

What was the Citizens School Committee, the most powerful, longest lasting IPS school board group that no one's ever heard of?

This breakout session will look into the history and politics of the [Citizens School Committee](#) (CSC) and go about not only trying to determine its significance, but what to do about what was discussed.

Formed in Oct. of 1921 to bring a "...new deal in management" to IPS, CSC won the Nov. 1921 election against the incumbent Better Schools League (BSL). .

Known as the "Little schools slate" or "*News Slate*" due to backing by the *Indianapolis News*, CSC meant to control the IPS budget by limiting the proposed BSL building program. The issue split the city. Democrats and businesses liked the CSC. The GOP, the *Indianapolis Star*, and Klan sought to fix the old schools and build new ones. GOP's Lew Shank became mayor, but his voters spilt their ticket. The democrat-backed CSC won.¹

After the Nov. 1921 election, CSC all but reneged on its pledge by overseeing the perpetuation and growth of what was already a segregated school district in a Jim Crow city. What made this white supremacist elected civic body infamous was that in 1922-24, it oversaw the creation of a racist system of high schools: Attucks, Washington, a new Shortridge, and an expanded Manual. IPS had become a segregated district based not only on a hierarchy of color, but ethnicity/nationality, religion, class, neighborhood, and occupation/vocation.¹

Attention must be paid to the late 1922 background co-scheme and its seemingly separate negotiations around a new north-side Shortridge and the Butler College (known then as the "Shortridge Annex" because of the number of Shortridge grads enrolled) and its move from Irvington to Fairview Park. Both schools would open in their new north-side locations in the fall of 1928.

As suggested, CSC was not alone. This 1922 decision was also affected by the local [Chamber](#); racist cartoons in the *Star*,² racist editorials in the *Times*;³ the racism of Butler College and its president, Dr. Robert Aley;⁴ and the north-side middle-class citizens of the [Federation of Civic Clubs](#). Even Shortridge Principal [George Buck](#) wanted an Attucks. Question: Were any of the above mentioned Klan members?

What is truly ironic is that this bigoted body lost the 1925 IPS school board election to an equally bigoted body in the form of the Protestant School ticket of the KKK. This meant that none other than the Klan would be carrying-out the racist 1922 CSC decisions for Jim Crow high schools and an expanded segregated K-8 district. What's even more interesting is that this choice between "gasoline and dynamite" reoccurred in the [1929 IPS election](#) where a recharged CSC ticket again ran against KKK, and won this time.

Revived in the 1930s by Judge John Niblack, and later by co-conspirator Bill Book of the Chamber, CSC ran IPS, unopposed, from 1930 to 1968 when it lost to [Non-Partisans for Better Schools](#)--and then disappeared.

As post-1968 political and racial tensions grew due to the US Justice Department suit to integrate IPS, "white flight" began. IPS 1967 enrollment was 108,743 students (32% Black). To some, [UNIGOV ensured de-facto segregation](#) in IPS. To others, it was a [benefit](#). By 2003, IPS had 40,084 students (57% Black). Today,⁵ just 22,928 students are enrolled (40% Black/31% Latino). Questions: Was UNIGOV racist? Does the CSC live on?

What? So what? Now what?

1. [1920s events leading up to and through the creation of Attucks and Washington and the relocation of Cathedral, Shortridge, and Butler College.](#)

2. [07.26.21 Racist children's activity "Drawing Lessons for Our Kiddies: A bottle of Ink turned into a pickaninny" Indianapolis Star](#) and [11.16.22 Racist Cartoon "Roger Bean" Indianapolis Star](#)

3. [04.28.22 "The Negro Problem" Editorial Indianapolis Times](#)

4. [08.25.27 Butler President Aley to Lionel Artis of YMCA on quota limiting new Black students to 10 per year](#)

5. <https://inview.doe.in.gov/corporations/1053850000/population>