Changing the Equation

Annual Report 2013
Since The Mind Trust launched in 2006, we’ve operated on the belief that re-shaping the education system requires a key ingredient: talented people. We’ve been relentlessly focused on unleashing local talent and attracting the best innovators from across the country to improve our city’s education landscape. Last year we made dramatic strides in our efforts.

In 2013, our first Education Entrepreneur Fellowship candidate from Indianapolis, Mariama Carson, applied for the $250,000 award. The 17-year Pike Township educator and winner of the nationally prestigious Milken Educator Award received the fellowship in May 2014, making Mariama our eighth fellow to be selected from more than 3,600 applicants since 2008.

Mariama most recently served as principal at Snacks Crossing Elementary, where she helped raise student pass-rates by 22 points in five years. She will begin her fellowship in August and will design a Spanish language immersion charter school.

We know that for talented people such as Carson to maximize their effectiveness in impacting students, it’s critical that we create the right landscape, and that includes cultivating a better understanding of The Mind Trust’s work and mission among people who are most impacted by education change. In 2013 we embarked on a serious effort to do that.

We expanded our team to focus on the work of community engagement and build relationships across the city with a broad cross-section of leaders who can be allies in our efforts. Among the highlights of those efforts was hosting an event featuring former U.S. Secretary of State Dr. Condoleezza Rice, who shared her message of education change with more than 800 people from across the community.

Creating the right landscape for talented people to thrive also requires creating a policy landscape in which innovation can flourish. We advanced that goal last year by working with a bipartisan and diverse coalition of community leaders to address two long-standing education challenges: the vast underuse of school buildings that puts schools at risk of closure, which devastates neighborhoods; and the lack of access to high quality pre-K. This group, the Lewis Hubbard Group, is led by Maggie Lewis, President of the Indianapolis City-County Council, and Al Hubbard, a businessman and former Director of the National Economic Council during George W. Bush’s administration.

The Lewis Hubbard Group made a powerful impact by bringing the issue of school facilities underuse into focus. The group’s elevation of the issue has helped to captivate the attention of some of the state’s most influential leaders, including Gov. Mike Pence, who highlighted the group’s data on the financial impact of facilities underuse in introducing his 2014 legislative agenda.

The group also was pleased to see the issue of underused facilities make its way into the legislative discussion. In 2014, the Indiana General Assembly passed Public Law 1321 (PL 1321), which enables education leaders to launch high quality, autonomous schools—Innovation Network Schools—in place of low performing and underused schools in Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS).

This law marks a historic shift in the policy landscape and provides our city a unique opportunity to unleash the power of education talent in a way that drives systemic change from within the district.

In 2014, we launched a new initiative, the Innovation School Fellowship, to maximize the power of PL 1321. The fellowship will provide innovative education leaders a rare opportunity to receive a full salary and benefits so they have a year to design and launch their schools, plus counsel from national and local experts, opportunities to visit high performing schools, and other support. They’ll also receive counsel from national and local experts, opportunities to visit high performing schools across the country, and other professional support so they can equip their schools for success.

Over the long term, we hope this fellowship will show what’s possible when the power of talent is unleashed within IPS—and thereby create a district filled with high quality, autonomous schools, much like the vision we presented in our 2011 Creating Opportunity Schools report.

There’s no perfect equation for achieving long-term education change, but by focusing on the key element—talent—we have made a significant impact on more than 113,000 Indianapolis students. With your continued support, we’re confident that our work will add up to something outstanding for the city: more students with opportunities to achieve their innate potential and succeed.

Thanks, as always, for making our work possible.

Sincerely,

David Harris, Founder and CEO
The Mind Trust
By the end of PLA’s first year, scholars showed impressive academic growth.

Makayla’s time at PLA—a new school launched in August 2013 through The Mind Trust’s Charter School Incubator—changed that. In only six months, she had grown by a year in math and a year and a half in reading, and she had stellar behavior.

"One minute she wasn’t reading at all, and then the next she read me a whole book," Hearn-Lindsay said of her daughter’s progress. "She’s just excited about school and learning."

Many of the 157 students at the flagship PLA school have had similarly transformative experiences. By the end of the 2013-14 school year, 84 percent of PLA students, called “scholars,” were at or above grade level in math, and 92 percent were at or above grade level in reading.

