



OUR SCHOOLS, OUR CHILDREN, OUR CHOICE

A Report On Public School Enrollment In Indianapolis

APRIL 2021

EMPOWERED FAMILIES' MISSION:

We build family power through relationships and rallying behind the strengths of parents to weave together the home, school, and community, in order to fight for highquality education.

EmpowerED Families connects with Indianapolis parents, families, community, and school leaders to help build parent power and to activate change.

LEARN MORE AT EMPOWEREDFAMILIESINDY.ORG



WHAT WE DO:



LISTEN

EmpowerED Families believes in the value of conversation and provides a safe space for parents and educators to share their needs and concerns. We host one-on-one meetings and small group conversations that we call "House Meetings."

EDUCATE

EmpowerED Families teaches parents ways to effectively advocate for high-quality education within the schools that their children attend. Events and trainings are hosted to enable parents, educators, and families to learn and grow together.

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ORGANIZE

EmpowerED Families helps parents and families realize the power of their own voice to activate change. We help parents organize to create urgency around the issues that are most important to them.

LEAD

EmpowerED Families activates parents to realize their own power and to step into leadership within schools and in communities. Our movement is led by families for families.

A MESSAGE FROM

PARENTS







Delma Suber Clare Pope Kisha Walker

As parents, we feel a big responsibility to make sure the choices we make are what is best for our children. We want what every parent wants — to set our children up for success so they can live out their dreams and purpose. Our kids all have different needs and interests, and we appreciate that the variety of school options in Indianapolis ensures we don't have to limit our choice to a boundary based on where we live.

We hope that when you read this report, you remember that each number represents a child and their family who has chosen a school that works for them. Every child, no matter what school they attend, deserves an education and school that will honor their needs, recognize their genius, and prepare them for a lifetime of success. Thank you for reading this report and learning more about our stories.

Alexandra Hall (not pictured), Clare Pope, Delma Suber, and Kisha Walker EmpowerED Families Parent Advocates

GLOSSARY

This report is full of valuable information to help inform parents of their options to choose a school that is right for their family. Here are the definitions of key terms used throughout the report.

CONVERTED SCHOOLS are existing district-run schools that seek out *Innovation Network School* status within *IPS*.

DISTRICT-RUN SCHOOLS are free, public schools that are managed by a school district. Decisions about how these schools work, including school start and end times, teacher pay, and programs offered, are made through the school district.

INDEPENDENT CHARTER SCHOOLS

are free, public schools managed by a nonprofit board and are not part of a school district. However, like all public schools, they must follow state and federal rules, such as providing special education services to students with *Individualized Education Programs* (*IEPs*). Charter schools must accept all students who wish to enroll, as long as spaces remain available.

INDIANAPOLIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS (IPS)

is the state's largest public school district, made up of district-run schools and *Innovation Network Schools*, which are managed by nonprofit boards and have more autonomy to make schoollevel decisions.

INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION

PROGRAMS (IEPs) are legal agreements developed and put in place to make sure students who qualify for special education services receive them so they can reach their full potential. Students must be evaluated to determine if they are eligible to receive special education services.

IPS INNOVATION NETWORK SCHOOLS

are free public schools within the *IPS* district that have more autonomy to make decisions about their operations than district-run schools. They may participate in some district services, like transportation.

MAGNET SCHOOLS are free public schools that are part of a district that families can choose for their child. In *IPS*, programs like Montessori and Center for Inquiry are offered.

RESTARTED SCHOOLS are schools with consistently low student academic achievement that are restarted by the district as an *IPS Innovation Network School* to improve the quality of education at that school.

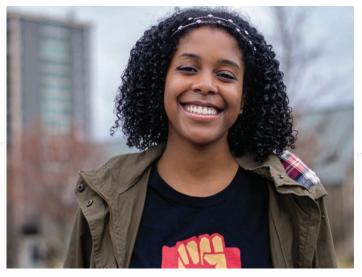
STATE TAKEOVER. From 2012 to 2020, the Indiana State Board of Education (INSBOE) had an approach known as "State Takeover" to try to improve schools that struggled with academic performance. Schools were separated from their district, and were managed by a company or nonprofit that had a contract with ISBOE. All state takeover schools were returned to their districts by the 2020-2021 school year.

