

BOUGHT BUT NOT SOLD OUT:
A CRITICAL AUTOETHNOGRAPHY OF A PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER IN
THE NEOLIBERAL TURN

Gayle S. Cosby

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Doctoral Committee

Jim Scheurich, Ph.D., Chair

Monica Medina, Ph.D.

October 18, 2021

Patricia Rogan, Ph.D.

Leslie K. Etienne, Ph.D.

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DEDICATION

I do hope that my people who are already in the spirit realm find this accomplishment pleasing. It's the least I could do, in my efforts on this material plane, to be the first of my family line to graduate from college - and in doing so, to cast aside any generational legacies of living in poverty. May Sierra, Kenji, and Atticus, and all of their seeds, never experience pangs of emptiness or despair. This is dedicated to each of you, my children.

This piece is also dedicated to any student of mine who sees me in themselves. Any who resonate with my story, and are somehow inspired to bring their story forth, no matter how painful, carry it with them wherever they go, and use that story to plant seeds of liberation in the lives of students they touch. This is the new cycle.

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Special thanks to my school-dad and committee chair, Dr. Jim Scheurich, who sees the fight against educational privatization in Indianapolis as worthy of his time and dedication. A big shout out to my school-mom, Dr. Monica Medina, who mentors me still, saw that I got published, and somehow makes her busy involvement with all things community and school related look effortless. Dr. Pat Rogan brings a graciousness and poise to the work that I hope to emulate someday. Dr. Les Etienne is one of the coolest cats on campus, always the truth. I know I'll always find him on the right side of the fight. I could not have asked for a better committee of people. They just stayed in my corner, and I'm eternally grateful for that level of support. It's rare.

I thank Source, God, the Universe, for what at times seemed to be an accidental constellation of incidents. Though the workings were mysterious (as they should be), there really are no accidents.

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Neoliberalism is a pro-capitalist ideology that cycles money and power to the elite class by deregulating or privatizing the public sphere and is fueled by economic exploitation and oppression. This dissertation examines the neoliberal construct at work in the privatization of Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) from an ethnographic lens using the vantage point of an elected IPS board member.

The literature surrounding the privatization of public schools offers stories from all over the U.S., however the conditions surrounding the privatization of public education systems are similar irrespective of geographical location. Common themes across the country include the de-professionalization of teachers, the circulation of the narrative myth of failing public schools and charter schools as a positive alternative, and overarching patterns of continued school segregation, gentrification of inner cities, and racial migratory patterns of residents affecting school enrollment.

Theoretical framing employed in this study includes Punctuated Equilibrium at the macro level; sociopolitics and logics of action at the meso level, and critical theory and politics of resistance at the micro level of analysis. The analysis of data was conducted thematically and data sources encompass a self-authored blog as well as personal communications and reflections, news articles, and board documents.

Results of this study illustrate that IPS as an organization underwent a fulcrum point of change, or ‘Punctuated Equilibrium’ in which it ceased to be an exclusively

public institution and began to establish partnerships with private charter school companies with inherent profit motives, via the ‘Innovation School Network’. There were many political players involved in orchestrating this change, and those interest groups and their logics of action are detailed. Implications of this study include identifying the future spread of school privatization and possibilities for disrupting the furthering of this neoliberal agenda.

Jim Scheurich, Ph.D., Chair

Monica Medina, Ph.D.

Patricia Rogan, Ph.D.

Leslie K. Etienne, Ph.D.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS)

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

Portfolio Management Model (PMM)

Teach For America (TFA)

New Teacher Project (TNTP)

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

The Caucus of Rank-and-file Educators (CORE)

Chicago Teachers Union (CTU)

Democrats for Education Reform (DfER)

Neighborhoods of Educational Opportunity (NEO)

Center for Reinventing Public Education (CRPE)

Phalen Leadership Academy (PLA)

Indianapolis Public Schools Community Coalition (IPSCC)

Citizens School Committee (CSC)

Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools (AROS)

Indiana State Teachers Association (ISTA)

Indianapolis Education Association (IEA)

Chapter 1: Introduction

Prologue

“This is a test,” I thought to myself as my mind raced about the decision before me. A multimillionaire CEO and potential campaign donor was on the other end of the line, offering to take me to either an exclusive athletic club for a lunch meeting or a political hobnob spot in the hood that I’d been to several times. I’d never stepped foot inside the athletic club, and as I sat there conjuring its imaginary furnishings; plush antique rugs over gleaming hardwood floors, dark wood paneling, and burgundy velvet curtains, I heard myself respond, “Let’s go to the Kountry Kitchen.” And before I had even met the man, my gut told me that I had already failed his test.

*

In November 2012, I was elected to serve as a commissioner for the Board of Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) (Opportunity Culture, 2021). As of 2018, the IPS district educates 26,410 students: 44% identify as Black, 29% identify as Latinx, 21% identify as White, and 65% of students qualified for free and reduced lunch (Opportunity Culture, 2021). Most people in my community would say that I ran for all of the right reasons. I am a product (K-12) of IPS schools as were several preceding generations of my family. My kids attended IPS schools and I also taught Special Education in the district for about 5 years. Granted, I had some experience in the field of education but lacked the cunning required to navigate political minefields like the situation described above. This research is a critical organizational autoethnography. “Fundamentally, autoethnography starts with a *person*, an *individual* researcher, who interrogates their self and their positionality within larger social contexts” (Herrmann, 2017, p.1). According to

Weick (1995), “people learn about their identities by projecting them into an environment and observing the consequences” (Weick, 1995, p. 231). Dorothy Smith views Institutional Ethnography (IE) as, “the investigative strategy best suited to conducting inquiries that get at the role of textual mediation in the relations of ruling” (Stanley, 2018, p. 38). The main difference between IE and organizational autoethnography is the lens, or the perspective of the research. This research is an organizational autoethnography that uses the lens of the individual (myself) as an, “insider looking about” (Herrmann, 2017, p.3), exploring my relationship to the organization IPS, inviting the reader to think with me as I recollected a personal and professional journey within an organization experiencing tumultuous change. This study examined the advancement of the neoliberal agenda in IPS from my perspective as a former board member, documenting political actors, groups, and events related to school privatization during a four-year period (January 2013- December 2016). By exploring my past role as a member of the governing body of this institution, I intended to analyze my relationship to the process by which IPS succumbed to privatization through ‘partnership’ with charter schools, known locally as ‘Innovation Network Schools’.

The details of Innovation Network School agreements vary, but in general, they allow a charter school operator to take over the management of an existing IPS school. This is an example of privatization (a pillar of neoliberalism) because the charter school, whether classified as a ‘for-profit’ or ‘not-for-profit’ business, has just laid claim to a portion of the public sector. The charter school receives federal and state/local tax dollars earmarked for education to fund the operation of their business, though the

charter's board of directors is not a publicly elected board, therefore the business lacks public input regarding the use of public dollars (taxation without representation).

The privatization of America's public schools is a widespread issue, according to a joint study by the Schott Foundation and the Network for Public Education (House, 2018), with 44 states and the District of Columbia having charter school laws on the books. Though charter schools may be geographically extensive in scope, they are not yet widely attended, nor are they widely accepted. Only six percent of the nation's students attend charter schools, and yet though relatively new, charter school opposition is mounting, as national organizations like the NAACP call for a moratorium (House, 2018). In this context, research on charter schools is timely and relevant to the current and future education of our children.