PLA, founded by The Mind Trust’s former Education Entrepreneur Fellow Earl Martin Phalen, was one of the first two recipients of The Mind Trust’s Charter School Incubator awards. The school currently serves kindergarten, first, and second grade students but will add prekindergarten and third grade in the 2014-15 school year. And eventually Phalen plans to grow PLA into a network of schools serving 10,000 students.
The keys to PLA’s early success are its longer school day and year, its academic rigor, and its focus on individualized learning. Scholars at PLA follow a blended learning model—a mix of traditional teacher instruction, small-group work, and computer-based learning—that allows for more individualized learning. They also rotate between music, art, Spanish, and physical education every day and attend enrichment classes ranging from African drumming to book clubs each afternoon. Hearn-Lindsey, who leads the school’s PTO, attributes Makalya’s success to the academic focus PLA’s model requires for students. Her ability to engage as a parent with teachers and school leaders also has been critical. She recalled walking out of a meeting one day and spotting Phalen, the founder, working at a table in the middle of a computer lab, surrounded by scholars.

“I thought, where else would you see this?” she said. “When you come from a traditional school background, you often feel like you cannot talk to staff. At Phalen, this is different.”

The Mind Trust awarded its second round of Charter School Incubator awards in 2013 to help launch more schools like Phalen Leadership Academy. One of the nation’s best charter school networks—KIPP—received $1 million to expand its life-changing model in Indianapolis. The Mind Trust also granted $250,000 to Tindley Accelerated Schools to double the size of its all-girls college-preparatory middle school, Tindley Collegiate Academy. To celebrate these awardees, The Mind Trust hosted an event in September featuring former NBC anchor and The Mind Trust board member Jane Pauley and KIPP co-founder Mike Feinberg.

The success of PLA and the transformation of students like Makayla are testaments to the impact of the Charter School Incubator.

The Mind Trust plans to help launch additional schools in coming years—both through the Charter School Incubator and the Innovation School Fellowship, an initiative launched in 2014 to equip education leaders to launch more high quality, autonomous schools within IPS.

After all, more students deserve the chance to attend schools that make them eager to wake up in the morning.
Before entering Mariama Carson’s classroom, Joshua Johnson struggled with school since he was 2.

Joshua, who has Asperger’s Syndrome, had been turned away from 10 schools by the time he’d reached fourth grade. But that year he found his way to Carson’s classroom at Eagle Creek Elementary School in Pike Township—an experience that changed his trajectory.

“It’s been incredible,” Joshua’s father, Jeff Johnson said in a video interview for the Milken Educator Award, which Carson won in 2004. “We’ve had school problems since he was two, and being turned away from 10 different schools was very hard. Then we found Mrs. Carson. I wish [Joshua] could go back to fourth grade so he could have her for two more years.”

During her decade as a teacher in Pike Township, Carson made an impact on hundreds of students like Joshua before becoming Assistant Principal at Snacks Crossing Elementary School in 2007.

At Snacks Crossing, she had a similarly significant impact on a school-wide level. In 2009, Carson took over as principal at the school, which at the time received a D rating from the Indiana Department of Education. In four years she transformed Snacks Crossing, where 75 percent of students qualify for free or reduced price lunch, into a B school. ISTEP+ scores rose by 14 points in reading and 22 points in math.

Now Carson wants to use her talent as an educator and school leader to launch her own public charter school focusing on the students most in need. The Mind Trust’s Education Entrepreneur Fellowship will enable her to do that.

“"My life’s calling is helping all students to reach their innate potential, and I’ve been so grateful for the opportunity to do that as a teacher and school leader.”

Mariama Carson, The Mind Trust’s eighth Education Entrepreneur Fellow
Carson will be The Mind Trust’s first Education Entrepreneur Fellow from Indianapolis and the first fellow to launch a charter school.

Carson will be The Mind Trust’s first Indianapolis Education Entrepreneur Fellow and the first fellow to launch a charter school.

Through the Education Entrepreneur Fellowship, The Mind Trust equips talented education innovators like Carson to launch initiatives that address key challenges in Indianapolis’ education landscape. The Mind Trust’s seventh fellowship initiative is The Expectations Project, which mobilizes members of faith communities to become advocates for high-quality educational options. The organization grew in 2013 hiring Jeffry Woods as its Indianapolis Regional Director and expanding its relationships with faith communities across the city.

Through the Education Entrepreneur Fellowship, The Mind Trust has provided talented education leaders with opportunities to create programs, including those that close the summer learning gap for low-income students, retain excellent urban teachers, and improve the abysmal academic outcomes among foster youth.