A MESSAGE FROM

EMPOWERED FAMILIES



Ontay Johnson, Executive Director



Tiera Hollanguest, Operations Director

Thank you for reading EmpowerED Families' first report! We are a nonprofit organization in Indianapolis that works with families to build their power and rally together to create change they want to see in our education system and community.

We chose to focus on K-12 enrollment for this report because we wanted to learn more about the choices families and students living within Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) boundaries have made over the last few years. In this area, families can choose between independent charter, district-run, and IPS Innovation Network Schools — the widest range of options available to families.

We believe an important finding in this report is that more families than ever have realized their power to decide which school to attend. For example, IPS enrollment grew during the 2020-2021 school year, with more families choosing IPS Innovation Network Schools for their children. You can learn more about this on pages 6 and 7.

Numbers can tell us a lot, but we knew it was important to share stories from parents in our city as well. We are so thankful to the parents who shared their stories with us to show the people behind the numbers.

There is still work to do to make sure families at all schools are being served equitably. We believe this report can help more people learn about the ways thousands of families in our city have made decisions for the benefit of kids. We plan to use this information as a jumping off point to dig in to more issues identified by parents.

Our staff and Parent Advocates are proud to call Indianapolis home and look forward to working with you to build family power that creates positive change in our city's education system.



INDIANAPOLIS FAMILIES: Are you interested in learning more about how to get involved to organize around change you want to see in our city's education system? Connect with us at EmpowerEDFamiliesIndy.org or follow us on Facebook and Twitter at @EmpowerEDFamIN.

THE BIG PICTURE

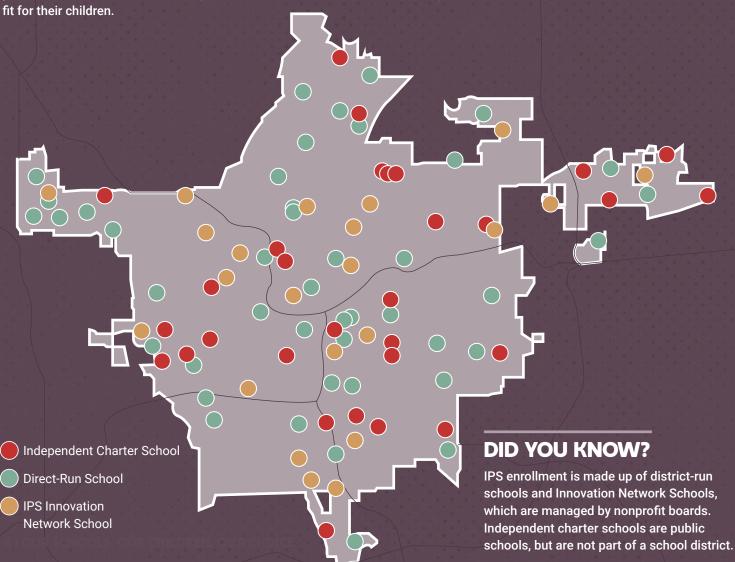
The boundaries for Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) extend throughout Center Township. This report looks at K-12 enrollment within these boundaries because this area of the city has the most public school options available to families:

- 1. Independent Charter schools
- 2. District-run schools
- 3. IPS Innovation Network Schools

Enrollment numbers for pre-kindergarten are not included, as this option is not available at all schools. All enrollment data is from the Indiana Department of Education and can be downloaded at <u>doe.in.gov</u>.