Significance of the Problem

Neoliberalism is a huge problem for everyone except the uber-wealthy elite that it is intended to benefit. Neoliberalism is defined by Harvey (2005) as, "favor[ing] strong individual private property rights, the rule of law, and the institutions of freely functioning markets and free trade" (p. 2). Neoliberalism involves the entire restructuring of our economy in order to increase the wealth and power of the elite class. The wheels of neoliberalism were set into motion many decades ago, but change on such a large scale takes time.

Neoliberalism perniciously impacts us in a multitude of ways, perhaps without our even knowing how to name what has happened. The U.S. is now home to 97.3 million people whose incomes hover near the poverty line, while 49 million subsist on income below the federal poverty line...meanwhile, wealth has been steadily

concentrating in the ranks of the top 10% of U.S. elites, “painfully demonstrative of what happens to a society when unfettered capitalism is conflated with democracy” (De Lissovoy et al., 2015, p. 34).

The neoliberal agenda has decimated the opportunities for middle-class attainment. Jobs that provide a living wage, benefits, and security are scarce even for college graduates and almost unheard of for high school graduates – jobs providing for a standard of comfortable living seem to be a relic of the past. Under the neoliberal regime, spending on defense greatly outnumbers spending on education, and 1 in every 31 Americans is imprisoned, with African Americans incarcerated more than six times that of Whites - in this vein, Black and Brown bodies are viewed in the neoliberal turn as ‘functionally redundant’ (De Lissovoy et al., 2015).

If adult U.S. citizens of color are viewed as redundant surpluses to the neoliberal system (De Lissovoy et al., 2015), we must turn our attention to how those adults are prepared as children in institutions of education. Are Black and Brown children also viewed as redundant surpluses - their only value lying in the tax dollars they can bring into privatized systems of education? What role are charter schools, as a privatized function of neoliberalism, preparing Black and Brown children to assume once they reach adulthood? These are questions considered as neoliberalism deepens the oppression of people based on race and class.

How the Neoliberal Educational Stage was Set in Indianapolis

Indiana Charter school legislation was enacted in 2001, making Indiana the 38th state to allow charter schools (Sandham, 2001). The governor at this time was Frank O’Bannon, a democrat, who conceded to the persistence of Senator Teresa Lubbers. She

had been trying to get the legislation approved since 1994 and was successful in 2001 when the bill encompassed both charter schools and a restoration of teachers' bargaining rights.

O'Bannon's successor, Governor Mitch Daniels (2005-2013), continued paving the way for privatization to occur in Indiana's public schools. According to Valerie Strauss (2018a), Daniels created a system based on the belief that the market principle of competition would improve education outcomes and drive down costs. The idea that market-based principles can drive educational improvement is a smokescreen justification of the neoliberal ideology. The real intent of neoliberalism is to, "restore class power to the richest strata of the population" (Harvey, 2005, p. 13). The strategy required to restore class power involves, "optimiz[ing] conditions for capital accumulation...[requiring that] sectors formerly run or regulated by the state...are turned over to the private sphere or deregulated" (Harvey, 2005, p. 25). When Daniels became governor of Indiana, he immediately set himself to the task of deregulating public education so that wealthy elites could begin to accrue profits from charter schools, vouchers, and associated businesses like real estate. Governor Daniels created the welcoming circumstances for privatization to flourish in Indianapolis, a trend that continued with the governorships of Mike Pence (2013-2017) and Eric Holcomb (2017 to present).

Mike Pence is a darling of the neoliberal school privatization movement, as evidenced by his ties to Betsy DeVos and his role in the current Trump administration. During his tenure as Indiana's governor, he increased the funding for charter schools and expanded the state voucher program eligibility requirements to cover private school

tuition for wealthier families (Strauss, 2017). Meanwhile, under his watch, failing charter schools were permitted to convert to private schools that accept vouchers, leaving their debt behind, and voucher schools were allowed discriminatory admission practices on the basis of sexual orientation (Strauss, 2017).

Neoliberalism in the IPS Board Campaigns

In 2012, neoliberalism knocked at the door of the IPS board campaigns, and although an unwelcome guest, made a grand entrance nonetheless. What was once a seat that was winnable with a few thousand dollars and a simple “kitchen-table” campaign – became a high-stakes, lucratively funded quest to wrest control away from the public in the public school system. Special interest ‘non-profit’ groups had set up shop in Indianapolis in the year or two prior to this campaign, and they had deep- pocketed Political Action Committees (PACs) with national, influential ties. As a candidate, I would soon realize just how invested these people were in electing their chosen ‘reform’ candidates to the IPS school board.

In retrospect, I saw how my campaign message encompassed elements of reform, though, in reality, it was just outside the typical, mainstream candidate message. As a teacher, I was feeling constrained by the prescriptive curriculum mandated by Indiana’s state standards and the resulting IPS Pacing Guide, a document detailing how instructional time must be spent in order to cover all of the required standards. These asinine requirements of teachers, coupled with a freeze in teacher pay, were initially the main focus of my campaign platform. I wanted teachers to once again be respected as professionals and given the freedom to teach. My campaign slogan was ‘Cosby for Change’ – an easy grasp for pro-neoliberal reform organizations.

And grasp they did. I began to move from that kitchen table campaign into very foreign territory, where people, organizations, and PACs were throwing thousands of dollars into the coffers. My final campaign finance report indicated that I had received a grand total of over \$78,000 – an unprecedented amount of money to be spent in a local school board race. The biggest contributors to my campaign? Indiana Democrats for Education Reform contributed over \$40,000 (City of Indianapolis, 2012). Stand for Children contributed over \$10,000 in cash reported on this form (City of Indianapolis, 2012), and an estimated \$175,000+ unreported behind the scenes from 501(c)(4) organizations spent directly on advertising, mailers, and canvassers (Stand for Children, personal communication, 2012). The Greater Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce chipped in \$7,400 (City of Indianapolis, 2012). It was several months after my swearing-in ceremony before the gravity of their intended purchase sunk deep into my chest, thanks to several of my grassroots friends, who were intent on educating me. Ironically, we would meet weekly at the Kountry Kitchen for my lessons. Despite the nagging of those special interest groups to vote this way or that, I found it far more important to figure out how best to represent the constituents in my district.

Theoretical Framework

Punctuated Equilibrium Theory

The theory of Punctuated Equilibrium (Meyer, 2006) has origins in biology and refers to the way an organism experiences change; periods of stasis. Applied to the study of organizational change, Punctuated Equilibrium as an overarching construct can be useful in explaining macro-level system change. When applied specifically to IPS, Punctuated Equilibrium provides a framework for (and helps the reader to visualize) the

changes that occurred to IPS as an organization. Before the 2012 election, IPS had finite organizational boundaries and functioned as a public institution. Charter schools were treated as rivals in competition for students and resources. Using the construct of Punctuated Equilibrium, this research will examine the processes that led to the erosion, porosity, and disintegration of those organizational boundaries. Once organizational boundaries were sufficiently eroded, IPS began partnerships with charter schools. This is the sudden point of change (fulcrum) that will be examined.

As previously mentioned, the advent of neoliberalism calls into question the current *purpose* of schooling, given the proliferation of myths regarding the failure of public schools. What myths were necessary in Indianapolis, serving as the fulcrum for punctuated equilibrium, legitimizing the erosion of the IPS boundaries and the subsequent partnering with charter schools? Myths are a part of the overall narrative that have been analyzed in this study.

