

A REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF THE WEBSITES OF THE SCHOOLS OF INDIANAPOLIS MAYOR JOE HOGSETT’S OFFICE OF EDUCATION INNOVATION

Mayor sponsored charter schools started in Indianapolis in 2000 with the opening of the Irvington Community School. Today, families have 35 schools to choose from. With the choice scenario come questions and even the need for independent oversight of charters by community stakeholder groups.

A major concern of this report is the type of information provided on the individual websites of charters. Compared to the level of district websites like www.myIPS.org, are local charter school sites of a high enough quality to make citizens and families well-informed?

Public oversight of the boards of these public schools is necessary because the boards of Mayor Hogsett’s charter schools are not elected, yet they spend public tax dollars.

Having public trust among the citizens and their elected representatives is vital to the kind of open and responsible democracy America portrays to the world.

John Harris Loflin

Parent Power

Indianapolis Affiliate of Parents Across America

Education-Community Action Team

August 13, 2018

Introduction

Below is a chart of the status of websites of Mayor Joe Hogsett's Office of Education Innovation according to the 4 questions listed below.

Public concerns and scrutiny has risen as the number of schools under the control of the Office of Education Innovation expanded. Much of the concern centers on the boards of these schools and the number of the public who attend board meetings. Of equal concern is the lack of easily accessible website information about the board, its members and activities--especially meeting minutes--and the school's financial records (i.e., budgets, payroll, profit/loss statements, IRS 1099 Form) so citizens know how their taxes are being spent.

We hope this analysis will lead to a public conversation on the level of expectations we voters and taxpayers have of our mayor and the conversations we want regarding the characteristics of a high quality Office of Education Innovation. One example is the office's availability and relative caliber of their Annual Performance Reports and additional Independent Auditors' Reports.

Summary

This review and analysis cover 42 of Mayor Hogsett's Office of Education Innovation (OEI) charter schools. Due to the ambiguous history who has authority over "Turnaround" schools such as Arlington, Emma Donnan, Howe, and Manual, this report did not cover those schools.

Statistically

- 38% (16/42) of the OEI charters did not have information on the date, time, place of board meetings on the charter's website
- 81% (34/42) had the names of charter's Board of Directors listed on the website
- Only Herron and Riverside high schools did not list the members of their boards on their sites
- 72% (30/42) had no minutes of board meeting available on their website
- Of the charters that did have minutes on the website, 21% only published some
- Since, in many cases charters did not publish their minutes, in those cases (72%) we "Don't Know" who of the public, especially parents and other stakeholders, attended the meeting.

List of Questions

1. **Is information on the date, time, and place of board meetings on the website? *Yes/Some/No***
2. **Are names of Board of Directors easy, somewhat hard to find, hard to find, or is it missing? *Easy/Somewhat/Hard/Missing***
3. **Are the minutes of past meetings available? *Yes/Some/No/Don't Know***
4. **Are names of non-board members who attended board meeting listed *Yes/No/ Don't Know***

A review of Office of Education Innovation school websites				
	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4
A. J. Brown	Yes	Easy	Yes	Yes
Avon/Mead Academy	Yes	Easy	No	Don't Know
Avon/Mead M. S.	Yes	Easy	No	Don't Know
Christel Acad. South	No	Easy	No	Don't Know
Christel Acad. West	No	Easy	No	Don't Know
Christel DORS West	No	Easy	No	Don't Know
Christel DORS So	No	Easy	No	Don't Know
DAMAR	Yes	Easy	Yes	No
	1		3	4
ENLACE	No	Some-what	No	Don't Know
EXCEL Avondale Meadows	Yes	Easy	No	Don't Know
EXCEL Franklin Rd	Yes	Easy	No	Don't Know
EXCEL Laf Sq	Yes	Easy	No	Don't Know
EXCEL Michigan St	Yes	Easy	No	Don't Know
EXCEL University Heights	Yes	Easy	No	Don't Know
	1		3	4
Global Prep	Yes	Easy	Some	Yes
Herron H. S.	No	Missing	No	Don't Know
Hope Academy	No	Easy	Yes	Yes
Ignite Achievement Academy	Yes	Easy	No	Don't Know

Indiana College Prep	Yes	Easy	No	Don't Know
Lighthouse	Yes	Hard	Some	Yes
Lighthouse East	Yes	Hard	Some	Yes
	1		3	4
Lighthouse South	Yes	Hard	Some	Yes
Indiana Math/Sci North	Yes	Easy	No	Don't Know
Indiana Math/Sci West	Yes	Easy	No	Don't Know
Indy MET	Yes	Easy	No	Don't Know
Irvington Elementary	Yes	Easy	Some	Yes
Irvington M. S.	Yes	Easy	Some	Yes
Irvington Prep H.S.	Yes	Yes	Some	Yes
Kindezi	No	Some-what	No	Don't Know
	1		3	4
KIPP Elementary	Yes	Easy	No	Don't Know
KIPP College Preparatory	Yes	Easy	No	Don't Know
Marion Academy	No	Easy	No	Don't Know
Paramount	Yes	Some-what	Some	Yes
Purdue Poly-tech H.S	Yes	Easy	Some	Yes
Riverside H. S.	No	Missing	No	Don't Know
	1		3	4
Tindley College Acad	No	Yes	No	Don't Know
Tindley Genesis	No	Yes	No	Don't Know
Tindley H. S.	No	Yes	No	Don't Know

