

Bait & Switch

Understanding the closing of Broad Ripple, Northwest, and Arlington high schools and the opening of The Bottle Works

[Here in Indianapolis], we are programmed to disbelieve what we experience. This impacts how we view society and how we view ourselves.

~ Mari Evans, *Clarity as Concept*

Indianapolis is truly dichotomous; a city in which contradictions is truly the norm. It is easy to be deluded here, especially when one prefers delusion to clarity.

~ Mari Evans, *Clarity as Concept*

Summary The “bait and switch” scheme is an old form of the con game. The seller presents a situation convincing the buyer the transactional scenario they propose is valid. Once the buyer signs the deal, they find out what they actually bought or about that which was the case all along. By then though, it’s too late...

The Bait: IPS spends time and money holding numerous public forums at various high schools, using misleadingly history and data to convince citizens how and why IPS is losing students and thus the only option is to close 3 public high schools. Professionals from out of town with no real connections to IPS and the Indianapolis community are brought in to carry out the bamboozling, or gaslighting when necessary. Lots of community input, mainly from anxious and well-meaning alumni, is taken on the guise it would influence the decisions.

The Switch: Meanwhile, all along, plans were in the works to open 10 or more smaller but privatized high schools down the road.

None of the well-paid professionals brought in to engineer the consent of citizens to close 3 high schools stay around, avoiding long-term accountability.

For a span of my memory this has been a city of opposing wills, two faces firmly set toward different directions—one covertly determined to maintain the status quo, to continually block any access to power, or to parity; the other advocating an active morality and its right to inclusion as an equal entity rather than a colonized one. This has been a city of perpetual confrontation, however cloaked, between the powerless and those who influence, control, and engineer the city’s movement in the inexorable and often ruthless march toward “greatness.”

~ Mari Evans in *Clarity as Concept* on Indianapolis

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The IPS scenario

Does Indianapolis want an entirely privatized school district?

This October 24, a documentary titled [In Closing](#) was published. Directed by Ira Mallory, the film explores the legacy and closing of Indianapolis Arlington High School and the iconic Broad Ripple High School begging the basic question: [Do IPS families, students, employees, and local citizens actually want a privatized district?](#)

In Closing covers the various meetings held by the then IPS leader, Dr. Ferebee and some of his [million dollar team](#) he brought in from North Carolina, as they tried to engineer the consent of the board and the public to support their proposal to close certain schools.

Starting in early 2017, [IPS held several community meetings](#) where teachers, students, parents, alumni and the public mainly protested the district's plan which included Northwest HS.

By mid-September of 2017, the [board voted 5-2 to "repurpose" all 3 high schools](#) for the 2018-19 school-years.

Yes, IPS did take public input. Yet, the district was just going through the motions. Many participants saw the sessions as "staged" and the outcomes pre-determined because in the end:

- public comments did not really matter to the board;
- current student voices did not matter;
- parent voices not affiliated with Stand for Children did not matter;
- community voices did not matter; and,
- IPS alumni voices did not matter.

In Closing points out that Dr. Ferebee left Indiana less than 1 year after the final Broad Ripple class graduated. He resigned effective Jan. 4, 2019. It must be noted that of those 5 who voted yes, only one, Commissioner Arnold remains on the board to face any accountability.

Bait & Switch: Say IPS must close high schools; plan to open up privatized ones

Today, citizens are told Broad Ripple, Northwest, and Arlington high schools had to be closed [due to declining enrollment](#).

However, what alumni and citizens were not told is that as soon as these 3 high schools were closed, the city/IPS/The Mind Trust would began plans to open up other high schools.

Also, after the 2011 Mind Trust [Opportunity Schools](#) report came out, citizens did not foresee 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.

Bait & Switch Indy Style

Bait: tell Indy IPS had to close 3 high schools because of declining enrollment.

Switch: then as soon as the schools close, begin the process of planning and eventually opening what are currently a bevy of 10 privatized high schools.

Here are the facts: IPS did offer and passed a plan to close 3 high schools. Yet, waiting backstage were plans for many smaller privatized high schools where the purported low numbers of IPS students would attend. Perhaps if citizens were told back in 2017 of the plan to close schools and then open up others, Broad Ripple, Northwest, and Arlington would still be open.

