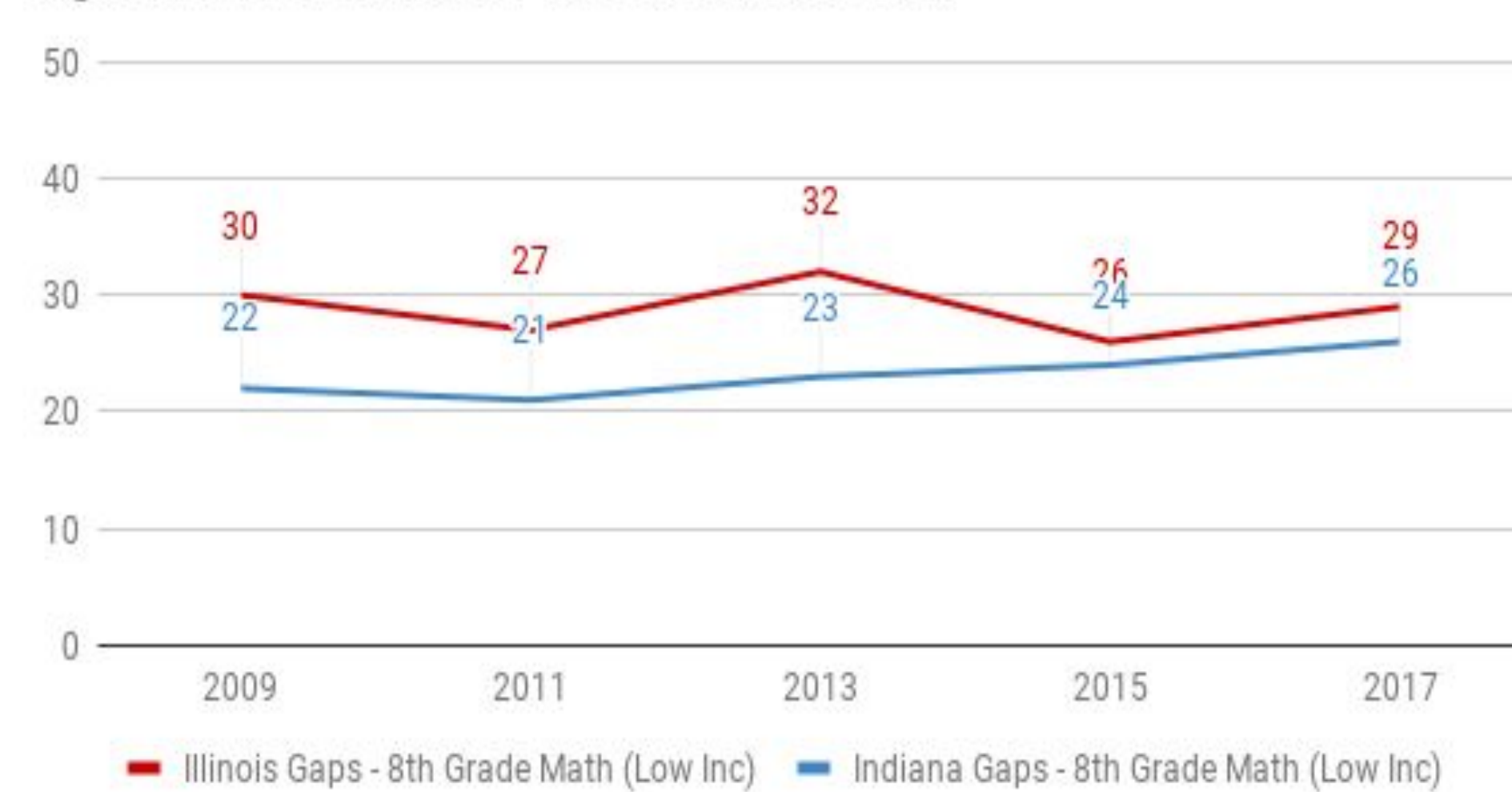
By joining the PARCC consortium, Indiana agreed to formally adopt the CCSS. Although states in the consortia were required to administer the PARCC assessments, Indiana never administered the exam. Political controversy over the CCSS name drove the state to leave the PARCC consortium. Republicans were in control since 2011, after the CCSS had been adopted by the state board of education. Indiana announced its exit from the PARCC consortium in the spring of 2014, just before the first year where the PARCC assessments would be released. Indiana remarkably wrote new college and career ready state academic standards, the Indiana Academic Standards (IAS), and a new state test, a revised version of the ISTEP+, implemented them during the 2014-2015 school year.