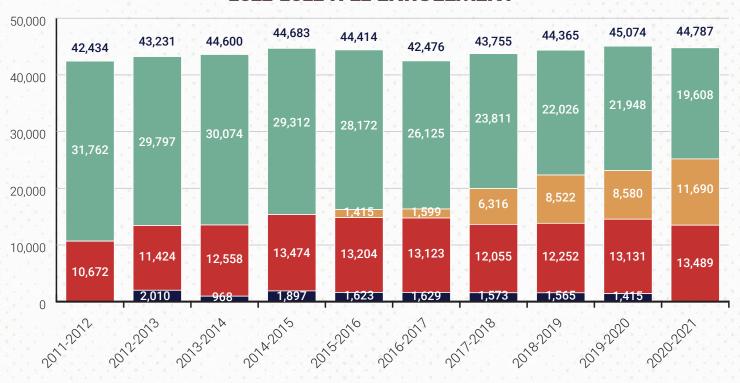
PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN IPS BOUNDARIES - 2020-2021

This map shows the boundaries of IPS and the locations of all public schools within this area during the 2020-2021 school year. The data and stories in this report show how families have utilized the options available to them to find the best school for the size hills are



A LOOK AT PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT IN INDIANAPOLIS

2011-2021 K-12 ENROLLMENT





DISTRICT-RUN SCHOOLS

District-run schools free. public schools that are managed by a school district. Decisions about how these schools work, including school start and end times, teacher pay, and programs offered, are made through the school district.

₹38.3% decrease

in enrollment since 2011



IPS Innovation Network Schools are free public schools within the IPS district that have more autonomy to make decisions about their operations than district-run schools. They may participate in some district services, like transportation.

SCHOOLS

1726.2% increase

in enrollment since being introduced in 2015



Independent charter schools free, public schools managed by a nonprofit board and are not part of a school district. However, like all public schools, they must follow state and federal rules, such as providing special education services to students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Charter schools must accept all students who wish to enroll, as long as spaces remain available.

126.4% increase in enrollment since 2011



STATE TAKEOVER SCHOOLS

From 2012 to 2020, the Indiana State Board of Education (INSBOE) had an approach known as "State Takeover" to try to improve schools that struggled with academic performance. Schools were separated from their district, and were managed by a company or nonprofit that had a contract with ISBOE. All state takeover schools were returned to their districts by the 2020-2021 school year.

All schools under state takeover were returned to their districts by the 2020-2021 school year.

SCHOOL OPTIONS BRING FAMILIES TO IPS

IPS saw shrinking enrollment before Innovation Network Schools became an option in the 2015-2016 school year. Now, enrollment is increasing as families and students can enroll in schools that best meet their needs.

16.8% increase in IPS enrollment since 2014

3 TAKEAWAYS FROM THE DATA



CONTINUOUS GROWTH

While many large public school districts across the country are seeing enrollment declines due to the pandemic, this data shows that IPS is seeing an increase in K-12 enrollment due to the growth of Innovation Network Schools. (see pages 7 and 10).

2.5% increase in IPS enrollment from 2019-2020 to 2020-2021

IPS Innovation Network Schools and independent charter schools serve a majority of students of color.

84% of students enrolled in autonomous schools during 2020-2021 identify as students of color

SPECIALIZED OPTIONS MEET THE NEED

Over the last several years, IPS enrollment has steadily increased. At 31,298 in 2020-2021, IPS K-12 enrollment, which includes both district-run and Innovation Network Schools, is now the highest it has been since 2012. This is due to more families learning about the specialized education options available at these schools that can best meet the needs of their child.

PERCENTAGE CHANGES IN ENROLLMENT FROM 2014 TO 2021

IPS district-run schools that were restarted or converted to IPS Innovation Network Schools have seen enrollment increases, while district-run, non-magnet IPS schools have seen declines in enrollment. After becoming Innovation Network Schools, more families began enrolling in these schools and have stayed enrolled.

29.4% decrease in enrollment at non-magnet district-run schools that have not been converted or restarted

18.2% increase in converted schools' enrollment

15.9% increase in restarted schools' enrollment

EMPOWERING FAMILIES WITH CHOICE

Independent charter school enrollment increased for the third year in a row. After nearly two decades as a public school option in Indianapolis, independent charter schools continue to be a popular choice that educate almost one-third of public school students within IPS boundaries.

