

Where do we go from here?

This June 21, the Indianapolis Public School (IPS) selected pro-privatization interim superintendent [Alessia Johnson](#) to be the district's leader despite those who questioned her [close ties to Teach for America](#).

Above all, don't forget, we wouldn't even be having a discussion about Superintendent Johnson if it were not for the fact that Stand for Children (SfC) helped buy IPS school board elections in 2012, 2014, 2016--and almost in [2018](#). This means the very foundation of the IPS corporate reform movement is corrupt.

- [Is Stand for Children buying IPS board election?](#)
- [Chalkbeat distorts truth about IPS election campaign funding](#)
- [What's really going on in Indiana's public schools?](#)

The response of Parent Power, Indy's Parents Across America affiliate, is to talk less about the superintendent and more about actualizing how we can win back families who are attracted to the charter movement.

Parent Power's Plan: 1) De-colonize public education 2) Show charters are anti-democratic and create public schools which are more like democracies Educators must take an honest look in the mirror and realize our public schools don't need fixing; they were never meant to educate all children. [We can't call schools designed to fail broken](#) because public education has succeeded in carrying out its original design.

From the start, the purpose of (public) schools (think Horace Mann's "Common School" idea) was to assimilate (colonize/conform) students into the "melting pot." See: [Schooling the world: The white man's last burden](#).

"Urban students quickly receive the message that they can only be smart when they are not who they are. This in many cases is classroom colonialism." ~ Prof. Chris Emdin

Teacher Dr. Chris Emdin, after discussing education with Native Americans, saw how similar his urban school was to the [Carlisle Indian School](#) where Natives were assimilated to the white norm. Emdin now calls his urban students "neo-indigenous" since their schools also have trouble with their urban clothing, language, and (hip hop) culture. Indeed, many educators, both traditional and charter, participating in education-as-assimilation, are motivated by [good intentions](#), yet are "faux-liberators" (think: Teach for America members) who may be actually [damaging students](#).

Failing to challenge the inherent colonality of public schools means the onus of change is forever on the "colonized." Success for people of color and poor whites will endlessly revolve around finding ways to conform and succeed on another's terms, rather than around nurturing their own community's criteria for achievement.

Schools are the enemy

Coloniality worked for many who wanted to assimilate, but for those who didn't, [school became the enemy](#) --think: *The Mis-education of the Negro* (1933) by [Woodson](#) and *The White Architects of Black Education* (2001) by [Watkins](#). Also read *Too Much School, Too Little Education* (1994) by [Shujaa](#).

Traditional public school educators must see how corporate reformers used the long-time distrust of African-Americans towards public education (See above: "Schools are the enemy") to successfully split them off from their own public schools, and the schools' teachers and unions and consequently making charters/vouchers more attractive. See Dr. Ford's talk, [The corporate assault on public education](#) to understand this "split."

The problem for charters is they are merely a neo-colonial response to our colonial education system. Charters are not anything different from regular schools except for new ways to better enable and perpetuate standardization via the myth of the Achievement Gap and [Eugenics-based standardized testing](#). See [The Mind Trust's neo-colonial war on parents](#). Here, the value of charters will depend upon how they're able to get students of color to assimilate towards the colonial normative dogma of whiteness. Also see: Weilbacher's paper [Standardization and whiteness: One and the same?](#)

"To believe in the existence of any sort of achievement gap, some sort of racial hierarchy is actually to believe in a racist idea. The achievement gap between the races with whites and Asians at the top and blacks and

Latinos at the bottom is a racist hierarchy. And this popular racist hierarchy has been constructed by our religious faith in standardized testing.” ~ Dr. Denisha Jones, Trinity University

“Standardized tests have become the most effective racist weapons ever devised to objectively degrade Black minds and legally exclude their bodies.” ~ Ibram X. Kendi

“Standardized tests see how white you are.” ~ John Harris Loflin

1. How do we de-colonize our public schools?

A major strategy to de-colonize public education and freeing it from confusing education with assimilation is by developing the critical consciousness of educators and students. Please critique: [Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy](#) and [What is a high quality education for urban students?](#)

2. Charters are anti-democratic: the irony of charter boards being selected, not elected by citizens

Public education advocates must show Africans Americans families their regular public schools are better than the neo-colonial charters for making their children career, college, and [citizenship](#) ready.

The issue is the fact charter boards are selected, not elected like traditional boards. Charters bypass the democratic process by appointing board members. The irony is many charters are located in Black or low-income neighborhoods where, by not having democratically elected boards, charters actually [disenfranchise](#) (pp. 255-267) the very people they claim they want to help--using these same citizen's tax dollars while depriving them of any direct say in how their money is spent. It's simply tyranny: taxation without representation.

“Elected school boards are the bedrock of American democracy.” ~ Thomas Ultic

Also public school advocates must embrace the idea that schools are places to contest and eradicate inequalities and other social toxins such as poverty. See [Urban schools as sites to contest inequalities](#)

“The purpose of education for urban students is not to help them get out of poverty, but to get rid of poverty.”

~ Prof. Jeff Duncan-Andrade

Local School Councils 2.0: Parents in charge

To make our traditional public schools more democratic, Parent Power suggests each traditional public school be run by a [Local School Council](#) (LSC). Here 6 parents and 2 community members are elected every 2 years. They hire/fire the principal and control the budget. See: [LSCs: Can democracy save our IPS?](#)

Community Schools 2.0: Transformative Community Schools

To also de-colonize their schools, citizens must demand community schools which are transformative, promoting self-reliance and self-determination. See: [Transformational Community Schools](#).

To the Black Education Reform Establishment: Be Real with Who You Are and Who's Interest You Represent

African Americans, who with good reason distrust public education, must also take seriously the critique of corporate school reform/school choice by Camden, NJ's Dr. Keith Benson and push and widen the current debate, “[Is school choice the Black choice?](#)” Questions: How can even Black controlled charters avoid the mandated biased and discriminatory standardized tests that measure the success and determine the funding of these schools? How can such charters get around the hegemony of [neo-liberalism](#) and especially the European [epistemology](#) that's the foundation of our traditional public and charter schools, a Euro-centric foundation that defines, though at the expense of African American culture, what success is in America?

When their public schools practice self-determination via elected school boards, educate for liberation, teach for social and economic justice, and no longer confuse education with conformity to only European culture, African Americans will turn away from the corporate controlled, neo-colonial, and anti-democratic charters.

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