Tindley Prep	No	Yes	No	Don't Know
Tindley Renaissance	No	Yes	No	Don't Know
Tindley Summit	No	Yes	No	Don't Know
Visions Acad at Riverside	Yes	Easy	No	Don't Know
	1		3	4
Turnaround Schools				
Arlington H. S.	Missing	Don't Know	Don't know	Don't Know
Emma Donnan	Missing	Don't Know	Don't know	Don't know
Howe H.S.	Missing	Don't Know	Don't know	Don't know
Manual H. S.	Missing	Don't know	Don't know	Don't know

List of Questions

1. Is information on the date, time, and place of board meetings on the website? *Yes/Some/No*
2. Are names of Board of Directors easy, or hard to find, or missing? *Yes/Somewhat/Hard/Missing*
4. Are the minutes of past meetings available? *Yes/Some/No*
5. Are names of non-board members who attended board meeting listed? *Yes/No/ Don't Know*

Minutes describe (i.e., title, role, identity) non-board members such as: school committee member, school employee, community member, parent, student, the school's EMO#/CMO# representative.

* Minutes lists but do not describe non-board members

Definition of terms

- *Date*: date website was reviewed
- *Easy*: quick, obvious
- *Some*: at least one
- *Somewhat*: found under another category
- *Hard*: not obvious, you have to really hunt, info located in some indirect section such as a school handbook
- *Missing*: information missing
- *Don't Know*: don't know since minutes are not available
- *Not Clear*: more specific information on where a board member lives is needed

A closer look at the 4 questions

Question 1 Is information on the date, time, and place of board meetings on the website?

Yes/Some/No

It is not clear whether or not information/notices of the date, time and place of board meetings are required to be found on a charter's website. Nevertheless, in many instances during this study's review, information about future board meetings could not be found on a school's site. A review of the Open Door Law at <http://oei.indy.gov/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/IDOL.pdf> shows the vagueness of this issue:

IC 5-14-1.5-5 Public notice of meetings

Sec. 5. (a) Public notice of the date, time, and place of any meetings, executive sessions, or of any rescheduled or reconvened meeting, shall be given at least forty-eight (48) hours (excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays) before the meeting.

(B) Publishing the notice on the public agency's Internet web site at least forty-eight (48) hours in advance of the meeting, if the public agency has an Internet web site.

Part (c) of Section 5 of IC 5-14-1.5-5 Public notice of meetings states, "Notice of regular meetings need be given only once each year, except that an additional notice shall be given where the date, time, or place of a regular meeting or meetings is changed. This subsection does not apply to executive sessions."

(b) Public notice shall be given by the governing body of a public agency as follows: (1) The governing body of a public agency shall give public notice by posting a copy of the notice at the principal office of the public agency holding the meeting or, if no such office exists, at the building where the meeting is to be held.

Question 2 Are names of Board of Directors easy, or hard to find, or is it missing?

Yes/Somewhat/Hard/Missing

Under Title 20 24-9-7 (http://iga.in.gov/static-documents/2/5/d/5/25d52c75/TITLE20_AR24_ar24.pdf) if a charter has a website, it must publish the name of board members.

Internet publication of names of governing body members Sec. 7. If an organizer of a charter school maintains an Internet web site for a charter school, the organizer of the charter school shall publish the names of the members of the charter school's governing body on the charter school's Internet web site.

What if a charter does not post the names of board? Currently, there is no express punishment for failing to post the names. Nonetheless, it will be considered as non-compliance with state statutes as part of the authorizer's accountability system and will be considered in decisions making by the authorizer.

Concerned citizens must bring this up to the Indiana Department Of Education/Title XX, the Indiana Charter School Board, and the Indianapolis Charter School Board.

Question 3 Are the minutes of past meetings available? Yes/Some/No

According to IC 5-14-1.5-4 Posting agenda; memoranda of meetings; public inspection of minutes Sec. 4. (c) The memoranda are to be available within a reasonable period of time after the meeting for the purpose of informing the public of the governing body's proceedings. The minutes, if any, are to be open for public inspection and copying.

<http://oei.indy.gov/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/IDOL.pdf>

The issue here is not that the board memoranda/minutes are public record, but the level of availability of the memoranda/minutes. Evidently, if a citizen is to inspect the memoranda/minutes, they have to go to the school to read or get copies. What if a parent/voter/taxpayer does not have the transportation or they are blind, how are they to inspect? What if someone can't afford to pay for the copies?