30.1% of students within IPS boundaries are enrolled in an independent public charter school for the 2020-2021 school year

"BEING ABLE TO HAVE A CHOICE IN SCHOOLING IS **IMPORTANT TO FAMILIES. PARENTS DON'T WANT TO FEEL THAT THEY HAVE TO SEND** THEIR CHILD TO ONE PARTICULAR **SCHOOL BECAUSE IT** IS IN THE DISTRICT. **PARENTS HAVE POWER BECAUSE** THEY HAVE A SAY IN WHERE THEIR CHILD **GOES TO SCHOOL.**"

- Delma Suber, parent

WHAT ARE MAGNET, CONVERTED, AND RESTARTED SCHOOLS?

Magnet schools are free public schools that are part of a district that families can choose for their child. In IPS, programs like Montessori and Center for Inquiry are offered.

Converted schools are existing district-run schools that seek out Innovation Network School status within IPS.

Restarted schools are schools with consistently low student academic achievement that are restarted by the district as an IPS Innovation Network School to improve the quality of education at that school.



Alex Hall is a mother of two 3-year-olds and an 8-year-old. Her 8-year-old attends a district-run IPS school downtown.

What matters most to you in choosing a school?

"I want to feel safe and comfortable in the building. I want the school to give my child what they need to succeed, but also for them to feel welcome. Things like giving hugs in the morning, having good friends, having fun activities in addition to strong academics."

Why do you think parents value having a choice?

"It is super important, and it's all my daughter has known. When she was younger, she went to a private school. It isn't right to force someone to go to a particular school based just on boundaries. Parents should be able to choose, but should also be informed in their choice. Just because a school is an "A" school does not always mean that your child will do well there. Picking a school that is a bad fit is just as bad as going to an "F" school.

"I work at a community center. We decided to hold a kindergarten fair because we noticed that parents weren't sure how to pick from the different options out there."



The data and parent stories in this report shows us that Indianapolis families want a variety of public school options. This has led to enrollment increases in IPS and at public charter schools. The families we spoke to all shared the same thing:

THEY WANT A SCHOOL THAT BEST MEETS THE NEEDS OF THEIR STUDENT.

INDIANAPOLIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS ENROLLMENT

Indianapolis Public Schools enrollment is made up of schools managed by the district and Innovation Network Schools, which are managed by nonprofit boards.



IPS IS A STRONG CHOICE FOR PARENTS

Comparing Enrollment from 2019-2020 to 2020-2021 Total IPS enrollment increased by 2.5%. 770 more students attended schools in IPS in 2020-2021 than in 2019-2020.

30,528		31,298	3
2010-2020	0000	2020-202	

↑2.5% increase in total IPS enrollment

An enrollment increase for a public school district is the opposite of what we are seeing nationally because of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to data compiled by Chalkbeat and The Associated Press, public K-12 enrollment in 33 states dropped by more than 500,000 students, or 2%, since the same time in 2019.*

"[MY SON] **DWAYNE IS VERY CREATIVE, VERY** ATTENTIVE, AND THE VISUALIZATION **PROVIDED BY HIS SCHOOL HELPS HIM LEARN. DWAYNE REALLY LIKES HIS** SCHOOL."

- Kisha Walker, parent at **Butler Lab School**

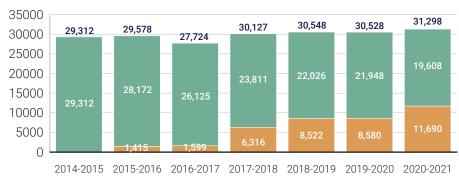
IMPACT OF IPS INNOVATION NETWORK SCHOOLS

The first IPS Innovation Network Schools joined the district in the 2015-2016 school year. Since then, more and more families have continued to choose these schools, which often have special programs families are interested in, like dual-language programs, social-emotional focuses, and STEM.

As of the 2020-2021 school year, 37.4% of IPS students attend an Innovation Network School. District enrollment has steadily increased since IPS created this option. Total enrollment has increased 6.8% since IPS Innovation Network Schools were introduced.

IPS Enrollment Growth

2014-2021 K-12 Enrollment



IPS Innovation Network Schools

Percentage of Enrollment in Innovation Network Schools



in total IPS enrollment since introduction of

District-Run IPS Schools

^{*}Chalkbeat and AP surveyed all 50 states, but 17 have not released comparable enrollment numbers as of April 2021.



