

Without a parent/s present, IPS tries to get inside the heads and hearts of students in order to engineer their consent and compliance for the district's Reinventing High Schools plan: A commentary by John Harris Loflin

It has been revealed to me by a local community activist that our IPS had private discussions (the public was not invited) with the 9th & 10th graders (only) at each high school--except for Manual and Howe.

Called *Indianapolis Public Schools Student and Staff Engagement Meetings*, our IPS has published a *Summary* of the district-led 9 day, 16 meeting, engagement "tour" to get students' buy in for the IPS Reinventing High Schools* plan plot. See the detailed 50 page summary of the meetings: www.myips.org/cms/lib/IN01906626/Centricity/Domain/11259/student%20and%20staff%20engagement%20summary.pdf

Members of the IPS Core Leadership Team and Public Relations Department held meetings with the students and staff. The district partnered with Radio One Indianapolis' Hot 96.3 on-air personalities, B-Swift/Dani-D (for students) and Tony Lamont/Jerry Wade WTLC-FM (for staff). See "Student Sessions with B Swift" at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h5C4C3BZB10>. Question: was any of our taxpayer money used to pay Radio One Indianapolis' Hot 96.3/WTLC-FM?

This very personal matter and conversations were done without the presence of parent(s), a responsible family member or relative, or guardian(s). Question: were parents even informed /asked to OK these mass "counseling" sessions?

I am a retired IPS middle school and high school teacher who worked with teens and pre-teens in and out of the classroom. As a community elder, I currently mentor youth. It is from these decades of experiences that I am of the opinion IPS used the Hot 96.3 DJs, with whom the students identify/look up to, in order to gain the trust and eventual compliance of the students. As is revealed in the report, very personal issues around loss of peer friendships and teacher/adult-student relationships, anxiety over new school allegiances/alliances, or the potential of a student's dream of attending a certain high school being trashed...all very personal concerns for these 13-15 year olds—**again without their parent/s being present.**

I submit for debate that IPS knew the students were vulnerable and susceptible to emotional harm around this personal issue. Even so, the need of IPS to push their agenda was a higher priority than the psycho-social needs of students whose life was already naturally unsteady due puberty, let alone the challenges of high school and an oncoming adulthood. Regardless, IPS pushed forward with the student sessions; the board knew *that if they could not* get student "buy in," the concept *would not work*. Thus, they had to get in ahead of the game; and, what password got them in the door?: "Yo! y'all: Itz Hot 96...n nuh (school) house!!"***

From my perspective, IPS knew they needed to get inside the heads and hearts of students in order to engineer their consent and compliance to IPS's top-down plot. They knew the 13-15 year-olds were susceptible teens who would be impressed by the imposing authority figure of the school system itself. This domination was reinforced by acquiesced teachers...and especially via the school principal and school police who gave the students a metaphorical "nod" that this was all OK.

Picking a high school is a once in a life time decision. We all know this was the time in our journey when we began to search for the meaning of life. Again, a very personal time when we realized we would die someday, and so we began to seek answers to some very important personal questions. Consequently, we all know now how high school life in-general, and our experiences at a specific high school/s, helped mold our adolescent identity and consequently our adult identity.

We also know the decades of school rivalry among IPS high schools/between IPS and township schools born out of school history and spirit mixing with academic/athletic competition. Hey, I graduated from IPS Harry E. Wood HS in 1961, and 56 years later I still proudly say: Go Woodchucks!

To rationalize the school closing idea, IPS tried to head off and soothe any possible push back from students who would experience the eventual loss of the high school traditions of their families, friends, and community, destroying/diluting the significance of the legacy and decades of high school customs, culture and heritage...again, all without the board's final vote; yet, with the implication to students that this was all a done deal—*which it is not.*

Our intuition can tell us that the answers to student questions at these meetings received one-sided/pro-IPS answers. We know too that IPS did not model for students critical thinking skills by providing students with a counter-narrative or opportunity for debate. In fact, we see in the *Summary* that IPS had student panels at each school made of 4 peers, perhaps to explain things and make the inevitable more palatable to the student body. We also see that IPS used the 3x5 card scheme to get students' questions/comments, but then controlled which question or response was "appropriate." No open mic here!

