

One important concept discovered in the oral history of IPS: The continuing influence on IPS by the Indianapolis business community

Summary: A major theme emerging out of the oral history of IPS project is that local business elites, especially in the form of the Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce, have influenced and continue to influence IPS since the early 1920s.

A short history of our IPS: the business model for public education

The history of our IPS is not always good. In fact, in many cases it is notorious. From segregated grade schools in the early part of the 20th century, long before the KKK school board ran IPS for 4 years (1926-1930), to its 43 years of segregated high schools (1927-1970)--based not only on color, but class and religion--our IPS has not been the example of equal educational opportunity for all.

To illustrate, from 1922-1926 and from 1930 to the late 60's, business elites had complete control of the district through the edu-political monopoly of the Citizens School Committee ('Better Schools,' 1959) and Judge John Niblack (McCarty, 1951) until 1964. It was then that Indy's Non-Partisans for Better Schools candidate John C. Ruckelshaus won a seat on the IPS board.

Due to the sustained control of local conservative social, economic, political forces, IPS continued to avoid *Brown v. Board*. Although a federal lawsuit was brought in 1968, the case did not come to trial until 1971 when IPS was found guilty of practicing *de jure* segregation. The case, along with subsequently related trials, was held in the Federal District Court of Southern Indiana before Hon. S. Hugh Dillin. Although there were many changes instituted in the school district as a result of the lawsuit, the most dramatic consequence was the decision to impose one-way busing (black children were bused out of the inner city to the predominantly white township of Perry) to achieve integration. Bussing instigated the exodus of mainly White families from IPS which has lost roughly 100,000 students between 1975 and 2014.

The consumer, not the citizen runs the show

There has been only a very few years when our IPS has not been controlled by business elites (Geib, 1990; Moore, 1997; Pierce, 2005); maybe there are none. Today, we have the continued control of our IPS by the business community via the corporate vision of school reform based on the business model of efficiency and productivity. The "cold rapture" of the market trumps civic imagination. *The economy becomes the sole value of education. The consumer, not the citizen runs the show.*

The Mind Trust, the Chamber of Commerce, and Mayor Ballard's Office of Education Innovation each support a corporate marketing "school choice" agenda that can privatize our public schools giving parents options, but no voice (Loflin & Evans, 2012).

Current IPS Commissioner Hannon's 2012 campaign chest was filled with unprecedented amounts of donations from national-level business elites and organizations (Loflin, 2013). Already some school board candidates are publically supported by the chamber (Martin, 2014). In fact current at-large IPS candidate Mary Ann Sullivan is the wife of Chamber of Commerce board member Brian Sullivan.

More on the continued control of local public education by business elites: The new *Brown v. Board* via school reform and bourgeois-segregation

The conservative social, economic, political atmosphere enabled 1920's decisions about IPS (Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce, 1922; Moore, 1997). Such control by business-elite is resurrected in the present corporate reform "standards" movement (PBS.org, n.d.) and its "business model" of education (Bennett, 2013) in IPS via the Mind Trust Plan (Ravitch, 2012).

This present local corporate reform model is backed by the Indy chamber (Martin, 2011) and has the potential of the creating of a 2-tiered Marion County schooling system (Evans & Loflin, 2010) that places the *Brown vs. Board* decision regarding race under the influence of a present "neo-colonial" politics of education (Codrington, J. & Fairchild, 2012).

Now class is brought in; now we are back to before 1954. Bourgeois-segregation under the "The New *Brown v. Board*" happens by "school choice" (Resseger, 2013); school lotteries; an increase in private schools (mainly Protestant); special education placements; punitive alternative schools

(Vanderhaar, Petrosko & Muñoz, n.d.); zero tolerance, standardized test scores, and “pushing out” students (Lewin & Medina, 2003; Advancement Project, 2010; Schott Foundation, 2012); families “self-selecting” out (Pulliam, 2013); “social cleansing” via mandatory school uniforms (requires conformity and compliance alienating some urban families/students); privatization (Resseger, 2013); gentrification (Badger, 2014); education reform (Ross, 1999); busting teacher unions to quell organized resistance to marketization (Strauss, 2014); and state budget cuts to public schools (Carden, 2009)--all based on class and ability, not color.

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