

# ***Misleading parents in order to privatize our IPS***

**A report with analysis and commentary regarding**

## **Parent Perspectives: A Community Conversation**

**The Mind Trust/EmpowerEd Families**

**December 12, 2023**

**Indianapolis Marion County Downtown Public Library**

*Summary* Parent voice is vital. Parents/guardians wear several hats: parent/guardian, taxpayer, and voter/elector. So, parents can't forget that since 2014 the Mind Trust (MT)/Stand for Children (SfC) have been strategically organizing them. For example, SfC strategically brought in none other than global R&B star John Legend to gaslight IPS parents: "Hey if John Legend says it's OK, it must be good!" This December 12th MT/SfC had one of its most serious parent organizing gatherings. Organizers even planned to have Indy's top African American radio station (WTLC) Radio One's Karen Vaughn to moderate. Note, MT got lot\$ of ca\$h (\$525M) from Eli Lilly to help SfC organize EmpowerEd Families (EEF) which in turn organized parents. See [2022 Eli Lilly give \\$525,000 to advance the work of two parent-organizing nonprofits](#). Note too, regardless of what MT/SfC may imply, IPS parents did not self-organize and go to Lilly's to get help in forming a parent group. EEF was not by parents for parents. It was by MT/SfC for parents. These self-described school reformers knew they needed parents to help them justify/rationalize the privatization of our IPS. What's tragic is that the current EEF paid leaders and its parent/guardian members do not understand that they are enabling the dismantling of their very own public school system—because that is just what is happening.

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## Parent Perspectives: A Community Conversation

Attending the Tuesday December 12, 2023 Parent Perspectives: A Community Conversation gathering was interesting. I'm glad I attended.

The event was an action based on a recent EEF study. This new co-report from MT and EEF titled, "Parent Perspectives: What Indianapolis parents and residents want from their public schools," highlighted views and recommendations from the majority of public school parents in Indianapolis Public School (IPS) boundaries. Both charter and Innovation school parents responded. Here's the link:

<https://empoweredfamiliesindy.org/parentreportpress/>.

A crowd of around 100 showed up. Hors d'oeuvres were served. Inside the downtown library theater, the program started a half hour late, but the holiday show by the student dance group from Global Prep Academy was entertaining.

Shannon Williams, MT's COO and Executive Vice President, gave the opening talk. Shannon described MT as a non-profit organization supporting public charters/public school options that provide the "right fit" for a child regarding academics, safety, high expectations, caring, and respect.

Since its start, MT has tried to sell charters as public schools. From the perspective of this essay, this was needed in order for charters to be seen as legit, as harmless. Yet, common sense defines a public school as a government institution accepting any/all students. Its board is elected by citizens. Charters avoid these basics.

To prove the point here, let's look at what a Kentucky judge just said, "Charters are not public schools": <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2023/12/12/kentucky-judge-rules-state-charter-school-law-is-unconstitutional/>.

The judge struck down a 2022 state law that allowed public funding for charter schools and said that it would create a "separate and unequal" system of schools that violated the state's 1891 constitution.

In his decision, Judge Shepherd said that the law, known as HB9, violated a section in the Kentucky constitution that prohibits the collection of taxes for any educational purpose other than "common schools" without the consent of voters. *In his ruling, Shepherd said that charter schools are not public schools or common schools as defined by the state constitution.*

## Back to Indianapolis

Once the panel discussion started, we learned that Radio One host Karen Vaughn couldn't make it. A Dr. Tamika Jones took her place. One of the 4 panelists, representing Invent Learning Hub/BELIEVE Circle City HS, was also absent.

Consequently, a panel made up of one parent with child at Herron Riverside, one parent with a child at Purdue Polytech, and the third parent had a child at Enlace Academy answered questions around, "What really works in a school for you and your child?"

One parent noted that she and her child were looking for a prestigious school that would have the leadership her child needed. According to her, Herron Riverside's Classical Curriculum had the tenured teachers who encouraged students "to march to a different drummer" and learn how to "overlay" their own ideas on what's being taught. For another parent, Purdue Polytech HS allowed students to be who they are. And for another parent the diversity of staff at Enlace is what she liked. All three parents emphasized school safety where their child would not get hurt in the school or be influenced negatively by the neighborhood surrounding the school.

Question: Is Purdue Polytech HS a part of Purdue or is the school just using Purdue's name/Purdue's brand?

