

Return oversight and voting Mayor's Hogsett's charters to the City-County Council

Since the Black Agenda mentions Mayor Hogsett's Office of Education Innovation (OEI) and the Indianapolis Charter Board, it is necessary B&LPI responds.

After the beginning of mayoral control of charters, the Indianapolis City-County Council (IC-CC) had a say over whether a proposed charter would become a school or not. Both a council committee and the full council were involved in the voting. Around 2013 (?), that responsibility was taken. There was no full IC-CC or community debate. Pushed by Jason Kloth and Brandon Brown, the OEI went to the Indiana state legislature and simply had the democratically elected IC-CC taken out of the process.

First, some history

What started out as a push for a few local charters (given freedom from certain traditional public education policy requirements) has grown. Now, [Indy is home of America's 2nd most privatized public school system!](#) New Orleans Public Schools is ranked first where every school is privatized.

Local citizens were not told back when the 2011 Mind Trust [Opportunity Schools](#) report came out, that possibly in 10 years [63.7%](#) of Indianapolis students would be in privatized schools. For more on charters, read closely: [Portfolio models: private ways of running public schools](#). Check out the [IPS Portfolio Management](#) scheme here.

To the dismay of the Mind Trust leadership, its 2011 \$700,000 *Opportunity Schools* study and proposals never caught on. And, neither did Indy's NEO Plan--Mayor Ballard's OEI proposal called "Neighborhood of Educational Opportunity" or NEO.

The NEO Plan's use of the term "high quality seats" when referring to students, turned people off. As well, the *Recorder's* Amos Brown wrote a Feb 28, 2013 commentary, "'White flight' reason education reformers pushing change in Indy" (http://m.indianapolisrecorder.com/mobile/opinion/article_ocbb6212-81f4-11e2-a215-001a4bcf887a.html) followed by a Jul 13, 2013 column, "NEO Plan harmful for Black, minority students" (http://www.indianapolisrecorder.com/opinion/article_eef46606-ea3b-11e2-b6fc-0019bb2963f4.html). Without Amos' backing, the NEO Plan was shelved.

In fact, the NEO Plan was so bad, Cincinnati rejected it too. See Jan 24, 2017 *Cincinnati Inquirer* story "CEO quietly quits school accelerator [[Accelerate Great Schools](#) in Cincinnati (AGSC)]." According to Cincy's Laura Chapman, the Mind Trust's Pat Herrel was unable to raise the money he was hired to do. The Mind Trust brought him back home. Read a local commentary on the situation: <http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Mind-Trust-NEO-Plan-Pat-Herrel-flop-in-Cincy.pdf>. And, AGSC thrives as it backed winning Cincinnati Public Schools candidate Ben Lindy, a Teach for America alum, for the 2019 election. Read more: [An open letter on Ben Lindy's candidacy](#).

So what to do next? Buy IPS!

Mind Trust's efforts to work with IPS had failed. Plan A, *Opportunity Schools* was ignored. Plan B, the NEO Plan got scrutinized, critiqued, and was finally rejected. The Mind Trust went into a long closed door session and came out with a plan that skipped the middle of the alphabet. They jumped to Plan Z—just buy the IPS board.

Working with Stand for Children(SfC) and SfC's ground crew, Teach for America, the Mind Trust went about Plan Z.

The privatization of public education

All this must be appreciated over a background of the 2012, 2014, and 2016 IPS school board elections which were bought by local and national corporate school reform supporters, consequently engineering the consent of the Indianapolis public for the privatization of their very own public schools.

For the scenario on the corporate takeover of our IPS, see Amos Brown's, "[Is Stand for Children buying IPS school board election?](#)" (*Indianapolis Recorder* 10.23.14) and these other news stories and info on IPS board candidate's campaign funding:

- The truth about IPS board election campaign funding
<https://kheprw.org/chalkbeat-indiana-distorts-the-truth-about-ips-board-election-campaign-funding/>
- Dark money clouds IPS election
<https://inschoolmatters.wordpress.com/2016/11/07/dark-money-clouds-ips-election/>
- Incumbents in IPS board race post massive fundraising lead over challengers
<https://www.wfyi.org/news/articles/incumbents-in-ips-board-race-post-massive-fundraising-lead-over-challengers>
- How much money is Stand for Children putting in school board elections and lobbying?
<https://www.wfyi.org/news/articles/how-much-money-stand-for-children-ips-school-board-elections-indiana-lobbying>

Money from wealthy donors from outside the county and state influenced IPS elections

For a clear example, note the large amounts of campaign contributions to Commissioner Sullivan:

- <http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Mary-Ann-Sullivan-2014-Campaign-Contributions-IPS-School-Board-Election.pdf> \$73,709.49 in contributions

Also note who gave and where they lived. IPS school board races were no longer a local phenomenon, where a candidate raised \$3-400 for yard signs and literature, and ran their campaign out of their home, but an event caught up in a wider national agenda to privatize/corporatize public education.

