

## ***Is the IPS school district a dropout factory?*** **A preliminary report and commentary on the graduation rates and promoting power of our Indianapolis Public Schools**

During October of 2018, 4 different and well designed expensive glossy mailers showed up in the mailboxes of IPS district residents asking them to support the 2018 IPS referendum. Each noted they were mailed out by Stand for Children.

These mailings probably helped get the referendum passed. The initiative will generate about \$52 million for the district's building improvements and \$220 million over an 8 year period for operating expenses.

**Misleading IPS grad numbers** One mailer in particular shouted out, "Keep graduation rates soaring. Vote Yes or IPS this election." An October 12 commentary by the *Indianapolis Recorder* titled, "Reviewing the Referendum" local entertainer Abdul Hakim Shabazz stated, "IPS has come a long way. The district graduation rate is 83%. It was 72% back in 2015. It was 47% a decade ago."

These graduation percentages are correct according to the IDOE website. Nonetheless, if we use the concept of Promoting Power, we see these graduation numbers *hide* the inability of our IPS to keep and promote at least 60% of its 9<sup>th</sup> grade students to the 12<sup>th</sup> grade—making a district with so-called "soaring" grad rates a dropout factory.

**Introducing "Promoting Power"** In order to open a conversation about the "success" of our IPS, fostering a clear view of the district's graduation rates (or those of any Indiana public school or district) is needed. The concept of Promoting Power ("holding power") is being used because it can provide a quick way to determine how a district or school is doing. Promoting Power also circumvents certain graduation rate formulas which can *hide* the inability of schools to keep students in school.

Promoting Power divides the number of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students who make it to 12<sup>th</sup> grade by the original number of students in that same 9<sup>th</sup> grade cohort. It does not determine graduation rates--those 9<sup>th</sup> graders (cohort) who actually graduate. A Promoting Power of <60% is weak Promoting Power. High schools with weak Promoting Power are called "dropout factories." The term was used in the *Indy Star's* 2005 "Left Behind" series:

- [http://rishawnbiddle.org/RRB/Starfiles/leftbehind/Dropout\\_factories.pdf](http://rishawnbiddle.org/RRB/Starfiles/leftbehind/Dropout_factories.pdf)

To understand more about Promoting Power and the dropout factory term see:

- [http://web.jhu.edu/CSOS/images/FAQ\\_Dropout\\_Factories\\_final\\_version\\_nov\\_2007.pdf](http://web.jhu.edu/CSOS/images/FAQ_Dropout_Factories_final_version_nov_2007.pdf)
- IPS enrollment figures: 2005/2006-2018/2019  
<https://compass.doe.in.gov/dashboard/enrollment.aspx?type=corp&id=5385>

The question is, how does the IPS district lose certain students and why? More importantly, how are districts/schools able to maintain increasing graduation rates, while having weak promotion power?

**"Weeding out" students** Issues of schools obtaining high graduation rates through unwritten policies where students are being "pushed out," and/or "counseled out" (or cases were school officials say the student/family "self-selected out") are raising concern. Graduation rate formula policies allow districts/schools not to have to count certain students--who leave under the above circumstances--in their graduation rates.

And, there are many “tactics” use to weed out students such as “Self-Selection Bias,” “Select Marketing Strategies, and the “Bum Steer.” Other tactics are reviewed in “Is Charles A. Tinley Accelerated High School a dropout factory?” They are “Flunk or leave,” “A deal you can’t refuse,” “No backfill rules” and recruiting “good test takers.”

- <http://www.schoolsmatter.info/2018/02/is-charles-tindley-accelerated-school.html>

**IPS alternative schools: Helping IPS grad rates while also being an initiation for the pipeline to prison?** Questions must be asked about IPS alternative schools and what part they might play in influencing grad rates—and acting as a “soft-jail” punitive model of education preparing under-served students for the pipeline to prison. Using federal and local data, *ProPublica* looked at how some alternative schools shortchange students and at times become a silent release valve for schools straining under accountability reform. Also, see the “Alternative Education: School-To-Prison Pipeline” brief.