Here are the current local privatized experimental¹ high schools:

1. KIPP [Experimental] High School
2. Purdue Polytechnic Central [Experimental] High School
3. Purdue Polytechnic North [Experimental] High School
4. Herron “Master Narrative”² [Experimental] High School
5. Riverside “Master Narrative”² [Experimental] High School
6. Victory College Prep [Experimental] High School
7. Rooted School [Experimental] High School
8. Black Expo Performing Arts Academy [Experimental] High School
9. Thrival Indy Academy [Experimental] High School
10. Believe Circle City [Experimental] High School

Shell game: This specific dismantling of IPS was done so smoothly, people hardly noticed

- *What’s tragic, Broad Ripple, Arlington or Northwest will never get a chance to vie for local/state championships/awards in sports, music, academics, the arts, debate or other competitions.*
- *This specific dismantling of IPS was done so well, people hardly noticed the shell game.*

The Bottle Works scenario

Closing IPS schools: The Indianapolis charter school experiment and real estate redevelopment for gentrification

Closing Broad Ripple put the district’s most valuable property on the auction block. Closing schools is a part of the IPS strategy to privatize the district and the city’s strategy to sustain the gentrification of Indianapolis. Note the majority real estate reps on the [2017-IPS Facilities Utilization Task Force](#). School privatization is about [land development, not schools or reform](#).

When did IPS get into the real estate business?

In 2013, the Chamber began to collude with IPS/Dr. Ferebee to rationalize the selling of taxpayer owned public assets--thus these citizens’ political/economic power--to private interests. This weakened IPS, making it ripe for takeover and an eventual privatization of the district.

Believe it or not, the IPS Board now has a section on “Real Estate” on the district’s website: <https://myips.org/district-school-board/real-estate/>

Note links to the Chamber’s recent involvement with IPS and its real estate policies/actions:

- 2013 https://edwards-moore-family.net/misc_files/IPSreportFINAL.pdf
- 2014 <https://indychamber.com/news/indy-chamber-ips-release-results-ips-operational-analysis/>
- 2014 <https://www.indystar.com/story/opinion/columnists/erika-smith/2014/02/24/erika-d-smith-right-sizing-is-right-option-for-ips/5788845/>

- 2018 <https://indychamber.com/news/indy-chamber-releases-details-on-ips-operational-assessment/>

“IPS continues its efforts to right size the district’s real estate portfolio. Since 2015, IPS has sold ten properties with an aggregate market value over \$20 million dollars with development property tax value of more than \$400 million. As important, the redevelopment projects located on the former IPS sites have contributed enormously to revitalization of urban neighborhoods within IPS boundaries.” ~ <https://myips.org/district-school-board/real-estate/>

Redevelopment/Revitalization or Gentrification? IPS and the ethnic cleansing and colonization of Indy neighborhoods

Since the late 1950s on through the 1970s, Indiana Ave has changed and the ethnic cleansing of Black Indianapolis has taken place: <https://www.newamerica.org/indianapolis/blog/indiana-avenue-ethnic-cleansing-black-indianapolis/>.

This gentrification/colonization has also taken over and erased the past and culture of these historically Black communities:

- Hosbrook St. (North Square³)
- Babe Denny Park/Concord Center area (Old Southside³)
- Riverside/Burdsal Pkwy. (16 Tech³)
- Dorman St./Highland Ave. area (Cottage Home³)
- Haughville (River West³)
- East 16th St. (Tinker St.³): Pennsylvania to College Ave and Kennedy-King Park area
- N. College Ave./Kountry Kitchen/Bellefontaine St./Yandes St./ A. J. Brown Ave. area (Monon 16³)
- Norwood, on Indy’s south side and just east of the back entrance of the new jail, is next.

More gentrified urban neighborhoods mean more mainly white middle-class families who will add to the city’s tax base. Such colonization means these families will want their children to attend the city’s boutique charters. Thus, more IPS charters and Innovation schools will be needed—all at the expense of, or the closing of, traditional IPS schools.⁴

This will enable a 2–tiered public school matrix in Indianapolis:

- one tier for the families who have the gravitas, wherewithal, and politics to choose, and
- one tier for the rest.

IPS Plan: Promote accumulation by dispossession

Accumulation by dispossession (the action of depriving someone of land or property) is where assets previously belonging to one group are put into circulation as capital for another group. Here, IPS sells its land, buildings and schools (i.e. Fletcher Ave. television studio, the Mass Ave. Coca Cola plant, E. 16th St. maintenance building, the Mallory building on E. Washington St., and schools 64, 97, 81, 78, and 92, or now possibly the Ed Center) to mainly white business interests who alone are defining the elite concept of what a future Indianapolis will look like.

Connecting the dots around the IPS Coca Cola building: Privatizing education, The Iron Works and The Bottle Works, the Sullivans, and Diane Hendricks

- Bait: The bidding for the IPS Coca Cola building contract will be fair, competitive, and transparent.
- Switch: Hendricks Commercial Properties would get the contact all along.

Concerned citizens must look into connecting the dots among former IPS Commissioner Mary Ann Sullivan, her husband [Brian Sullivan](#) of Shiel-Sexton construction company, and today's Bottle Works project renovating the former IPS Coca Cola plant on Mass Ave. The historic project was contracted out to billionaire, and devoted pro-charter personality and funder, none other than Diane Hendricks. She is [one of America's most fervent charter supporters](#) and she just happens to [top the Forbes magazine's list of richest self-made women](#). This is her 3rd year at the top, with her fortune growing from \$7 billion in 2019 to \$8 billion in 2020.