Sociopolitics and Logics of Action

In a 1993 article, Bacharach and Mundell provide a complete framework for a sociopolitical study of an organization. This framework includes terminology to name the groups of actors (interest groups) as the focal point. Interest groups engage in logics of action – applied to IPS, this could include a desire to partner with charter schools or to view them as rivals.

Bacharach and Mundell (1993) also define the terms macropolitical (the actions of external interest groups) and micropolitical (actions taken among groups within the organization), with the integration of both being essential to any sociopolitical study. Additionally, Bacharach and Mundell's (1993) framework analyzes dimensions of power

(authority and influence); and strategies (coalitions, negotiations, and compromise). This framework provided a construct for naming all actors and processes occurring internally and externally to IPS during the neoliberal turn.

Critical Theory and Politics of Resistance

At its core, neoliberalism is achieved through conquest, (dis)possession, acquisition, and oppression, as the end goal is to maintain wealth in the elite class (Harvey, 2005; MacLean, 2017). The privatization of public schools is similarly a struggle for power and control as neoliberals work to transform the public into the private and profitable (Lipman, 2011; Saltman, 2015; Spence, 2016). Grassroots organizations and individuals all over the country provide a counter-narrative and activism against school privatization (Buras, 2015; Lipman, 2011). Hence, the critically oriented theories of Henry Giroux (2003) are applicable to this study. First, because the very nature of neoliberalism is conquest by conflict, and second, because conflict is required to combat encroaching privatization and the neoliberal turn.

Giroux provided a framework for thinking about how education can be used to either maintain or disrupt the status quo. Giroux's *Politics of Resistance* (2003) expounded upon Freire's ideas on banking methods of teaching versus teaching for liberation; noting that if students are not taught to think critically about their environments and how to make positive change, then social justice is obscured from them, and kept out of reach.

Within the context of all of these overarching theoretical constructs, there is still a deeply personal story to be told. In this work, I explored not only the macro-level mechanisms of neoliberalism and the meso-level dynamics of school privatization within

IPS – the autoethnography required that I delve deeper into my own role as a school board member within these large, swirling clouds of politics. In many cases, this is a negotiation of discrepant identity, as I navigated a politically esteemed position in which, at times, I feel that I did not belong (Herrmann, 2017).

Summary of Relevant Literature

Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is a huge construct, and it is approached in numerous ways in the literature. The literature describes neoliberalism in an economic sense (Harvey, 2005), a historical sense (MacLean, 2017), and a disaster capitalism/opportunistic sense (Klein, 2007). Other authors used a more familiar writing style and down to earth approach, specifically describing neoliberalism in terms of its effects on Black politics and Black people (Spence, 2016) or its effects on people living in poverty (Baptist & Rehmann, 2011).

Literature concerning school privatization encompasses data on many of the strategies being used to weaken public school systems. Other authors have proposed comprehensive strategies to fight neoliberalism, including the strengths and weaknesses of both the neoliberals and the grassroots resistance (Baptist & Rehmann, 2011; Saltman, 2015). Yet others offered us stories of hope from grassroots educational activists and scholar activists across the country, fighting the advances of school privatization and its effects (Buras 2013, 2015; Lipman, 2017; Sanders et al., 2018).

Methodology

Organizational autoethnography is an interrogation of self within an institution or organization. While interrogating the self, I intended to use theoretical constructs to

frame the study. The three theoretical constructs used in this study are Punctuated Equilibrium (macro frame), Sociopolitics and Logics of Action (meso frame), and Critical Theory as an underpinning to describe the inherent conflictual aspects of neoliberal education reform. Other micro-level theoretical constructs have been employed from social science disciplines to frame my personal journey in this work.

Data sources to be utilized are primarily my own: a blog that I wrote during my tenure, handwritten notes, IPS emails, and personal communications/handouts from various meetings. I have also accessed other public data sources to supplement my personal recollections. These sources of data included online news articles, blogs written by others, IPS Board Documents, and Marion County Election Board financial reports. The data has been organized in thematic order.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Neoliberalism in Historical and Broad Context

Neoliberalism is a difficult concept to understand; therefore, there are multiple definitions, each of which provides a different glimpse of the construct. Some of the most notable definitions provided by authors on the topic are listed below:

The neoliberal state should favor strong individual private property rights, the rule of law, and the institutions of freely functioning markets and free trade. These are the institutional arrangements considered essential to guarantee individual freedoms... Under the assumption that ‘a rising tide lifts all boats’, or of ‘trickle down’, neoliberal theory holds that the elimination of poverty (both domestically and worldwide) can best be secured through free markets and free trade (Harvey, 2005, p. 64-65).

Their [neoliberal] cause, they say, is liberty. But by that they mean the insulation of private property rights from the reach of government – and the takeover of what was long public (schools, prisons, western lands, and much more) by corporations, a system that would radically reduce the freedom of the many. In a nutshell, they aim to hollow out democratic resistance. And by its own lights, the cause is nearing success (MacLean, 2017, p. xxx).

A more accurate term for a system that erases the boundaries between Big Government and Big Business is not liberal, conservative or capitalist but corporatist. Its main characteristics are huge transfers of public wealth to private hands, often accompanied by exploding debt, an ever-widening chasm between the dazzling rich and the disposable poor and an aggressive nationalism that justifies bottomless spending on security. For those inside the bubble of extreme wealth created by such an arrangement, there can be no more profitable way to organize a society (Klein, 2007, p. 18).

In its ideal form, neoliberalism calls for privatization of public goods and services, deregulation of trade and finance, and the loosening of labor and environmental protections by the state. In the view of neoliberalism, public control over public resources should be shifted out of the hands of the necessarily bureaucratic state and into the hands of the necessarily efficient private sector (Saltman, 2015, p.2).

What is neoliberalism? The term is not to be confused with the commonsense understanding of “liberal” in the United States, which usually designates a moderate left-wing attitude, concerned with the

welfare state, social justice, and tolerance. Rather, neoliberalism is the opposite. It has become the general designation for an economic politics that claims to realize a market order that is “free” from government interference, especially from any attempts toward wealth redistribution in favor of lower classes or marginalized groups (Baptist & Rehmann, 2011, p.53).

As can be gathered from the preceding definitions, neoliberalism is huge – its scope touches economics, our jobs, our (once public) institutions, our government, and our very way of life. Neoliberalism is so huge, in fact, that it has integrated with our frame of reference, our common sense and become a part of our understanding of ‘the way things are’ (Harvey, 2005). In order for us to understand how this is being *done to us*, we needed to briefly examine its history.

Neoliberalism is the brainchild of James McGill Buchanan, an economist that founded the Virginia school of economy and the Center for Study of Public Choice, established in 1956 (MacLean, 2017). This was the inception of a stealthily operated movement designed to free the wealthy class from paying taxes for projects that they did not support – projects that supported socially just causes and the common good (MacLean, 2017). Of course, Buchanan knew he would not have the support of the masses in this endeavor, but he found other wealthy like-minded individuals that supported the cause, namely the likes of Milton Friedman and Charles Koch, in the 1970s (Klein, 2007; MacLean, 2017). Milton Friedman, “stockpiled free- market ideas,” and waited for disaster to create opportunities to implement them (Klein, 2007, p. 7).

