

School reform group gets \$3.5M gift from Lilly Endowment Brings Mind Trust close to fundraising goal

The Mind Trust is nearing its \$18 million fundraising goal more than a year ahead of its 2013 deadline.

The Lilly Endowment announced Friday it would more than double a multimillion-dollar commitment to The Mind Trust, an Indianapolis-based school reform organization.

A new \$3.5 million gift brings the endowment's contributions to The Mind Trust's Grow What Works fundraising campaign to \$5.5 million this year. That means the campaign, launched in May, has raised about \$15 million.

"We're obviously well ahead of schedule," said The Mind Trust's founder and CEO, David Harris.

The new money will be aimed at supporting one of The Mind Trust's major goals -- to attract high-quality teachers to Indianapolis. The goal is to recruit, train and place 350 teachers and school leaders through Teach for America and The New Teacher Project, two national alternative teacher training programs already supported locally by The Mind Trust.

Teach for America focuses on recent college graduates, while The New Teacher Project recruits career-changers for high-need teaching jobs, such as math, science and special education.

They are two of six education reform organizations that The Mind Trust has targeted for expansion in Marion County through the fundraising campaign. The others are College Summit, a summer training program for high school students; Summer Advantage USA, which operates summer schools; and the school reform advocacy groups Stand for Children and Teach Plus.

The Mind Trust's fundraising also supports its education entrepreneur fellowship, which funds new ideas in education reform, and its charter school incubator, a new effort to grow charter schools in Indianapolis.

"Teach for America and The New Teacher Project teachers are achieving positive results for students, and are therefore playing an important role in closing the achievement gap in Indianapolis," Lilly Endowment Vice President Sara B. Cobb said in a statement.

The Mind Trust was founded by former Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson along with Harris, who previously headed Peterson's charter school office.

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