

**EMBARGOED UNTIL
DECEMBER 18, 2011
12:01 AM**



MEDIA CONTACTS
Gail Payne, 317.985.5523 m
gpayne@TheMindTrust.org
David Harris, 317.822.8102 o
dharris@TheMindTrust.org

THE MIND TRUST RELEASES BOLD PLAN FOR TRANSFORMING IPS BY SHRINKING AND RESTRUCTURING CENTRAL OFFICE AND GIVING TALENTED PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS MORE AUTONOMY AND RESOURCES

INDIANAPOLIS, IN -- The Mind Trust today released a bold plan for transforming Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) that would dramatically shrink and restructure the central administration, send about \$200 million more a year to schools without raising taxes, provide universal prekindergarten to all 4-year-olds, give teachers and principals more autonomy in exchange for more accountability, and provide parents with more quality school choices. It is the boldest urban reform plan in the United States.

In developing its plan, The Mind Trust engaged local and national experts to analyze high-performing urban public schools across the country and distill the key conditions for their success— autonomy, accountability, and parental choice. Crafted after a year of research and design, The Mind Trust’s plan presents a new vision for how IPS and other urban districts could be restructured to create these conditions for all public schools.

Under The Mind Trust’s plan, \$188 million a year would be reallocated to schools by shrinking and refocusing the central office on targeted activities. Funding and responsibility for most services would shift to schools. Schools could use the funds to provide or purchase the services they need, such as curriculum, school lunches, and building maintenance, and do whatever it takes to support student needs, like extending the school day or year, paying great teachers more, and purchasing new technology.

The plan also calls for reallocating up to: \$14 million a year for free, high-quality pre-K for all IPS four-year olds; \$7.5 million a year to help start excellent new schools; and \$2.5 million a year to recruit and develop the next generation of great teachers and school leaders. *All aspects of this new design could be funded with existing resources.*

The smaller and more efficient IPS central office would no longer directly run schools. It would focus instead on a handful of targeted functions: setting high standards and holding schools accountable; replacing failing programs with quality new schools; managing a district-wide choice and enrollment process; overseeing the New School Incubation and Talent Development Funds; and distributing funds for high-quality prekindergarten. The central office also would manage facilities, transportation, and special education — although schools could contract with other providers over time.

The plan also would break down the confusing distinctions among traditional district, public charter, and magnet schools. These are simply legal terms and none connote quality. The Mind Trust’s plan proposes a unifying designation for all high-quality public schools within IPS boundaries that are given the conditions to succeed: “Opportunity Schools.”

In The Mind Trust's plan, over time all schools in IPS would become Opportunity Schools, once they have strong leadership teams in place and meet high standards. They would keep that status only if they perform at high levels and attract enough students. In return, all Opportunity Schools would control more resources and be guaranteed autonomy over staffing, budgeting, setting the school culture and other key decisions. Plus, they would be schools of choice, so parents could send their children to the school that best meets their needs.

The Mind Trust's plan calls for bold changes because the current system is broken - - in IPS and in large cities around the country. Despite a 61% increase in per pupil funding over the last two decades *adjusted for inflation*, IPS is among the lowest performing districts in the country. Only 45% of students pass state tests in reading and math, and about 58% graduate on time. "Decades of failure demonstrate that it's not the people who are at fault, it's the system. Most IPS schools don't have the conditions that research shows schools need to succeed. This plan creates those conditions," said David Harris, Founder and CEO, The Mind Trust.

"We know that poverty's a major challenge, but around the country a growing number of schools are achieving remarkable success with students just like ours. Schools like CFI and school networks like YES Prep, KIPP, and Achievement First are proving that all kids can achieve at high levels. If they can do it, we have an obligation to ensure IPS schools have the conditions and talent that will achieve similar success with all students," Harris said.

To carry out the new vision, the plan recommends that the mayor take responsibility for the schools by appointing three members of a new five-person school board; the City-County Council would appoint the other two. The plan states that while no system of governance is perfect, mayoral accountability is much better than the alternatives: continuing the catastrophic status quo with the current school board or having the state take over all IPS schools. "The only way to make a plan this bold happen and succeed is if it stays at the top of the city's agenda for years. The mayor is best positioned to provide this sustained leadership," the plan says.

Everyone would benefit under The Mind Trust's plan. Students would be better prepared for college, careers, and life. Teachers would have more freedom to innovate around curriculum and instruction. Principals would have the autonomy to build their own teams, reward great educators, and develop an achievement-driven school culture. Parents would have many more quality school choices. And with better schools in every neighborhood, Indianapolis residents would have higher property values and more accountability for how their tax dollars are spent.

Copies of *Creating Opportunity Schools: A Bold Plan to Transform IPS* and related background and summary materials are available at www.TheMindTrust.org.

###