SHIFTING STANDARDS, SHIFTING GAPS

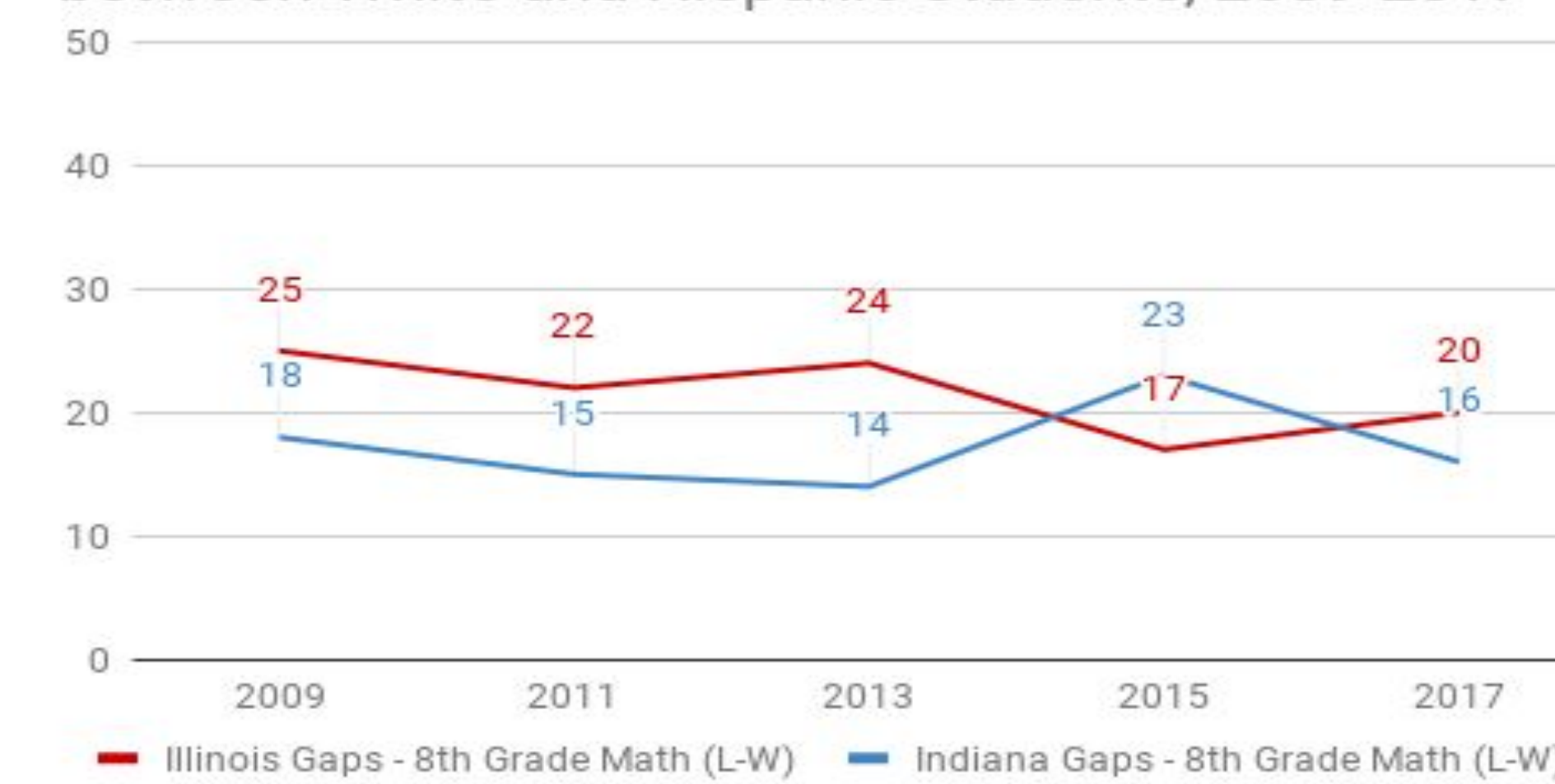
Gaps in NAEP 8th Grade Math Achievement between White and Black Students, 2009-2017