What's concerning here is the business relationship between [Shiel-Sexton and the Bottle Works](#). In fact, Diane Hendricks construction was already involved with Brian Sullivan in 2016 by way of the Hendricks/Shiel-Sexton [Iron Works](#) project off of E. 86th St.

That's why things got tight in May of 2016 when it looked like Hendricks Commercial Properties would get the \$26M Coca Cola Bottle Works contract—making Commissioner Sullivan (who adamantly shares Diane Hendricks' pro-charter politics) have to abstain from voting: “Some IPS Board members expressed hesitation before the vote, saying they didn't have enough information or shared concerns of community members. Board President Mary Ann Sullivan recused herself from acting on the real estate proposal because her husband works for contracting firm Shiel-Sexton.” Read *Indianapolis Business Journal*, April 8, 2016.

Since the situation has so much intrigue and political drama, to be fair, here are 3 different stories on the deal:

- School Matters “[Billionaire Hendricks wins IPS contract](#)”
- *Indianapolis Business Journal* “[IPS board chief recuses herself from Mass Ave land sale](#)”
- *Indianapolis Star* “[IPS board selects developer for Mass Ave. site mid concerns](#)”

Just as interesting is the “only” \$12M IPS got out of a billionaire like Diane Hendricks, when IPS could have gotten \$17.5M from Mass Ave Partners which were in cahoots with Schmidt Associates, Gene Zink's Strategic Capital Partners. See the School Matters and *Star* stories.

Here's a video view of both the [Iron Works and Bottle Works](#). The Bottle Works opened December 15, 2020: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wYKbgY_JYxQ.

The goals of TfA and grads Johnson and Brown for IPS are met: A dismantled IPS
In June of 2019, our IPS selected Aleesia Johnson as superintendent. Previously, in March of 2018, the Mind Trust introduced Mr. Brandon Brown as its new CEO. Founder [David Harris left](#) to go national. He has now taken the IPS experiment to [The City Fund](#).

Both Johnson and Brown taught for 2 years for Teach for America (TfA). As they now go about their daily responsibilities, both are hiding the influence of TfA's ideology which aims to dismantle IPS and the local teachers union.

Now Indianapolis is home of America's 2nd most privatized school district
What started out in 2001 as a push for a few local charters has grown. Today, [Indianapolis is the home of America's 2nd most privatized school system](#). New Orleans Public Schools is ranked first where every school is privatized.

Bait: “We just want to open a few charters for experimentation”

Switch: IPS is now the 2nd most privatized district in the nation

TfA’s politics and what TfA graduates are expected to do: “Lead alongside those shaping the political, economic, and social future of our country”

LEE <https://educationalequity.org/>, founded in 2007 as a spin-off of TfA, provides resources, training, and networking for TfA alumni “who are interested in elected office or other extra-curricular leadership positions.” Here is how Teach for America spreads its pro-charter ideology: infiltrate local and state systems of wealth and power with TfA graduates.

LEE: “After your 2-year commitment in the classroom, you become an alumnus of [TfA]. 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. [TfA's] alumni are providing critical leadership--as teachers, school and district leaders; elected officials and policy advisers; and founders and leaders of education and social reform initiatives--to ensure all children have the opportunity to attain an excellent education.”

In summary

Pick a school district and take it over: privatize its schools and sell off its assets

During his tenure (2013-2018), Dr. Ferebee continued the dismantling IPS by expanding privatization through the Innovation school concept as well as selling district properties.

[The Mind Trust](#) brought Teach for America to Indianapolis. TfA grad Aleesia Johnson is now IPS superintendent. TfA grad Brandon Brown now directs the Mind Trust. For all practical purposes, they lead the present IPS experiment.

But, [do we want Teach for America running our IPS?](#)

As the Bottle Works opens, the important question is *qui bono?* Who benefits?

Indianapolis is truly dichotomous; a city in which contradictions is truly the norm. It is easy to be deluded here, especially when one prefers delusion to clarity.

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1. None of the privatized high schools have been around long enough to see if their particular model is viable. Where are the years of research supporting any of these experimental high schools? It will take 3 decades or more to see if graduates go on to be successful and contributing members of society, thus validating these explorations.
2. Herron and Riverside college-prep high schools use a classical curriculum providing a [classical education](#) reflecting the [Master Narrative](#) based on the Western canon and its European/white middle-class epistemologies. For more see: [The Riverside "Master Narrative" High School: Gentrification and the new White River](#)
3. The gentrified names for these historic Black Indianapolis neighborhoods.
4. Let’s see what happens to IPS #31 as the Bates-Hendricks neighborhood continues colonizing and with 2-Chicks & a Hammer moving on S. East St., enabling the gentrification of the Lincoln St./S. East St. intersection.

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