Koch and his elite contemporaries did not seize upon disaster, instead preferring to machinate the movement in their own way - providing inordinate amounts of money to lubricate that machine (MacLean, 2017). The neoliberal machine had effectively taken control of the government through unfettered campaign finance funding – wresting

control of most of the republican party – and careened our society toward further privatization of once public goods and services, such as public education (MacLean, 2017). Our politicians are no longer beholden to the populace. They are beholden to the almighty dollar – the dollars that are floated from the elites through a back channel, untraceable 501(c)(4) to finance their ballooning-budget campaigns. These dollars purchase the compliance of politicians and policy makers in advancing the neoliberal agenda, the agenda that benefits the elite class at the expense of the rest of us. Thus, neoliberalism functions as a subversive killing of democracy, unbeknownst to most of us, and is stealthily ingraining itself as our ‘way of life’ (Harvey, 2005).

Neoliberalism in Education/Reform?

Education is the final public frontier, ripened for conquest by the neoliberal machine, and its longstanding history as a public service is devolving rapidly into a bustling marketplace full of carpetbagging educational ‘entrepreneurs.’ Both in the US and globally, neoliberalism is transforming public education into a profitable, private industry (De Lissovoy et al., 2015). The neoliberal foray into privatizing public education effectively began during the Reagan era. Reagan not only heavily regulated labor unions (Harvey, 2005, p. 52), he also revised the tax code, dropping the top tier of taxpayers’ share from 78% to 28% - basically, realizing James Buchanan’s 1956 dream with the stroke of a pen. He did not stop there, however – his report, “A Nation at Risk”, written during an economic downturn, linked “America’s failing educational system” to “America’s failing economy” in the public eye (Spence, 2016, p. 74). This ideology was the catalyst for major changes in the American educational system, shifting the purpose of education from preparing citizens to training workers. Mayors everywhere responded

to ‘A Nation at Risk’, taking measures to make urban school districts more appealing to middle-class families who might locate there (Spence, 2016, p. 75). Beginning in 1989, one of those measures allowed for ‘failing’ school takeover (Spence, 2016).

President Bush’s “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB) act of 2002 cited a failing educational system in the face of a globalized market (Leyva, 2009), created national standards for education and the beginnings of the “accountability” system that we know today, tying funding to school performance (Spence, 2016). NCLB transformed parents into consumers, creating the constructs to financially reward or punish schools based on their performance on standardized testing. NCLB policies allowed parents to choose alternative options to “failing” schools – a narrative myth necessary for privatization which was made possible by decades of intentional, racially targeted disinvestment and neglect (Buras, 2011; Spence, 2016; Verger et al., 2016). Bush also founded the Office of Innovation and Improvement within the federal Department of Education, which “...fosters financial connections and the exchange of ideas between pro-privatization think tanks, the executive branch, and congressional staff” (DeBray-Pelot et al., 2007, p. 213).

One of the most common misunderstandings regarding neoliberalism is the idea that it is promoted entirely by Republicans (DeBray-Pelot et al., 2007). In fact, the neoliberal goal of privatizing education is non-partisan. Clinton, in 1997, ushered in federal legislation and substantial funding for charter schools, noting that he hoped to see 3,000 charters by the year 2000 (Verger et al., 2016). Indeed, between 1991 and 1999, 35 states passed charter school legislation (Spence, 2016). Despite hopes that Obama would reverse the neoliberal trend, his Race to the Top (RTTT) initiative involved a lucrative,

competitive federal grant program – a requirement of qualification was that the state applying for funds was pro-charter (Verger et al., 2016), and this program further incentivized the development of market-based educational approaches (Spence, 2016).

The preceding political history provided concrete examples of how the neoliberal machine, effectuated by the elite network of billionaires and their associated organizations, bought not only presidents but politicians at all stations (and therefore, legislations and policies) necessary to effectuate the current neoliberal turn in education. Some of the funders of the neoliberal advance include the following individuals and/or foundations: “Eli and Edythe Broad, Dell, Bill and Melinda Gates, Heritage, Hewlett-Packard, or the Walton Family” (Verger et al., 2016). These financiers in turn support “...pro-school choice advocacy groups and new civil rights movements supporting the school choice idea, such as the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, the Center for Education Reform, the BAEO [Black Alliance for Educational Options] and the Hispanic Council for Reform and Educational Options. (Verger et al., 2016). These neoliberal opportunists did not view education as a common public good, but as a government monopoly full of potential money to be gained, to the extent that it can be ‘enclosed’, or privatized (Lissovoy et al., 2015).

The privatization of public schools is accomplished by weaving the narrative myth (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Meyer, 2006) that public schools are ‘failing’, and alternatives (namely, charter schools) are therefore better options (Berliner & Biddle, 1996). This myth is supported in the policy and public discourse by a robust infrastructure, largely financed by the elite network, and includes: school management companies, teacher and leader preparation organizations (Teach for America/TFA and the

Broad Fellows), contracting companies, test and textbook publishers (Pearson), political and legislative lobbying organizations (American Legislative Exchange Council, or ALEC), think tanks (Hoover, Heritage), corporate consultancies, corporate media and films such as *Waiting for Superman*, and certainly not least, for-profit and nonprofit charter school organizations (Saltman, 2015, p. 321-322).

All of the players in the aforementioned neoliberal conglomerate led us to the idea of portfolio school districts, or portfolio management model (PMM). The idea, borrowed from the language of the stock market, describes a school district that includes in its ‘portfolio’ not just traditional public schools, but also charter schools and charter/traditional school hybrids. According to Paul Hill, the leader of the Center for Reinventing Public Education (the think tank behind the Portfolio Model of School Management [PMM]), portfolio schools:

[Are] based on a simple set of ideas: a district that provides schools in many ways – including traditional direct operation, semi-autonomous schools created by the district, and chartering or contracting to independent parties – but holds all schools...accountable for performance...Many things traditional school districts were originally built to do...are at odds with operation of schools by diverse providers and replacing schools and staff that do not perform. Adopting a portfolio model means rebuilding a school district from the ground up (Buras, 2011, p. 302).

Numerous studies (Buras, 2011, 2013, 2015; Gluckman, 2003; Lipman, 2011, 2017; Ravitch, 2013; Sanders et al., 2018; Schniedewind, 2012; Sondel, 2016; Stein, 2015) illuminated the impact of the neoliberal agenda and infrastructure in education on urban public school districts in cities across the United States, with the portfolio model being prolifically implemented nationwide. From these studies, we can grasp an understanding of the strategies that are employed in order to achieve the end goal of

privatizing public education. Combined, these strategies support the narrative myth of ‘failing’ public schools and further create opportunities for elite, neoliberal networks to reap profits from education, formerly a common, public stronghold.

Strategies for Advancing the Neoliberal Agenda in Education

One strategy that we see implemented across cities such as New Orleans, Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, Milwaukee, and Californian cities is the obscene proliferation of charter schools. Charter schools receive local, state, and federal dollars to educate children, redirected from public dollars intended for resourcing public education systems. According to Saltman (2015), charters, “...skim money out of the system, draining as profit money that would otherwise go into educational provision” (p. 317).

Saltman (2015) further notes,

For example, non-profit charter school administrators capture massive salaries, and systematically higher administrator pay comes at the expense of lower teacher pay than in traditional schools; non-profit charter schools become a catalyst for numerous for-profit contracts and lucrative real estate deals; increasingly non-profit charter schools become a means to subcontract to for-profit management companies.