Gaps in NAEP 8th Grade Math Achievement between students Eligible and Not Eligible for Free/Reduced Price Lunch, 2009-2017



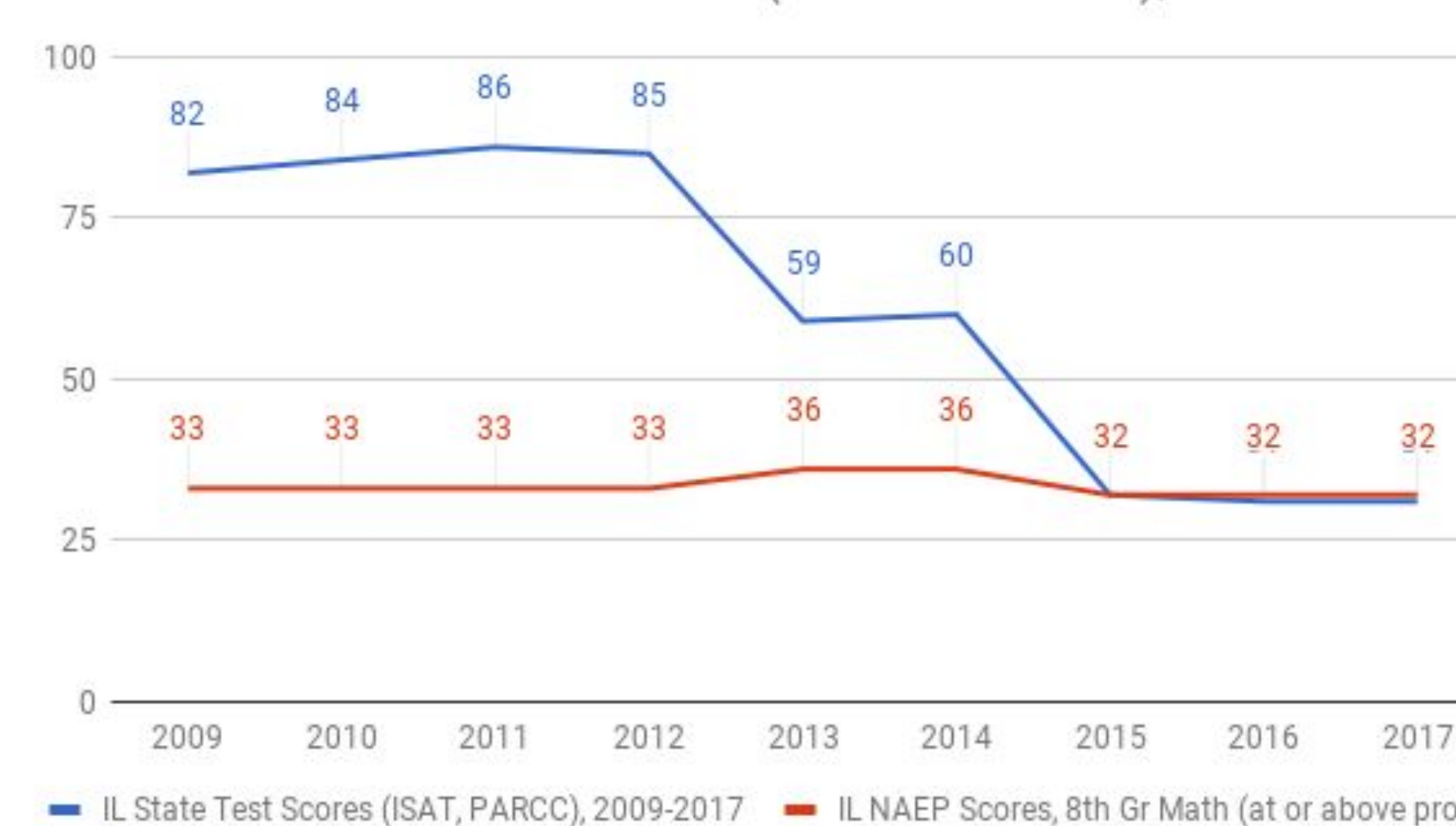
Gaps in NAEP 8th Grade Math Achievement between White and Hispanic Students, 2009-2017