From my standpoint, the major purpose of the sessions was about **talking students into not leaving** the district; and, who knows what indoctrination took place to try and accomplish that by manipulating the vulnerable psyche of a 13/14 yr old child whose teen brain lacks the problem solving, and decision making skills*** demanded of this level of life-changing choices. To iterate: this was a possible manipulation and done without the presence a child's parent/s or guardian/s.

We see by the questions/discussions in the *Summary*, IPS tried to smooth over any existential issues of possible intimidation/bullying, general daily fear and anxiety, and possible aggression/violence. At worst, IPS tried to counter the alienation youth might have which resulted from a sense the students got that they were "played." They were assembled and their input was sought, but they knew the real deal: they were helpless to affect this new IPS plan. I believe students left the meetings with a feeling of dread resulting from a sense of powerlessness—a disaffection that they have experienced before, that they knew would infect the schools and classrooms, spilling over in the neighborhoods enabling apathy and its tragic outcome: violence.

Finally, when we unpack the Reinventing High Schools concept and ask "who benefits?" we see the attempt to get students on board was not about students at all. It was about alleviating the fears of the board and consequently the power elite whom they serve. All we have to do is look to see from whom they accepted campaign donations <http://www.marioncountyelectionboard.org/cfa/Offices/schbd-msdips.html>.

I believe the IPS board actually knew that if they could get the students to support the plan, it would calm any fears of the local white establishment--the county's 1% who hold most of central Indiana's wealth and power. Remember too, that Reinventing High Schools is about the continuing "reinventing"/gentrification of Indy: Our IPS board has lots of folks to keep happy: 1) real estate brokers, developers, and banking/financial opportunists (Martin, 2014); 2) national/local charter school matrix players--including national-class hedge fund investors (martin, 2014); 3) the governor, certain statehouse legislators and city-county councilors; 4) the growing national Mind Trust cartel/Stand for Children's 501c4 "dark money" operation (Brown, 2014; Martin, 2014)/Marian Universality's teacher and school leader academy hustle ; and, 5) the many others who will benefit politically/financially from the selling of our high schools.

Finally, through my lens, getting students on board acts as a salve for the conscience of board members who know it is just wrong to close/sell off our schools when they know the better solution is to keep the high schools open as high schools, and leave it up to the school's community and alumni to make it work.

- See IPS's "Opportunity Culture" sales pitch <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xR2oj9vBnNI>
- Also review the entire initiative <https://www.myips.org/reinventinghighschools>

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* Where are the years of research supporting this form on reinventing/establishing high schools via conglomerating all current choice and magnet programs, as well as expanded programming—including career-themed academies and innovation network high schools? The irony may be in this latest news that there is scant interest in skilled labor by youth: "Only 3% of middle/high school students expressed an interest in skilled trades." twitter.com/USATODAY/status/883069356820885508

**What a tragedy for the supporters of the authentic, conscious, non-commercialized hip hop of KRS-ONE and Public Enemy, and today's J. Cole and Kendrick Lamar, Hot 96 DJs used hip hop culture to mislead youth.

*** Pictures of the brain in action show that adolescents' brains work differently than adults when they make decisions or solve problems. Their actions are guided more by the emotional and reactive amygdala and less by the thoughtful, logical frontal cortex.
www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/teenbrain/interviews/nelson.html

References

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- Martin, D. (2014). *Hoosier School Heist How Corporations & Theocrats Stole Democracy from Public Education*. Indianapolis, IN: Brooks Publishing. Here's link to the 1st chapter. <http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Hoosier-School-Heist-How-Corporations-and-Theocrats-Stole-Democracy-From-Public-Education.pdf>