TAKEAWAYS:

- The growth of Innovation Network Schools can explain why IPS enrollment has steadily increased over the past few years, as families find a good fit for their students with the growing variety of options.
- ★ IPS has grown its choice school offerings, both district-run and through Innovation Network Schools. Families are utilizing the variety of options including: Montessori, STEM-focused, arts-focused, Butler Lab schools, Center for Inquiry, study abroad, and more.
- Indianapolis families want to attend schools in their communities and neighborhoods, and are able to find the best fit for their students now that they can find options outside of boundaries determined by where they live.

PARENT STORY

Kisha Walker is the mother of a 16-year-old student at Riverside High School, an IPS Innovation Network School, and a 13-year old at a Butler Lab School 55, an IPS magnet school.

Why did you choose these schools?

"We live close to Butler Lab, and the school has let us know we can still attend if we move. Riverside is a liberal arts school, and my daughter is very interested in this way of learning. By the time she was 13 she had already written a book and started a business. I wanted to cultivate those things in her and looked for a school that could encourage her academic and artistic side. Riverside allows her the freedom she needs to do both well."

Why do you think other families and students choose these schools?

"With Riverside, it is a choice and families and students have researched to decide it is the option that works best for them. For Riverside, there is a feeling of freedom and acceptance that she likes. She attended a different high school with a stricter environment, and it was clear she needed a different environment. This isn't the case for all students, which is why choice is important."

What matters most to parents about a school?

"For me, culture and opportunities outside of academics. Both of my students have great extracurricular opportunities outside of classwork. I also notice the diversity of staff and teachers. Most of the teachers at School 55 are white, and I feel that should be looked at for my son and other students of color."



Public charter schools in Indianapolis receive **\$7,000 LESS PER STUDENT**** than traditional public schools. Contact Indiana legislators to let them know families and students should be able to have equitably funded public education.

Call the Indiana House of Representatives: (800) 382-9842 Call your Indiana State Senator: (800) 382-9467

CHARTER SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

Public charter schools have existed in Indianapolis since 2002. There are two types of public charter schools in Indianapolis: Independent charter schools and IPS Innovation Network Schools with charters. These schools are managed by nonprofit boards and all must have a charter school authorizer, which oversees and measures a school's financial health, academic progress, and culture. The most common authorizers for Indianapolis charter schools are the Mayor's Office of Education Innovation and the Indiana Charter School Board.



ENROLLMENT CONTINUES TO RISE

Comparing Enrollment from 2019-2020 to 2020-2021 Public charter school enrollment increased 15.2%. 3,030 more students attended independent charter schools and IPS Innovation Network Schools with charters in 2020-2021 than in 2019-2020.

19,889 22,9192019-2020 2020-2021

15.2% increase

in public charter school enrollment

CHARTER SCHOOLS PROVIDE MANY OPTIONS FOR FAMILIES

Over the last several years, independent charter schools and IPS Innovation Network Schools with charters have remained a consistent public school choice for families. For the 2020-2021 school year, there are 56 independent charter schools and IPS Innovation Network Schools with charters. In 2013-2014, there were 31 independent charter schools in the same area.

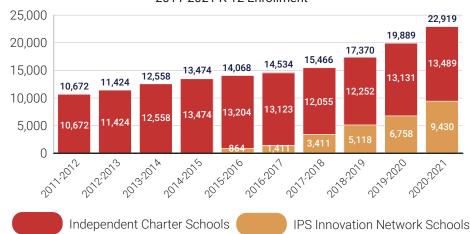
In 2020-2021, more than half of public students within IPS boundaries attended a public charter school.attend an independent charter school.

"HAVING A CHOICE IS SUPER IMPORTANT. IT IS DETRIMENTAL TO A CHILD'S LEARNING IF THEY ARE FORCED TO GO TO A SCHOOL THAT IS A BAD FIT AND DOESN'T GIVE THEM ANY OPPORTUNITIES."