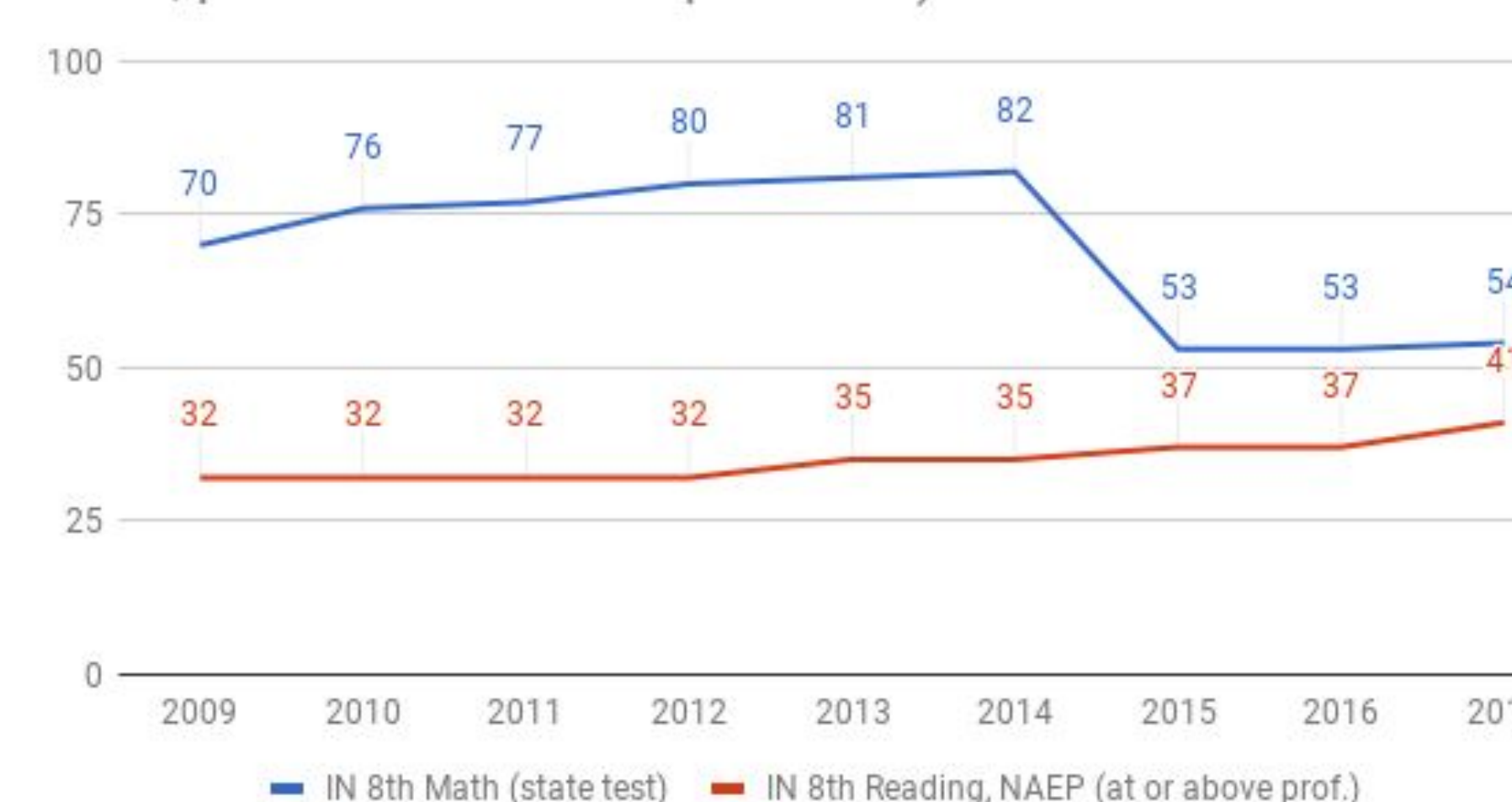
Between 2009 and 2010, Indiana and Illinois consistently scored between 32% and 39% of students at or above proficient overall, on NAEP. However, that picture looks quite different when broken out by subgroup. In fact, 2015 was the only year in which Illinois's gaps between subgroups were smaller than those of Indiana.