- Commissioner Sam Odle
<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Samuel-Odle-2012-Campaign-Contributions-IPS-School-Board-Election.pdf> \$61,924.56
- Commissioner Kelly Bentley
<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Kelly-Bentley-2014-Campaign-Contributions-IPS-School-Board-Election-1.pdf> \$52,677.73
- Commissioner Lanier Echols
<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Lanier-Echols-2014-Campaign-Contributions-IPS-School-Board-Election-1.pdf> \$52,677.73
- Commissioner Michael O'Connor
<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Michael-OConnor-2016-Campaign-contributions-IPS-School-Board-Elections.pdf> \$33,985.75
- Commissioner Venita Moore
<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Venita-Moore-2016-Campaign-Contributions-IPS-School-Board-Elections.pdf> \$25,711.61
- Commissioner Diane Arnold
<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Diane-Arnold-2016-Campaign-Contributions-IPS-School-Board-Elections.pdf> \$16,353.60

For more read:

- [Indianapolis Education Reform Player Profiles](#)
- [Corporate School Boarding Indy Style](#)
- [Hoosier School Heist; How Corporations and Theocrats Stole Democracy From Public Education](#)

Here's info on IPS Supt. Dr. Ferebee's million dollar team he brought in with him from North Carolina: <http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/IPS-2016-17-pay-info-Dr.-Ferebees-NC-team.pdf>

But why buy the IPS school board? A national movement to privatize public education

To understand more of the national background on privatization, view [The corporate assault on public education](#).

Another group of publications takes a look at this time period where unprecedented amounts of money came into IPS elections, especially from out of state contributors:

- <http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Democracy-for-Sale-What-happened-in-Denver-in-2011-will-happen-in-Indianapolis-in-2012.pdf>
- <http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Who-Runs-Our-IPS.pdf>

More news stories and columns on the overkill of campaign finances against poorly funded IPS candidates

- Academic shame for charter schools! Amos Brown Nov 6, 2014
“Maybe if the school reformers spent some of their filthy lucre they wasted in the IPS race on improving the quality of charter school board members and teachers and encouraged real instruction instead of listening to out-of-town educational scam artists, the majority of Indy's charters would be ‘high performing’ schools for our kids.”
http://www.indianapolisrecorder.com/opinion/article_10ff4c0c-65e2-11e4-8df2-03f7d5b55bcf.html
- Don't bet on big bucks in IPS election Dan Carpenter Oct 30, 2014
“Convince them [the public], in short, of the wisdom of the Mind Trust and Stand for Children and Democrats for Education Reform and the billionaires behind the industry of professional critics and charter school entrepreneurs who seek to own the operation.”
<http://thestatehousefile.com/commentary-dont-bet-big-bucks-ips-election/18192/>
- Indy's Chamber wants to elect an un-diverse IPS school board slate Amos Brown Sep 4, 2014
“Voters, parents and students in IPS don't need Michael Bloomberg or other out-of-town fat cats to decide our school board election. Indianapolis voters and Indianapolis dollars and resources should decide who governs all of our city/county's eleven school districts. Not out-of-town cash and meddlers like the Chamber's Star Chamber selection committee.”
http://www.indianapolisrecorder.com/opinion/article_6c06aa28-344b-11e4-b8fc-0019bb2963f4.html
- The Mind Trust is a Trojan Horse That is Destroying Indianapolis Public Education Jim Scheurich
<https://kheprw.org/the-mind-trust-is-a-trojan-horse-that-is-destroying-indianapolis-public-education/>
- IPS' corporate-bought board needs to pay attention to real crises in IPS Amos Brown Jan 29, 2015
http://www.indianapolisrecorder.com/opinion/article_61c555c8-a7d7-11e4-ac39-d31c221ea357.html

Look at millions spent in recent LA school board races: Is the IPS 2020 election next?

- <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/04/education/los-angeles-school-board-race-attracts-national-attention-and-money.html>
- <https://laist.com/2020/02/14/lausd-2020-primary-teachers-union-charter-schools-outside-spending-independent-expenditures.php>
- <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-03-03/2020-los-angeles-county-election-results-school-board>

2017 IPS high school choice experiment: IPS and Radio One inveigle students and parents into accepting the district's new Career Academy model

Note, especially, the late 2017 commentary, "[Without parents present: IPS tries to engineer the consent of students to accept its plan to reinvent high school.](#)" The meetings discussed are examples of the extent to which the district and the local business community went to manipulate students and families—and public opinion—to accept an IPS high school corporate Career Academy model of public education.

2018 Too little, too late: Mind Trust (MT) admits it strategically avoided grassroots community input and wants to do so now

MT has finally apologized for its decade of top down control of the Indianapolis education narrative and thus IPS. "The Mind Trust's new CEO pledges to listen to critics and look to parents to lead changes" is the title of the *Chalkbeat* MT infomercial:

<https://in.chalkbeat.org/2018/5/17/21104987/the-mind-trust-s-new-ceo-pledges-to-listen-to-critics-and-look-to-parents-to-lead-changes>

MT's Brandon Brown states: "We learned that it's critically important to involve a diversity of opinions on the front end so that we're shaping our thinking as much as we can. We learned that it's also very important to engage the community at the grassroots and the grassroots level when you are proposing massive changes to the system."