One parent, who seemed to be responding to/apologize for a concern around choice, remarked that she and her child's response to the situation was not against the children, teachers and families at the school the child attended, but was up against the world—and that that world standards for academic excellence had to be the guide to fulfilling the unique needs of each student—in this case students of color.

Since these parents did not live around these schools, the main complaint towards their child's school concerned transportation issues.

This “school choice” situation with its many manifestations reminded me of the assertion I’m making in my nationally recognized paper “The elite capture of Indy’s education nonprofits.” See: <https://vorcreatex.com/elite-capture-of-indianapolis-public-schools/>. My concern here is that school choice makes white people out of Black and Latino people. What’s the point here?

Inherently, members of local and national communities of color must be collaborative, not competitive to survive. The African philosophy Ubuntu, “I am because we are” is the guiding principle here. Yet, the atmosphere of school choice/the individualism of school choice around the assertion, “I want a school that’s best for my child” that was espoused by the parent panel leaves out the larger African American community.

This is opposed to an EEF panel parent from a marginalized community saying, “I want a school for my child that’s best for my community.” For example, nothing was mentioned about a student/parent/family picking a school because it had a social justice orientation. The reality is that without the context of Ubuntu, picking prestigious schools would just give that child from a minority community a “leg up” over their peers:

See: <https://vorcreatex.com/elite-capture-of-ips-schools-in-indianapolis/#the-elite-capture-of-empowered>.

Also see: <https://vorcreatex.com/elite-capture-of-ips-schools-in-indianapolis/#the-mind-trust-practices>.

The event ended with EEF leader Kim Graham noting that great schools have great parents and that these parents have a right to access what she called, “a quality education.” This will happen for parents by working together: “Working together is better,” she said.

MT’s hosting an event at Central Library was publicized as an unveiling of the joint report mentioned above: <https://empoweredfamiliesindy.org/parentreportpress/>. Actually, though, the report was published with “itself.” What is meant here is that after being led by 4 different fellows/leaders in just 3 years, EEF ceased to exist on June 2023, and now there’s no longer any daylight between it and MT. The IRS 990 Annual Report filed for the year before it closed (2022) shows nearly \$1M (\$913K) poured into this “parent advocacy.org” initiative. Hey, \$913K is lot\$ of money: <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/851486435>.

### **A commentary**

To reveal the intentions of the 12.12.2023 Parent Perspectives: A Community Conversation, note IPS Supt Johnson is a Teach for America (TfA) grad—just like MT’s leader Brandon Brown. The goal of TFA is to privatize/charter-ize school districts like our IPS. See more here: <https://f2acc6.p3cdn1.secureserver.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Do-we-want-Teach-for-America-controlling-our-IPS-A-commentary-on-why-Aleesia-Johnson-must-not-be-IPS-superintendent.pdf>. Here is what TfA explains to its newcomers and alum:

“Your Potential is Limitless After your two-year commitment in the classroom you become an alumnus of Teach For America. You’ll join a diverse network of change-makers--civil rights attorneys, socially conscious CEOs, ed-tech entrepreneurs, career educators, and many more--who are working to create opportunity nationwide. Teach For America’s alumni are providing critical leadership--as teachers, school and district leaders [like Supt. of IPS] (emphasis mine); elected officials and policy advisers; and founders and leaders of education [like MT’s Brandon Brown] (emphasis mine) and social reform initiatives--to ensure all children have the opportunity to attain an excellent education.”

What an “excellent education” is is never explained. We can easily see TfA’s goals are to “...place TfA alum in elected office in policy or advocacy leadership roles in active pipelines for public leadership--all to shift control over American education reform to a specific group of spritely college grads-turned-politicians with a very specific politics.” See more here: <https://www.teachforamerica.org/where-we-work/indianapolis>.

Even so, Johnson and Brown have done well: IPS is already the 2<sup>nd</sup> most privatized district in America: [Indianapolis: Home of America’s Second Most Privatized School System](#). Please note, regarding the New Orleans district, every school is privatized.

*John Legend Meets with Stand for Children Parents in Indianapolis*



On May 13, 2014, there was a lot of laughter and even some tears as 9-time Grammy winner and Stand for Children national board member John Legend met at Stand Indiana's office with 15 IPS parents taking part in a ten week Stand University for Parents (Stand UP) program in Indianapolis.