In 2015, both states saw a precipitous drop in student achievement on proficiency on state tests. This was the first year for the PARCC in Illinois and the first year for the college and career readiness assessment, the revised ISTEP+, in Indiana. However, student achievement on NAEP improved insignificantly for Indiana, while in Illinois, a slight improvement on NAEP was seen between 2012 and 2015.

IL NAEP and State Test Scores (8th Grade Math), 2009-2017



NAEP versus State Test (ISTEP+) Scores (Indiana 8th Grade Math, percent at or above proficient)



FEDERAL POLICY INFLUENCE IN ILLINOIS

Race to the Top, the Obama era grant for education reform, allowed Illinois to develop and implement policies and programs to increase CCR for all students and transition CCSS. Based on the states' assessment results, it seems that the state did not use high-quality, evidence-based policies, strategies, and programs to achieve adequate progress towards its' goal.

POLITICAL CONTEXT OF INDIANA

Indiana politics drove the state to leave the PARCC Consortium. Republicans were in control since 2011, after the CCSS had been adopted by the state board of education. They predicted that rewriting standards and piloting, field testing, and administering a new assessment to match were costly initiatives. Repealing the standards was arguably a political stunt and resulted in no real change since Indiana's new standards continue to be based on common core. So, the problem was also not with the content or the mission of the standards but with the CCSS name.

SCHOOL FUNDING IN ILLINOIS AND INDIANA

Although both states receive about equal funding from the federal government (about 10%), over 60% of Indiana's educational revenue comes from the state, whereas only 35% of Illinois's funding comes from the state. Because so much of Illinois's funding comes from local sources, there is great disparities across districts within the state, with some of the worst funding gaps in the country (Education Trust, 2015). In Indiana, the highest poverty districts receive about 12% more state and local funds per pupil than the lowest poverty districts; in Illinois, the highest poverty districts, like Chicago Public Schools, receive 19% less state and local funding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Reflect, evaluate, and review standards-aligned curriculum, instruction, and professional development. When switching to new standards, states must ensure that teachers and school leaders are well-equipped to make the shift successful for their students, for the sake of their own evaluation and ideally students' learning.

Commit to the development of equitable funding formulas. A funding structure similar to that of Indiana, where the majority of funding comes from the state government, may prove beneficial in closing achievement gaps between students. In Illinois, additional inputs are needed to support the academic outcomes of traditionally underperforming groups.

Use Evidence-Based Education Reform Policies: Both states' missions show a commitment to implementing the most effective policies to ensure student success. With the flexibility provided by ESSA, states can track effective practices and adjust them to fit the needs of its student population--the same can be done at the district level.