With this analysis suggests is that charters and the agendas/memoranda/minutes available and easy to find in a variety of forms on the website. For example, the school would have the place on the site where the blind parent/voter/taxpayer who have the information read to them.

Question 4 Are names of non-board members who attended board meeting listed Yes/No/Don't Know

In all cases of this research where the board minutes were found on a school's website, the names of non-board members who attended were listed.

Please understand that one of the major reasons why this analysis of charter school websites is being conducted is because of concerns by the public that:

- few, if any, citizens attend board meetings other than a school's employees, OEI officials, or EMO/CMO representatives;
- charter boards have become use to and are OK with this disinterest because they benefit from this lack of scrutiny by the public; and,
- charters may be enabling the low turnout by not having their website contain easy to find information on when and where board meetings will take place, the planned meeting's agenda, and links to past board meeting minutes.

Inasmuch as the public cannot necessarily attend every charter school board meeting, there has to be a way for citizens to know who is attending the meetings) and what went on at these meetings school policy, procedures, curriculum, etc. where their taxes are spent.

We don't want to see what happened in New Orleans happen in Indianapolis

- <https://thelensnola.org/2010/10/07/charter-school-transparency/>
- <https://thelensnola.org/2016/08/19/most-charter-schools-unaware-or-noncompliant-with-transparency-law/>

It is suggested the controversy over who attends charter school board meetings can be settled if the Indianapolis Charter School Board and the Mayor Hogsett/OEI collect the data on who of the public has attended each charter's board meetings over the last 10 years. Once published, the data must be constantly updated to ensure public trust.

List of OEI charters and link to websites

- Andrew J. Brown Academy
<https://www.nhaschools.com/schools/Andrew-J-Brown-Academy/en>
- Avondale Meadows Academy
www.avondalemeadowsacademy.com
- Avondale Meadows Middle School
<http://avondalemeadowsms.org/>
- Charles A. Tindley Accelerated School
<https://www.tindley.org/our-schools/charles-a-tindley-accelerated-school/>
- Christel House schools/programs
<http://www.chacademy.org/>
Christel House Academy – West
Christel House DORS – South
Christel House DORS – West
- Damar Charter Academy
<http://damarcharteracademy.org/>
- Enlace Academy
<http://oei.indy.gov/enlace-academy-2/>
<http://www.enlaceacademy.org/>
- Excel Centers
<https://excelcenter.org/>
Excel Center – Avondale Meadows
Excel Center – Franklin Road
Excel Center – Lafayette Square
Excel Center – Michigan Street
Excel Center – University Heights
- Global Preparatory Academy
<https://globalprepindy.org/>
- Herron High School
<https://www.herronhighschool.org/>
- Hope Academy
<https://www.fairbanksd.org/about-us/our-facilities/hope-academy/>
- Ignite Achievement Academy
<http://www.igniteindy.org/>
- Indiana College Preparatory School

- <http://www.icanschools.org/indiana-college-preparatory-school>
- Indianapolis Lighthouse Charter Schools
 - <http://www.lighthouse-academies.org/schools/indianapolis/>
 - Indianapolis Lighthouse Charter School—South
 - Indianapolis Lighthouse Charter School – East
 - Indiana Math and Science Academies
 - <http://west.imsaindy.org/>
 - Indiana Math and Science Academy – North
 - Indiana Math and Science Academy – West
 - Indianapolis Metropolitan High School
 - <https://indianapolismet.org/>
 - Irvington Schools
 - <http://www.ics-charter.org/irvington-community-elementary-school/academics-ices/ices-high-ability-program/>
 - Irvington Community Elementary School
 - Irvington Community Middle School
 - Irvington Preparatory Academy
 - Kindezi Academy
 - <http://www.kindeziacademy.org/>
 - KIPP Schools
 - <http://kippindy.org/>
 - KIPP Indianapolis College Preparatory
 - KIPP Indy Unite Elementary
 - Marion Academy
 - <https://www.marionacademyin.org/>
 - Paramount School of Excellence
 - <https://paramountindy.org/>
 - Purdue Polytechnic High School
 - <https://pphs.purdue.edu/>
 - Riverside High School
 - <https://www.riversidehighschool.org/>
 - Southeast Neighborhood School of Excellence (SENSE)
 - <https://www.senseindy.org/>
 - Tindley Schools
 - <https://www.tindley.org/>
 - Tindley Collegiate Academy
 - Tindley Genesis Academy
 - Tindley Preparatory Academy
 - Tindley Renaissance Academy
 - Tindley Summit Academy
 - Vision Academy @ Riverside
 - <http://visionacademy-riverside.org/>

- Charter Schools USA
<http://www.charterschoolsusa.com/indiana-2/>
- Emmerich Manual High School
<http://emmerichmanualhs.org>
- Emma Donnan Middle School
<https://www.emmadonnan.org/>
- Thomas Carr Howe High School
<https://www.tchowehighschool.org/>
- Arlington Community High School
<http://www.arlingtonknights.org/>