Of course, parents (and the general public) mostly are unaware of these gritty details.

They succumbed to the powerful and well-orchestrated narrative myth of failing traditional public schools, coupled with a desire to provide their children with excellent opportunities, though, “...the research definitively shows these schools [charters] do *not* perform better and often perform worse than regular public schools” (Spence, 2016, p. 120).

Another strategy that advanced the neoliberal agenda is the de-professionalization of teaching (Buras, 2013; Saltman, 2015; Verger et al. 2016). As highlighted earlier, part of the neoliberal infrastructure includes alternative teacher certification programs such as

Teach for America (TFA), New Teachers for New Schools, and the New Teacher Project (TNTP) -Teaching Fellows, among other local offshoots of these. Fast track teacher prep programs inject a high number of underprepared educators into the teaching force. As noted by Buras (2013), “Our own experiences and those documented by education researchers tell us that talent and excellence are not the most accurate descriptors of inexperienced teachers recruited through organizations such as TFA and TNTP” (Buras, 2013, p. 131). Studies have indicated inadequate preparation, high turnover rates (90% leave in three years), and “class and race incongruence with students” (Buras, 2013, p.132). Many young unsuspecting TFA enrollees don’t realize what they are being called on to do. According to one former TFA participant, “Despite what TFA says, teaching is actually very hard” (Buras, 2013, p. 133).

The use of inexperienced TFA teachers is not coincidental, rather, the intent is to remove vestiges of institutional memory and veteran teachers who might be ‘skeptical of charter reforms’ (Buras, 2013, p. 130). According to one veteran teacher who returned to teach at her high school under new charter leadership,

Daily, I realize that this school is not the old one. It is not the family atmosphere that we had built through tradition. It has become a business venture, with the focus on dollar signs and test scores. Time and again, I remember a colleague’s words of distrust about charter schools. I begin to understand his mistrust and to develop my own (Buras, 2013, p. 134).

This de-professionalization of teachers has caused a mass exodus of the experienced teaching force (Buras, 2011) and promoted constant teacher turnover, a boon to charter schools that do not have to contribute as much in pensions (Sanders et al., 2018). This ultimately inhibited the sense of community and culture of a school, as relationships with and between school staff are consistently new.

Further, the advancement of charter schools, the replacement of veteran teachers with TFA and/or the use of TFA teachers exclusively, reduced the numbers in teachers' unions, as charter schools are generally not unionized. Therefore, the capacity for teachers to mount an organized resistance to neoliberal agendas is minimized (De Lissovoy et al., 2015). A macro view illuminated TFA's role in replacing teachers' role as "engaged public intellectuals with autonomy" with a role of "low paid deskilled workers who deliver prefabricated knowledge designed by experts elsewhere" (Saltman, 2015, p. 317). No doubt, those 'experts' designing the prefabricated knowledge are also a part of the neoliberal, profiteering infrastructure.

Racism and Neoliberalism

These strategies are occurring in urban schools populated largely by Black and Brown students, and therefore, are racist. Since charter schools do not perform better (and sometimes worse) than traditional public schools (Sanders et al., 2018; Spence 2016) and are nowhere near performing as well as suburban or affluent predominantly White schools, they are not leveling the playing field for the students of color attending them (Chapman & Donnor, 2015). Race and socioeconomic status are inextricably linked in the U.S. due to vestiges of slavery and discriminatory practices such as redlining and disinvestment in Black communities; however, neoliberalism perpetuates the legacy of these sordid practices in the current age of colorblind forms of racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). Also dubbed neoracism by Giroux (2003), this colorblind ideology, or neoracism in education, is a racism that is masked by a social justice framework of 'good intentions' in providing the mythical 'better' educational opportunities available in charter schools (Spence, 2016). Despite the narrative myth of

good intentions, “...neoracism can be understood as part of a broader attack against not only difference but also the value of public memory, public goods, and democracy itself” (Giroux, 2003, p. 197).

Scholars conducting spatial analyses of urban communities in the neoliberal turn (Buras, 2011, 2015; Lipman, 2011) employed the Critical Race Theory (CRT) tenet of whiteness as property to document a, “...strategic and racially exclusive pattern of educational policy- making.... premised on the criminal dispossession of Black working-class communities...” (Buras, 2011, p.304). It is at this intersection where we link the neoliberal turn to the gentrification of urban spaces that is accomplished through strategic school closures in Black and Brown neighborhoods (Buras, 2013, 2015; Lipman, 2011), the transfer of public school resources into private hands (Cosby, 2015), and the strategic location of highly desirable schools in affluent neighborhoods (Cosby, 2015). The impact is felt deeply in communities, as Buras (2011) relates, “Notably, they are not only rapacious in their effects; the process of implementing these reforms, far from being democratic, has been more akin to a deadly assault on Black schools and neighborhoods” (Buras, 2011 p. 302).

Neoliberalism in education manifested itself in other ways, all of which are inherently racist as they affect schools primarily attended by children of color. Besides the aforementioned, more obvious goals of capturing profits and urban space, there are less tangible, more surreptitious neoliberal forces at play in our educational systems.

Aims of Education Under Neoliberalism

The purpose/aims of education have shifted during the neoliberal turn. Neoliberalism “frames knowledge as a commodity that ought to be consumed and then

regurgitated and displayed for academic promotion and the chance ultimately of economic inclusion” (Saltman, 2015, p. 318). The production of assessment data is of primary concern in the neoliberal turn. There are two reasons for the focus on the production of data – first, because of the state-sanctioned accountability measures and their reliance on standardized test results *as the (singular) measure of performance*; and second, the use of standardized test results *as the basis for school choice decisions* of parents (Sondel, 2016).

This positions parents as consumers in an educational marketplace competing to find the best education (a commodity) that can ensure upward class mobility for their children. In this view, education is the developer of human capital, which is one of the bargaining chips that you use to secure a job in the new neoliberal (gig) economy (Saltman, 2015; Spence, 2016). The gig economy made people into poor entrepreneurs – “self-employed” with companies like Lyft and Uber or relying on other part-time, temporary, or seasonal work, where there are no benefits and no job security. Alternatives to entrepreneurial self-employment include gigs at companies like Walmart, where employees are paid so little they can qualify for public healthcare and other forms of assistance (Spence, 2016). The idea of human capital shifts the locus of control back onto the jobseekers because they are responsible for self-development, never mind the unequal access to opportunities by race and class (Saltman, 2015). Thus, in the neoliberal gig economy, class inequality is “naturalized” – attributing poverty to personal flaws, never blaming the system or systemic inequalities (Giroux, 2003; Spence, 2016). We have seen worker productivity rise steadily while we are being paid far less (Spence,

2016, p. 11). The end result of this? The reality is that we have to ‘hustle hard’ to make ends meet – needing two or more gigs to sustain ourselves (Spence, 2016).

This is a vast departure from a bygone era in which good jobs were readily available after graduation from high school (Meyer, 2006). The neoliberal turn has removed any prospects of white picket fences, insurance, and retirement for high school grads – most of those ‘good’ factory jobs were replaced by technology or relocated overseas to ensure higher profits (Spence, 2016). Also part of a bygone era was the civic-mindedness of education, the intent to prepare *citizens* (Meyer, 2006). The current teach-to-the-test modality of public schools has sidelined all subjects except tested ones, leaving civics, much of history, science, social studies, and character-building lessons by the wayside (Sondel, 2016).