IPS parents beware: The fox guarding the henhouse wants to recruit you

Question: over the last decade have hundreds of IPS parents self-organized to bring MT into the IPS conversation? No.

We know now, IPS parents were left out of the conversation. Now groups like AACI must look at the big, big money big behind the strategy to gaslight IPS parents.

2020 RiseIndy: The latest effort by local and national corporate reformers to buy IPS

A Dec 11, 2019 story in the *Indianapolis Recorder* on RiseIndy (RI) (<https://riseindy.org/>) was titled, "[A new Indianapolis education PAC wants to bypass controversy. That could be hard.](#)" It looks like Indy's latest attempt to maintain control of the pro-corporate reform IPS board wants to avoid the "...debate between charter and traditional public schools" and take the highroad by emphasizing student academic achievement (BKA scores on standardized tests).

This is pure bunkum: RI was created to see that corporate reformers don't lose again

Just look at RI's staff, board and advisory: <https://riseindy.org/our-team>. RI is not an "up from the pavement" movement, but "a well oiled" effort by Indy's local neo-liberal Black and white

middle-class/upper-class Republicans and corporate Democrats to use their money and power, not to privatize a public utility or toll road, but, of all things, our public schools.

Proposed Action Item: Make the chartering process more democratic, and more representative

AACI will critique the above information in “Return oversight and voting on the mayor’s charters to the City-County Council.”

A charter school task force will be fostered by AACI to look into making the chartering process more democratic, and more representative. This will be done by bringing the IC-CC back into the process, which will cause a wider oversight and debate around individual charters than is the current level of the non-elected and handpicked Indy Charter School Board members:

<https://www.indy.gov/activity/the-indianapolis-charter-school-board>

Remember, taxation without representation is tyranny.

As well, AACI must critique the fact that charter boards are not elected. For charters in Black American neighborhoods or schools with significant numbers of Black students, the inability to be able to vote in or out charter school board members or make them accountable actually disenfranchises the very Black adults and communities that charters claim they are helping. All the while, these charters spend these very same citizen’s taxes.

As well, charter boards are allowed to have members who don’t even live in Indiana. Whose interests are being served here?

Superintendents Ferebee and Johnson obtained their status and power to privatize the district by an unprecedented (and successful) effort to buy the IPS school board

The raw histories of facts and news commentaries covered above directly challenge the political and ethical authenticity of the Ferebee and/or Johnson regimes. The antics of the Mind Trust, and their sidekick Stand for Children, can now be viewed as shady local and national-level political deals having little to do with students, but with power. Here, according to Amos Brown, school reformers, “...spent some of their filthy lucre...” to grab control and privatize public education in Indianapolis.

Yes, the above elections are over; yet, were the 2012, 2014, and 2016 IPS school board races corrupted by big money—indeed a “coup” by local and national entities to take over the school district?

Two books have been published recently specifically studying IPS as 1) a national example of issues surrounding the dark politics of school board elections, and 2) a district with an historical underbelly of educational politics whose high schools did not challenge, but actually maintained our city’s status quo of race and class inequalities.

Outside Money in School Board Elections: The nationalization of education politics (2019).

- <https://education.msu.edu/news/2019/book-explores-external-funding-for-school-board-elections/>

Making a Mass Institution: Indianapolis and the American High School (2020)

- <https://www.amazon.com/Making-Mass-Institution-Indianapolis-Directions/dp/1978814402>

Check out this video on how outside money is influencing school board races:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K1EHuFnLaYw>

To help unpack and analyze the 2012, 2014, and 2016 IPS elections and put them in perspective, AACI will take seriously the points and concerns of 2 Black American educators:

Prof. Lester Spence

- [The neo-liberal turn in Black politics](#)
- The Intersection: Lester Spence On Neo-liberalism's Effect on Black Politics. Detroit Today | Jul 6, 2016
<https://wdet.org/posts/2016/07/06/83418-the-intersection-lester-spence-on-neoliberalisms-effect-on-black-politics/>
- "How Bill Cosby, Obama and Mega-Preachers Sold Economic Snake Oil to Black America"
<https://caribreport.com/2018/05/05/how-bill-cosby-obama-and-mega-preachers-sold-economic-snake-oil-to-black-america-must-read/>
- *How the "free market" has devastated black communities.* TED Talk
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vDJormxhmVI>

Dr. Keith Benson

- "To the Black Education Reform Establishment: Be Real with Who You Are and Whose Interest You Represent"
<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/To-the-Black-Education-Reform-Establishment-Be-Real-with-Who-You-Are-and-Whose-Interest-You-Represent.pdf>

ACCI will have to explore their group and individual consciences to see if the past and current use of local and outside big money to steal IPS school board races is unethical. If so, AACI must at least move to require direct democratic responsibility/accountability to the OEI by bringing back our IC-CC into the chartering process.