- <https://www.propublica.org/article/how-students-get-banished-to-alternative-schools>
- <https://www.propublica.org/article/alternative-schools-methodology>
- <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/571f750f4c2f858e510aa661/t/57d980f15016e196233cdad6/1473872114876/School-To-Prison-Pipeline-Brief-July-2014.pdf>

### IPS data

	2005 – 06	2006 – 07	2007 – 08	2008 – 09	2009 – 10	2010 – 11	2011 – 12	2012 – 13	2013 – 14	2014 – 15	2015 – 16	2016 – 17	2017 – 18	2018 – 19
9th	<b>4188</b>	<b>3352</b>	<b>2351</b>	<b>3213</b>	<b>2338</b>	<b>2071</b>	<b>1182</b>	<b>1664</b>	<b>1572</b>	<b>1646</b>	<b>2134</b>	<b>2023</b>	1746	1435
10th	2518	<b>2348</b>	<b>2494</b>	<b>1913</b>	<b>2682</b>	<b>2786</b>	<b>2303</b>	<b>1527</b>	<b>1516</b>	<b>1529</b>	<b>1482</b>	<b>1571</b>	<b>1555</b>	1527
11th	<b>1610</b>	1746	<b>1936</b>	<b>1617</b>	<b>1614</b>	<b>1699</b>	<b>1738</b>	<b>1464</b>	<b>1318</b>	<b>1319</b>	<b>1187</b>	<b>1186</b>	<b>1290</b>	<b>1409</b>
12th	935	<b>1534</b>	1611	<b>1416</b>	<b>1402</b>	<b>1323</b>	<b>1338</b>	<b>1376</b>	<b>1215</b>	<b>1100</b>	<b>1004</b>	<b>913</b>	<b>998</b>	<b>1173</b>

School year	# 9th grade	# 10th grade	# 11th grade	# 12th grade	IDOE #grads	Class of	IDOE Grad %	Promoting Power <60%	Weak or Strong	Dropout Factory
05/06	<b>4188</b>	<b>2348</b>	<b>1936</b>	<b>1416</b>	??	08-09	?	1416/4188=33.8%	Weak	Yes
06/07	<b>3352</b>	<b>2494</b>	<b>1617</b>	<b>1402</b>	1136	09-10	47.4%	1402/3352= 41.8%	Weak	Yes
07/08	<b>2351</b>	<b>1913</b>	<b>1614</b>	<b>1323</b>	1144	10-11	48.0%	1323/2351= 56.3%	Weak	Yes
08/09	<b>3213</b>	<b>2682</b>	<b>1619</b>	<b>1338</b>	1064	11-12	51.7%	1338/3213=41.6%	Weak	Yes
09/10	<b>2338</b>	<b>2786</b>	<b>1738</b>	<b>1376</b>	1055	12-13	62.5%	1376/2338= 58.9%	Weak	Yes
10/11	<b>2017</b>	<b>2303</b>	<b>1464</b>	<b>1215</b>	1056	13-14	69.9%	1215/2017= 60.2%	Weak	Yes
11/12	<b>1882</b>	<b>1527</b>	<b>1318</b>	<b>1100</b>	1038	14-15	65.4%	1100/1882= 58.4%	Weak	Yes
12/13	<b>1664</b>	<b>1516</b>	<b>1319</b>	<b>1004</b>	927	15-16	68.3%	1004/1664= 60.3%	Weak	Yes
13/14	<b>1572</b>	<b>1529</b>	<b>1187</b>	<b>913</b>	808	16-17	72.8%	913/1572= 58.1%	Weak	Yes
14/15	<b>1646</b>	<b>1482</b>	<b>1186</b>	<b>998</b>	794	17-18	72.1%	998/1646= 60.6%	Weak	Yes
15/16	<b>2134</b>	<b>1571</b>	<b>1290</b>	<b>1173</b>	869	18-19	76.9%	1173/2134=54.9%	Weak	Yes
16/17	<b>2023</b>	<b>1515</b>	<b>1409</b>		897	19-20	82.6%			
17/18	1746	1527				20-21				
18/19	1435					21-22				

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