Neoliberal Pedagogies as a Form of Control/Weapon

The structures of accountability, the de-professionalization of teachers, and overreliance on standardized testing that permeate our current systems of public education are strategies that ensure the pedagogies employed in neoliberal education *maintain* schooling as a site of social reproduction (Saltman, 2015; Sondel 2016). In simpler terms, this means that if you were born into poverty, chances are that the education you receive will only prepare you to remain in poverty. Education under neoliberalism does not provide an opportunity to escape those circumstances as parents hope. A seminal work on this topic, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970), outlines the banking method of teaching, which is the depositing of facts into students’ brains that are ultimately irrelevant to their lived experiences (in modern times, this equates to teaching to the test). In direct contrast, a pedagogy of liberation involves “learned forms

of interpretation, judgment, and critical forms of inquiry that form the basis for criticizing oppressive realities and imagining alternatives” (Saltman, 2015, p. 319). This type of education can liberate students from poverty and oppression. Further, according to Sondel (2016):

...Relying on competition, rewards, and sanctions alone shifts the purpose of education toward the production of assessment data. If we are willing to accept that learning is not the passive accumulation of predetermined, isolated units of information, and that schools are responsible for preparing students not only to exist within an unequal labor economy but also to participate as engaged citizens, then we must shift our pedagogies, and our paradigms for education reform away from the market-based model (Sondel, 2016, p. 185).

Saltman (2015) illuminates the importance of this needed shift away from neoliberalist pedagogy by stating, “the type of social and political agency suppressed by these reforms are necessary for both self-governance and for questioning, changing and democratizing existing institutions of the economy, political system, and culture” (p. 319). Thus, in addition to restricting class mobility, the neoliberal pedagogy of oppression keeps the very children who might question their circumstances ignorant of, and therefore pliant and receptive to the narrative myths that allow neoliberalism to flourish – in Gramsci’s terms, this constitutes “consent hegemony” (Baptist & Rehmann, 2011, p. 111).

There are other factors of control coupled with this destructive pedagogy in our public schools. Increasingly, schools encourage pharmaceutical control of children (Saltman, 2015), participate in the racially disproportionate placement of students into special education (Spence, 2016), push out children that are identified as having special educational needs (Sanders et al., 2018), and enact strict “no-excuses” behavioral policies/ police state of schools (Sondel, 2016). The pharmaceutical control of children

and their tracking into special education can exclude them from testing, kept them from progressing to the next grade, or facilitate dropping out of school (Sondel, 2016; Spence, 2016).

Pipeline to Prison

‘No excuses’ or ‘zero tolerance’ behavioral expectations in schools provide a direct link to the pipeline to prison, especially for Black and Brown students. Constant surveillance is common in urban schools – as are practices such as “level zero” (silence) for most of the school day and marching in tight lines in hallways with hands behind backs (Sondel, 2016). Personally, I have seen kindergarteners forced to use “hugs and bubbles” while in the hallway – students gave themselves a hug and placed a bubble of air in their mouths. Some no-excuses charter schools such as KIPP came up with acronyms for their rules – “SLANT” stands for “...Sit up, Listen, Ask and answer questions, Nod, and Track the speaker” (Sondel, 2016).

Our students face a forced level of compliance inherently present in zero-tolerance policies, which instills “...docility that will allow them to take their places at the bottom rungs of the economy or in prison” (Saltman, 2015, p. 318). Under neoliberalism, social safety nets are replaced with a propensity for disciplining the poor, disproportionately locking them behind bars rather than helping them (Alexander, 2010; De Lissovoy et al., 2015). The United States has 5% of the global population, but 25% of the world’s inmates, with Blacks incarcerated six times more frequently than Whites (Alexander, 2010; De Lissovoy et al., 2015). In sum, “the neoliberal prison system...is simultaneously a strategy for managing surplus extraction [surplus humans of color] and a racialized instrument of social and political repression” (De Lissovoy et al., 2015).

Possible Solutions to Neoliberalism

How do we fight against something that we can certainly feel is impacting our everyday lives in negative ways, but is still so hard to pinpoint? It is all around us, manifesting its ugly head everywhere we can look, but is it rather intangible at the same time? Neoliberalism truly is a wicked, rascal problem. Luckily, some authors (Baptist & Rehmman, 2011; De Lissovoy et al., 2015; Saltman, 2015; Spence, 2016) have given us constructs in understanding the struggle and ideas for engaging in the fight.

Saltman (2015) provided a useful analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of both the neoliberal regime and the grassroots coalitions attempting to stem the tide. According to Saltman (2015), the primary strength of the neoliberal infrastructure, "...is its deep pockets that can pay for all of this activity at corporate development, policy advocacy, design, and implementation, think tank propaganda, and corporate media productions" (Saltman, 2015, p. 322). The seemingly unending stream of money is also used to purchase election results, leading to a "hollowing out" of government and policies aligned with the neoliberal agenda (Saltman, 2015). Another strength of the neoliberal regime is the pervasiveness of its ideologies which make the takeover of public schools seem like "common sense" (Harvey, 2005; Saltman, 2015).

Proponents of neoliberalism also have their weaknesses. First, their arguments are intellectually weak and are not supported by educated citizens (Saltman, 2015). Second, despite the neoliberal focus on test scores, there is a lack of data to support charter schools as a better choice (Saltman, 2015). A third weakness is that neoliberalism has furthered the segregation of schools by leaving privileged schools intact while 'extracting resources' from schools with students living in poverty (Saltman, 2015).

On the other side of the fight, the left, or the grassroots resistance, does not have the financial backing nor the power of mass media to draw on (Saltman, 2015).

However, there are numerous potential points for the left to consider when mounting resistance to neoliberal advances. As the scope of neoliberalism is so broad, the counter to the neoliberal turn necessitates an entire recapturing of the ‘commons’, through a push for more democracy throughout society (De Lissovoy et al., 2015, Saltman, 2015). This can be accomplished by creating “pedagogical practices, curriculum, and [forms of] school organization that enact the global commons” (De Lissovoy et al., 2015, p. 52).

Pedagogy and curriculum are of utmost importance in reclaiming the commons, as, according to Giroux (2003), “the question of what educators teach is inseparable from what it means to invest in public life and to locate oneself in a public discourse” (Giroux, 2003, p. 10). This is a heavy lift, requiring participation from multiple groups in an orchestrated network, linked by a broader fight toward educational justice (Saltman, 2015). The potential is there, but the level of cohesiveness and organization must rival that of the neoliberal infrastructure of networks; and must include nodes of resisters that can:

develop policy advocacy...provide critical pedagogical guidance, [while] others can offer free critical curriculum, others can serve to do political lobbying and activism, some can be involved in developing deep relationships between the educational justice movement and organized labor, others between the movement and political parties, the movement and mass media journalists, yet others between the movement and scholars in a wide range of academic fields (Saltman, 2015, p. 323).

This strategy will most certainly be a challenge as long as the current resistance is “still sporadic, unorganized, fragmented, and dispersed into innumerable ‘identity movements’” (Baptist & Rehmann, 2011, p.113). This resistance allowed neoliberals to

“control the outcome, and history proceeds in the form of a passive revolution that preempts any possible opposition” (Baptist & Rehman, 2011, p. 113).