 Alex Hall, parent of child attending an IPS districtrun school in downtown Indianapolis

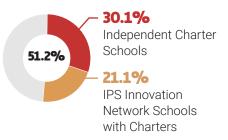
Charter School Enrollment Growth

2011-2021 K-12 Enrollment*



Percentage of Charter School Students in IPS Boundaries

in 2020-2021



with Charters

^{*}The first Innovation Network Schools in IPS opened in the 2015-2016 school year, which is why there is no data for prior years.



TAKEAWAYS:

- Charter schools remain a consistent choice for Indianapolis families with more than half of public school students in IPS boundaries attending one in 2020-2021..
- ★ During the COVID-19 pandemic, some charter schools used their autonomy to offer an in-person option for families, which working families might have found a necessity if they couldn't afford additional childcare costs and/or had no option to work from home.
- Charter schools have been an option for Indianapolis families for almost 20 years. The introduction of this choice has led to families' interest in exploring school options outside of their traditional boundary school for their children.

PARENT STORY

Delma Suber is the mother of three children. Her 16-year-old attends Herron High School, an IPS Innovation Network School, her 10-year-old attends Dynamic Minds Academy, an independent charter school that serves K-12 students on the autism spectrum, and her 9-year old attends Paramount Brookside, an independent charter school.

Why did you choose these schools?

"All three kids have different needs and we wanted to find schools that address those individual needs. For our high schooler, we appreciate the college prep and liberal arts curriculum Herron offers. Dynamic Minds is a program for students with autism, and we believe they are serving him better than a traditional school. At Paramount, they focus on the whole child. I really appreciate the case managers they have who connect with each family. They really go above and beyond.

What recommendations do you have for school leaders or policymakers?

"I want them to look at disparities in education when it comes to African American boys with special needs and change a system that predetermines whether my child's future will be in college or prison. Some schools are no longer a place where possibilities are made possible. For example, Black boys are more likely to be suspended. The educational system has become a feeder for transitioning these same Black boys to prison. My 10-year-old autistic son was suspended 6 times at his last school based on his disability. The school failed him by not having the protocol training in place for his teachers."

"In one incident, my son was left with a teacher who had no communication from his primary teacher that my son had an IEP on file. This particular teacher was not familiar with my son's triggers. This teacher handled him like he would handle any other student, and as a result my son was suspended. We misunderstood the end time of suspension and were late picking him up. The school contacted us to tell us to pick him up because he was trespassing. Those words stuck with me. The school saw my son as a trespasser, and not a student. That language is preparing my African American son for a criminal justice system and not academia. The systemic mindset on how the educational system views our special needs children has to be changed. I am very glad that we had the choice to move him to a different school."

CHOOSING A SCHOOL: RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES



There are many tools and resources families can use to learn more about their school options.

PARENTS AND FAMILIES: You are the ultimate decision maker when it comes to the school your child attends. You have the right to ask questions, see facilities, and learn more about school culture before you pick a school.

Below are a few resources for parents and families that can help them learn more about their school options and find the right fit for their child.

WHAT ARE SOME RESOURCES MY FAMILY CAN USE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR OPTIONS?

Enroll Indy - enrollindy.org

Enroll Indy helps families choose schools that meet their child's needs by providing a one-stop enrollment process, school information that is relevant and easy to understand, and data to inform school improvement in Indianapolis.

Individual School-led Tours

Most schools host tours of their buildings throughout the year where families can see facilities, meet school leadership and teachers, and ask questions. Visit an individual school's website or follow them on social media to see upcoming enrollment events.

IPS Showcase of Schools

An annual event where parents and families can visit individual school booths, find on-site enrollment opportunities, and get more information on athletics and other programs.

Request Your Own Tour

Many schools are also open to parents and families requesting individual tours. Touring a school and having time to ask questions can be an important step to determine whether it is the right fit for you and your child. You can usually find email information for school leadership on a school's website, Enroll Indy, or a school district's website.

I'VE LEARNED ABOUT THE DIFFERENT PUBLIC SCHOOL TYPES IN INDIANAPOLIS. WHAT SHOULD I ASK NEXT?