For Carson, the Education Entrepreneur Fellowship will provide a way to change the life trajectories of thousands more students.

“As a classroom teacher, my goal was to get students to believe in themselves as learners and establish a collective society that supports one another,” Carson said. “Because of The Mind Trust’s Education Entrepreneur Fellowship, I will be able to create these outcomes on a school-wide scale and, in doing so, give many more students the chance to unleash their potential and succeed.”

“...carter school sponsoring have since birthed another major new educational player in the city and state. The non-profit group, The Mind Trust, created a rare example of an education entrepreneur fellowship, which aims to fund the development of innovative educational ideas on the condition that the entrepreneurs try their new ideas first in Indianapolis.”

—Scott Elliott, “Why Indiana Matters When It Comes To Education,” Chalkbeat Indiana, October 21, 2013
Across the country, efforts to dramatically improve public education have led to student success. But to maximize these efforts—and to ensure they are sustainable—it is critical that the parents and communities most impacted by education reform are invested in the changes taking place.

To achieve this, in 2013 The Mind Trust embarked on an effort to engage the communities most affected by education change in our work and mission. In April 2013, The Mind Trust hired Kameelah Shaheed-Diallo to spearhead the work. Under her leadership, The Mind Trust has developed and begun executing on a strategic plan to increase awareness about education reform and grow the number of reform advocates.

Among the key initiatives is hosting a series of listening sessions in partnership with United Negro College Fund, the nation’s largest and most effective minority education organization. These sessions, which began in 2013 and have continued in 2014, engage faith leaders, community activists, education leaders, and other key stakeholders in the African American community in a conversation about improving educational opportunities for students in Indianapolis.

Sekou Biddle, UNCF’s Vice President for Advocacy who has worked in urban education reform for almost two decades and served on the District of Columbia State Board of Education, facilitates these conversations, which are natural extensions of the work of Andrea Neely, UNCF Regional Development Director, Indiana. These conversations have generated great momentum. “The listening sessions hosted by UNCF and The Mind Trust are vitally important,” said Biddle. “The reality is that sometimes we forget that public education is an institution and that the public has an obligation to push the system to work appropriately. Organizations need to spend more time informing the public about the knowledge they have acquired so that people have a better sense of what the possibilities are in public education.”

The Mind Trust’s community engagement strategy will continue to engage the public in these crucial conversations. The organization plans to host bus tours that will include visits to high quality schools and feature compelling speakers, as well as host a high profile event to bring the community together and engage the next generation of leaders through a year long education program. The Mind Trust will also continue meeting one-on-one and in small groups with a wide range of key leaders throughout the community, with a special emphasis on key influencers.

“Let’s agree on one thing: The status quo is not acceptable.”

Former U.S. Secretary of State, Dr. Condoleezza Rice, speaking at Indianapolis’ Light of the World Christian Church on September 19, 2013.
In September 2013, The Mind Trust broadened its community reach by hosting a major engagement event featuring former U.S. Secretary of State, Dr. Condoleezza Rice. Dr. Rice spoke at Light of the World Christian Church to more than 800 people in an hour-long program focused on education equity.

By continuing these community engagement efforts, The Mind Trust can help to spread the message about the power of its work to an audience that has a key interest in its success. “We need to continue to help people understand what success stories look like and shift the expectation,” Biddle said, “so that these success stories are less of the exception and more of the rule.”

In doing this, we will ensure that our work not only has an impact on thousands of students, but that it can be sustained—to the benefit of generations to come.

“As a community, we need to admit that there is a sizable gap between where we are and where we need to be. We’re working to develop a collective sense of urgency about the need to provide great schools for all children.”

— Sekou Biddle, Vice President for Advocacy, UNCF
Indianapolis City-County Council President Maggie Lewis is a social worker and public administrator by trade who leads an Indianapolis-based social services agency. She is both the highest-ranking local Democrat in Indianapolis and the first woman to serve as President of the city’s governing body. Al Hubbard is a businessman and former chairman of the Indiana Republican Party who served in both Bush presidential administrations, most recently as former Director of the National Economic Council under President George W. Bush.

Though their resumes reflect different political ideologies, they’re closely aligned on an issue they both see as critical to the future of our city and nation: K-12 education.

In September 2013, they announced a partnership to launch a group of 16 diverse and bipartisan community leaders—formed in collaboration with The Mind Trust—to tackle two key education challenges facing Indianapolis: the severe underuse of buildings within the city’s largest district, IPS, that poses the threat they will close and significantly harm neighborhoods, and the need for broader access to high quality pre-K.