In combating the overarching narrative myths embedded in neoliberalism that is becoming engrained as common sense, the role of scholar-activists is of particular importance. Baptist and Rehmann (2011) turn to Gramsci’s work to interpret how neoliberalism employs narrative myths in hegemonic forces, and how to combat those forces (Baptist & Rehmann, 2011, p. 118). The role of scholar activists in this fight is to work against what Gramsci calls “a ‘disjointed’ and uncritically adopted incoherence that risks restricting or paralyzing people’s capacity to act and therefore needs to be criticized and transformed into a higher degree of coherence” (Baptist & Rehmann, 2011, p. 117). Gramsci saw the intellectual in ALL people and therefore calls on activist scholars not to proselytize to non-academics, but rather to become entrenched in the grassroots, working to develop ‘organic intellectuals’ (Baptist & Rehmann, 2011). Organic intellectuals are in close contact with the people and work on “common sense” (i.e. narrative/myths) by

...listening to their stories, perceiving and acknowledging their multiplicities, but also intervening into their inconsistencies, and looking for ‘good-sense’ strongholds starting from which it is possible to develop a greater level of coherence and capacity to act (Baptist & Rehmann, 2011, p. 118).

Thus, the movement to counteract neoliberal narrative myths works on the common sense of the people by avoiding academic elitism.

In the fight against the neoliberal turn in our public schools, academics spread hope by sharing stories of success. Pauline Lipman (2017) shared stories of successful grassroots organizing with parents of color and community organizations in Chicago, bolstered by radicalized leadership (The Caucus of Rank-and-file Educators, or CORE)

of the Chicago Teacher's Union (CTU). Additionally, Dave Stovall reported that at least one Chicago charter school has unionized and that the CTU successfully bargained their contract to include a moratorium on charter schools in the Chicago Public Schools district (Sanders et al., 2018). Another CORE is active in New York (the New York Collective of Radical Educators), where Terrenda White shared that some charter schools are beginning to realize the importance of community participation (Sanders et al, 2018). In New Orleans, Kristen Buras worked in concert with the Urban South Grassroots Research Collective, comprised of grassroots organizations such as Students at the Center, the Mos Chukma Institute, and the New Teachers' Roundtable, sharing stories and information based on decades of knowledge and experience (Buras, 2013). There are stories of hope flooding the academic landscape from all over. Indianapolis has its own story yet to be told, a story that is still unfolding daily – with a cast of billionaire characters and everyday grassroots organizations – in its unfolding, I hope that the Indianapolis story, too, engenders hope.

Chapter 3: Theory and Methodology

Theoretical Framework

I have planned my dissertation to conduct an organizational autoethnography situated during my tenure as a commissioner for IPS. I have explored my past role as a member of the governing body of this institution, and intended to analyze the process by which IPS succumbed to a myriad of macropolitical and micropolitical forces at play in Indianapolis on a neoliberal quest to privatize the local public school system.

Considering my positionality as one member of the governing body of the organization, as well as my inquiry focused on institutional change, I employed meso-level theories of organizational change as a framework and guide for this critically-oriented research.

Punctuated Equilibrium Theory

Punctuated equilibrium theory is borrowed from the field of Evolutionary Biology. In biological terms, punctuated equilibrium refers to “evolution that is characterized by long periods of stability in the characteristics of an organism and short periods of rapid change during which new forms appear...” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Applied to the study of organizations, punctuated equilibrium provided a framework for studying organizational change in which the organization stays static for long periods, and then change occurs at a rapid pace, usually as a result of “...lobby groups, national political cultures, party politics, or critical junctures...” (Verger et al., 2016, p. 16).

According to Verger et al. (2016), the punctuated equilibrium model is one of the more well-known and still widely-used organizational change theories, despite being developed in the 1990s (Verger et al., 2016, p. 16).

As an example of punctuated equilibrium in education, “The rise and decline of the common school as an institution: Taking ‘myth’ and ‘ceremony’ seriously,” Heinz Dieter Meyer (2006) provides a sociopolitical account of the genesis of common (public) schools. He cites Meyer and Rowans (1977) work in positing that our institutions are ingrained in, and therefore, reflect our social reality. Meyer (2006) gives a historical account of the fluctuating sense of *purpose* that American education systems have endured over time – noting that public schools serve a purpose in relation to the larger society. In his 2006 article, Meyer delineates all of the multiple socioeconomic groups vying for influence, their positions on the creation of common schools (pro/con), the locus of their interest, and the degree of organization of their respective groups. By applying the theory of punctuated equilibrium to education, he illustrates how different groups in a society shaped the formation of common schools (Meyer, 2006).

In the formation of common schools, the urban intellectuals of the time believed the patchwork of differing systems of education needed to be united around ideals of equality, fairness, and a sense of justice for those unable to afford private education (Meyer, 2006). However, according to Meyer’s (2006) retelling, this rhetoric was not sufficiently convincing for the aristocratic class who were quite comfortable with their children privileged educational opportunities. The catalyst for garnering the support of the aristocratic class was a narrative myth involving the dangers associated with an uprising of the waves of new immigrant families, producing fear in the aristocrats (Meyer, 2006). This mythical narrative provided a punctuated equilibrium – *a window of opportunity for change* in which the elites would support the formation of common schools in order to avoid unrest en masse (Meyer, 2006). The elite class then aligned

with the urban intellectuals and the working class, who were interested in providing their children with better educational opportunities - this coalition across different socioeconomic groups provided the momentum needed to bring common schools into existence (Meyer, 2006).

The Purpose of Public School

Though these distinct groups approached the existence of common schools for different reasons, once established, the common schools sought to achieve an evolving sense of *purpose*. Thus, the earliest mission of public education was to, “induct young and new immigrants to the Protestant faith,” (Meyer, 2006, p. 60). This mission evolved over time, gradually becoming more accepting of varying faiths, but the purpose of the common/public school system transitioned into a means of “Americanizing” (read: forced assimilation of) recent immigrants (Meyer, 2006). This purpose eventually evolved into schools’ creation of more civically-minded citizens, ready to assume positions in a booming factory-rich economy (Meyer, 2006).

The most recent *historical* purpose of the public school system has been to prepare young people to participate in the ‘American dream,’ at times in our history when the economy was strong. However, for the past several decades, this sense of purpose has been in rapid decline, mainly resulting from the advances of technology and neoliberal (profit-motive) ideals; replacing many jobs with computers or outsourcing them to other countries (Spence, 2015). Under the advent of neoliberalism, which, according to Harvey (2005) is defined as, “favor[ing] strong individual private property rights, the rule of law, and the institutions of freely functioning markets and free trade,” a public high school education in America no longer culminates in the acquisition of a

white picket fence (Harvey, 2005, p. 2). For most people living in the present neoliberal turn, a college education is a necessity in order to achieve some degree of financial security. Even then, the current trend toward the ‘gig economy’ does not guarantee that you will get a good job with solid pay and benefits (Spence, 2016).

The current neoliberal purpose of public schools, which formerly held a sense of promise and unrealized potential, has been decimated through the multitude of ways that neoliberalism plays itself out in our society – namely, economic downturn and loss of stable employment opportunities for Americans. Public schools have been “going through the motions” and are more of a custodial institution for people ages 6-18 than an agent of positive change for our youth (Meyer, 2006). Theories regarding the *current purpose* of public schools in the neoliberal era posit that they are not only a custodial institution, particularly for students of color and/or students living in poverty, they also sustain the stark differences in American wealth by providing a substandard education to some along racial and socioeconomic lines (Alexander, 2010; Buras, 2015; Lipman, 2011; Ravitch, 2013; Spence, 2015).