How can I learn about a school's culture?

A school's culture is made up of a variety of things: parent engagement, discipline policies, daily routines, core values, hiring practices, and more. If possible, find a family who will share their personal experience with the school - what they love about it and what they would improve. Stepping into the building during the school day can also help, which is why requesting your own tour could be a good way to see the school in action. Check out school tour resources on the next page.

How do I know if a school is serving students well academically?

One way to equally compare schools is to look at publicly available data that all schools share, like standardized test scores, graduation rates, and how English Language Learner students are progressing. In Indiana, you can find this information on INView, a website run by the Indiana Department of Education, at inview.doe.in.gov/. Search for an individual school and click on the "Performance" tab to find this information.

When should I be looking at school options?

You can research schools year-round. Schools may only be open for tours during the school year, but some may offer summer tours. Make sure to ask if there are enrollment dates you need to keep in mind in order to get a spot at a popular school. The majority of public schools in IPS boundaries enroll students through Enroll Indy and follow their enrollment windows, which usually close at the end of January and the end of April of each year. Learn more at enrollindy.org.

Subject line: Requesting a School Tour Hello! My name is ______. My child will be going into grade level _____ next fall. We are interested in learning more about ______ (school name) as a possible school option. Can we schedule a time to tour the school? We are excited to learn more about your academics and school culture. Thank you!

between families and the school? How do teachers and parents

communicate?

SAMPLE EMAIL TO REQUEST A TOUR

HOW CAN I FIND CONTACT INFO TO SET UP A TOUR?

Look online: Visit the school website. They may have an enrollment page and contact information listed. You can find school websites on Enroll Indy's School Finder tool at <u>find.enrollindy.org</u>.

Call the main office: You can find the main office phone number listed on the school's webpage or on their Enroll Indy school page. The main office should be able to help you with your request.

Going through this process is also a good way for you to learn how the school normally handles parent requests and how easy it is to get in touch with someone.

QUESTIONS TO ASK ON A SCHOOL TOUR

For all grade levels:		For high schools:
Do you normally have a wait list? Is there a certain time I need to decide to enroll in your school? Is your staff able to help me complete enrollment through Enroll Indy or another system your school uses? How large are your class sizes? Do you have transportation? How do you work with your students who have IEPs? What support do you have for students who are English Language Learners? Do you have a school counselor? What social-emotional or mental health supports do you have for students and families? Do you have before and after school care? If so, is there an extra cost? What types of clubs or athletic teams does your school have? Is there a participation fee?	 What do teacher parent conferences look like? How can I check my student's grades or academic progress? Do you have a uniform? If so, what are the prices for each required item? Do you have a textbook fee? If so, can you share an estimate for fees? What is the racial diversity of your staff? How many teachers of color are employed at your school? What kind of equity or cultural competency training do you provide for your staff? What racial equity commitments or policies do you have? What kind of technology does your school supply to students? Is there a tech fee? What kinds of community partnerships does your school have? 	 What is your graduation rate? What are the required courses each student needs to take? What are the elective options? What percentage of your students have earned dual credit or AP credits? How many of those students are students of color? What kinds of support do you provide for students enrolled in the 21st Century Scholars program? What kinds of support do you provide to students to explore their college or career options after high school? What types of support do you provide for completing the FAFSA and applying to scholarships? Do you offer any support after high school for your alumni?
■ What does communication look like		

"I KNEW I PICKED THE RIGHT SCHOOL BECAUSE THEY GAVE MY CHILD THE FREEDOM TO BE THEMSELVES AND DEVELOP THEIR OWN INTERESTS." "PARENTS WANT A SCHOOL WHERE THEIR CHILD FEELS LIKE THEY FIT, THAT MEETS THEIR ACADEMIC NEEDS, AND PREPARES THEM FOR THE REAL WORLD."

- Delma Suber, parent



EmpowerED Families is releasing our 3-year education policy platform in May 2021, created by local parents and families.

LEARN MORE AT
EMPOWEREDFAMILIESINDY.ORG