The coalition—called the Lewis Hubbard Group—spent the last months of 2013 and early 2014 delving into those issues through readings, careful study and fact-finding trips to New Orleans and Miami, where they met with leaders such as Louisiana Recovery School District Superintendent Patrick Dobard and former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush.

In a short time the Lewis Hubbard Group has precipitated a huge shift in the community conversation about underused school facilities. Because of the group’s efforts, the issue became part of the public dialogue and a focus of high-ranking leaders, including Indiana Gov. Mike Pence, who cited research on the issue from the Lewis Hubbard Group in a key speech introducing his 2014 legislative agenda.

The group also was pleased to see the challenge of underused school buildings raised as part of key legislation that passed in the 2014 legislative session. The law, Public Law 1321, enables IPS to select talented leaders to launch autonomous schools in vacant IPS buildings, in co-location with unused and low-performing schools, or in place of chronically underperforming schools.

“As a mother of a school-aged son and a lifelong Indiana resident, I believe one of the key investments we can make for Indiana’s future is making sure all children have access to an excellent education,” Lewis said. “To do that it’s critical that we address these long-standing challenges by developing bold solutions. The status quo isn’t acceptable.”

Hubbard agreed on the need for dramatic change and believes the Lewis Hubbard Group provides a vehicle for driving it.

Students at Phalen Leadership Academy participating in a Zumba dance class as part of a daily enrichment course.

“ The Mind Trust is also welcomed as a third party to guide city-wide policy. Its Creating Opportunity Schools report has defined the conversation on school reform in Indianapolis since its release in 2011.”

Caitrin Nicol, Philanthropy, Summer 2013
“Along with national defense, improving education is the most pressing challenge we face as a nation,” Hubbard said. “I am committed to addressing the inequity in educational opportunities in our community, and I believe the Lewis Hubbard Group is a way to drive positive educational change.”

The Mind Trust’s work with the Lewis Hubbard Group also follows the organization’s long-term commitment to advance bold policy initiatives that create a landscape where great schools can thrive. In 2013, The Mind Trust raised awareness about the risk Indiana’s proliferation of charter school authorizers poses to the quality of the state’s charter sector by partnering with the Indianapolis City-County Council’s Vice President John Barth to host a panel discussion on the topic at the Council’s Community Affairs Committee meeting.

The Mind Trust’s Founder and CEO, David Harris, also authored four op-eds in the Indianapolis Star in 2013, including one calling for more public resources for successful charter schools and education organizations, such as Teach For America. Securing more equitable funding for public charter schools and strong organizations serving Indianapolis’ public school students is a major focus of The Mind Trust’s work.

But transforming the policy landscape in Indianapolis wouldn’t be possible without the work of community leaders such as the Lewis Hubbard Group members. Especially leaders who, like Lewis and Hubbard, are willing to reach across the aisle to advance a cause that is critically important to the future of the city and its students.

“We’ve been struggling for a long time with trying to bring about fundamental change. It seems like we are tinkering all the time. We just can no longer afford to tinker. We are losing kids every single day and we need to make sure that every kid in our city has an opportunity to get a great education.”

— David Harris, The Mind Trust’s Founder and CEO, in WFYI Public Radio report about the Lewis Hubbard Group, Sept. 19, 2013
The injustice of the educational reality for most Indianapolis students drove David Harris to work in education reform. From Harris’ early days launching former Mayor Bart Peterson’s Charter School Initiative, the abysmal outcomes among underserved children in Indianapolis and across the nation were apparent. Changing that paradigm, Harris believes, is not only a moral imperative; it’s critical to the well being of our community.

In 2013, Harris shared his personal commitment to education on the national stage as part of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation’s “Profiles of Change” series.

The initiative included a video campaign highlighting nine education reform advocates from across the nation who have worked to dramatically improve their local education systems. Among the other featured advocates were former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush and Kenneth L. Campbell, President of the Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO).

The Profiles of Change campaign kicked off with a panel discussion at the U.S. Chamber in Washington, D.C., that was moderated by former NPR senior correspondent and Fox News contributor Juan Williams.

Through Profiles of Change, Harris shared his story of the powerful work The Mind Trust is doing to ensure that every Indianapolis child receives a high quality education.
So many of the kids in our community and around the country aren’t being given the opportunity to fully develop their God-given talents because of the education system,” Harris said in the Profiles of Change video, which has received close to 19,500 views since it was posted in October 2013. “It’s fundamental to the health of our city and to the health of our country that we make sure kids develop their talents.”

Harris started The Mind Trust in 2006, along with former Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson, to create a landscape in which talented people are empowered to develop and implement outside-the-box plans to transform the city’s public education system. Today, because of The Mind Trust’s efforts, Indianapolis is better positioned than at any point in its history—and than virtually every city in the country—to dramatically transform its K–12 education system.

“One word to describe us is relentless,” Harris said in the video. “We’re constantly thinking, ‘What more can we do?’”

“The fact is, Indianapolis, and Indiana generally, has begun to rival those other places mentioned above [New York City, New Orleans, and Washington D.C.] that everyone knows when it comes to education...as one of the most interesting places to watch.”

— Scott Elliott “Why Indiana Matters When It Comes to Education”

Chalkbeat Indiana, October 21, 2013
Jane Pauley’s journey to becoming a Today Show co-anchor began in a Warren Township public school classroom. She remembers beaming with excitement the nights before her class shared show-and-tell and the warm, welcoming smile of her talented teacher.

Pauley wants all students, regardless of circumstances, to have excellent public school experiences like she did. That’s why she has served on The Mind Trust’s board of directors for the last three years – and why she has made generous financial contributions to our work.

As Pauley explained in a 2013 Indianapolis Business Journal column, she believes The Mind Trust’s work has positioned Indianapolis to make dramatic strides toward giving all students excellent educational opportunities.

“Everything I’ve seen in the last three years has convinced me that Indianapolis is poised to dramatically overhaul its K-12 system so that every student has the opportunity to succeed,” Pauley wrote.

Pauley’s passion—and her generosity—helped inspire a new initiative of The Mind Trust: an individual giving society.

In 2013, The Mind Trust launched the Torchbearer Society, a group of civic-minded individuals who care deeply about improving public education and know the powerful impact their support can make to change the lives of students and the future of Indianapolis.
Through the Torchbearer Society, The Mind Trust aims not only to more deeply engage its supporters, but also to tap into their curiosity about local and national education reform.

Members pledge a minimum of $5,000 annually for three years, and they receive opportunities to hear from nationally renowned education experts and tour high-performing schools and education organizations in the city. The Torchbearer Society’s first speaking event featured Neerav Kingsland, a key architect of the dramatic transformation of New Orleans’ public school system and the CEO of New Schools for New Orleans.

“A student at KIPP Indy, a school supported by The Mind Trust’s Charter School Incubator.

“Indianapolis is poised for education change, and it didn’t take a catastrophe like in New Orleans or an economic collapse like in Detroit to catalyze it. What it took was strong leadership, focused work and a big idea: Innovators drive change. I have discovered my hometown has a unique history of strong leadership and community-driven buy-in to innovation. This is a historic moment for Indianapolis. To paraphrase a familiar refrain, if we can do it here, it can be done anywhere.”

—Jane Pauley, “Indianapolis is an education epicenter,” Indianapolis Business Journal, March 11-17, 2013
The Mind Trust, Inc.
Summarized Statement of Financial Position
For the twelve months ending December 31, 2013

Assets
Cash & investments ......................................... $6,923,099
Receivables & prepaid expenses............................... $2,907,259
Fixed assets .................................................. $49,213
Total assets ................................................ $9,879,571

Liabilities and net assets
Accounts payable (includes accrued liabilities)..................... $47,199
Grants payable.............................................. $1,874,366
Total liabilities.............................................. $1,921,565
Unrestricted net assets ...................................... $1,042,648
Temporary restricted net assets............................... $6,915,358
Total net assets ............................................. $7,958,006
Total liabilities and net assets ................................ $9,879,571

The Mind Trust, Inc.
Summarized Statement of Activities
For the twelve months ending December 31, 2013

Revenue/support
Gifts, grants, & sponsorships to The Mind Trust ................. $6,952,826
Interest & dividends ........................................ $23,139
Total revenue and support ................................ $6,975,965

Expenditures
Investments in partner organizations’ program and Initiatives . . . $5,972,676
The Mind Trust’s programs and initiatives ....................... $2,046,439
Management and general ..................................... $338,374
Fundraising ................................................. $248,985
Total expenses ............................................. $8,606,474

2013 Financial report
2013 Financial report
2013 Contributors

The Mind Trust is so grateful for the generous support of its contributors who are helping change the equation and improve education opportunities for all Indianapolis students.

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