The Use of Narrative Myths

Many myths were/are required to pave the way for the neoliberal turn in education. For the past four decades, the neoliberal ideology that the market can regulate systems and that governmental provision for the people should be replaced by profit-motive private businesses has taken hold of several sectors that were once more public, such as health care and national security/defense (Au & Ferrare, 2015; Harvey, 2005; Lipman, 2011; Spence, 2015). One of the last governmental provisions, a public stronghold, has been the common or public school. In order for neoliberal (market-

driven, profit-motive, or privatization are also terms used interchangeably) ‘reform’ ideals to advance into the public education sector, the following myth was injected into the narrative surrounding public schools: that public schools are failing and must be replaced with something ‘better’ (Berliner & Biddle, 1996; Ravitch, 2013; Spence, 2015). Hence, something must be done about this ‘manufactured crisis’ of public school failure (Berliner & Biddle, 1996).

Many systems have been constructed in order to lend credibility and support to this myth. Some of those systems include the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and No Child Left Behind Act of 2000, which have ushered in a new era of focus on school measurement and accountability (Spence, 2015). In order to measure schools and hold them accountable, Indiana has used an A-F system to grade school performance based on standardized test scores (the state I-LEARN, formerly ISTEP test). This notion of testing has resulted in comparisons across schools with vastly different populations and resources, and in the process, many urban public schools are unjustly labeled as failing, contributing to the credibility of the failing urban school myth.

Those in education circles are typically aware that urban schools suffer from White and wealth flight and intentional economic disinvestment in inner-city districts, but the illusion of the failing public school still widely persists (Spence, 2016). Myths about failing public schools support the privatization of public schools and, ultimately, the neoliberal agenda. This myth is premised on the idea that since public schools have failed students based on the constructed metrics (A-F grades) used to measure performance, then privately operated organizations (i.e., charter schools and private schools operating with vouchers) will fare better on those metrics (Spence, 2016). This is

a point of contention considering the existence of data that contradicts the superiority of charter schools (Spence, 2016). The media is complicit with the neoliberal infrastructure in perpetuating the myth of the failing urban public school, causing alarm in parents who want nothing but the best educational opportunities for their students (Spence, 2016). Hence, the narrative myth of failing public schools has become increasingly ingrained into the collective consciousness of our society, to the point that it begins to feel like ‘the way things are’ (Harvey, 2005).

In my study, I took the theoretical concept of punctuated equilibrium that Meyer (2006) applies to the common or public school in America and extended that trajectory to the examination of the current neoliberal turn that school districts are facing. In the same vein as Meyer (2006), I have analyzed the current *purpose* of public schooling in Indianapolis. By analyzing my own experiences as a commissioner and triangulating my experience with the narrative myths/political rhetoric, I have examined the myth of the failing urban public school in Indianapolis as the ‘punctuated equilibrium’ which has made possible the market-based privatization of IPS, and by extension, public school districts in other cities which are facing similar circumstances.

Sociopolitics and Logics of Action

The theory of punctuated equilibrium assisted in framing the narrative myths associated with the neoliberal turn in education and how those myths ultimately result in organizational change. To complement this, studies of sociopolitical groups and their logics of action assisted with understanding exactly how the narrative myths incite action in the multiple constituent groups involved in the neoliberal turn of IPS. The

sociopolitical theoretical framework allowed me to more concisely name the actors and the processes that ultimately led to organizational change within IPS.

The sociopolitical framework that I intended to use is explicated in an article titled, “Organizational Politics in Schools: Micro, macro, and logics of action” by Bacharach and Mundell (1993). The authors provided an excellent outline and definition of the numerous constructs involved in a sociopolitical study of an organization. This theory focused on the ‘interest group’ (or: the groups of actors) as the unit of analysis and details how the interest group’s logics of action are “the implicit relationship between means and goals that is assumed by organizational actors” (Bacharach & Mundell, 1993, p. 423). The authors further posited that, in a Marxist vein, “organizational politics, therefore, emerge from historical and societal power struggles, and organizations become arenas of those struggles” (Bacharach & Mundell, 1993, p. 425). As a result, and also because of my particular focus on the neoliberal (read: attempt to maintain elite class dominance) turn in education, I also employed Critical/Conflict theory, which is discussed in the next section. The authors noted in their study (Bacharach & Mundell, 1993) that

...the concept of the logic of action, although Weberian in origin, is not necessarily inconsistent with the other two classical perspectives of organizational politics. It is possible to view...the Marxian perspective, [where] this logic of action is imposed on the organization members by the dominant coalition (Bacharach & Mundell, 1993. p. 428).

This quote is precisely my view of IPS as an organization during the neoliberal turn. There are multiple interest groups engaging in a struggle over various logics of action, with those logics of action being implemented by both neoliberal interest groups

seeking to dominate and grassroots interest groups responding to those advances, with groups in both camps vying for control of IPS.

According to Bacharach and Mundell (1993), any study of organizational politics necessarily involves an examination of both macropolitics and micropolitics. Bacharach and Mundell (1993) defined micropolitics, “as how logics of action are negotiated among interest groups within organizations,” and macropolitics as, “how logics of action that are generated by external interest groups penetrate the organization” (Bacharach & Mundell, 1993, p. 432). Thus, an example of micropolitical groups would be teachers and administrators working within IPS, whereas an example of macropolitical groups would be the teacher’s union and the mayor’s office. Note that in this sense, macro- and micro have nothing to do with the size or number of the action groups involved, but whether they are located within groups (micro-) or are external (macro-) groups seeking to influence the organization (Bacharach & Mundell, 1993).

Bacharach and Mundell (1993) outlined five imperatives for micropolitical analyses. First, they must clearly define the issue(s) (*logics of action*) being struggled over. Second, the *unit of analysis* must be clear: organizational, group, or individual. Third, the *dimensions of power* must be examined. Fourth, the actors must be consistently identified. Fifth, the *strategies* need to be accounted for (Bacharach & Mundell, 1993, p. 433).

In micropolitical analyses, dimensions of power are examined in two ways (Bacharach & Mundell, 1993, p. 434). According to the authors, the first dimension of power is *authority*, defined as “the right to make the final decision” (Bacharach & Mundell, 1993, p. 434). The second dimension of power is *influence*, defined as

resources, information/expertise, or “one’s position in the formal hierarchy” (Bacharach & Mundell, 1993, p.434). Attention needs to be paid to how these two dimensions of power are utilized in the logics of action among interest groups in the study. Bacharach and Mundell (1993) provide a table for analysis of whether authority or influence are being exercised in exchanges within interest groups (p. 435).

Additionally, in micropolitical analysis, various *strategies* need to be considered. The decision to form coalitions with other interest groups (or not), negotiate with other interest groups, or choose not to compromise with other interest groups will need to be analyzed. Bacharach and Mundell (1993) provide a table with which to consider the compatibility of logics of action between different interest groups in a political study, which will be useful in my analysis of IPS (Bacharach & Mundell, 1993, p. 440).

Having analyzed macropolitical interest groups, Bacharach and Mundell (1993) list three issues to be addressed. First, the key interest groups within the institutional environment must be identified. Second, the logic of action of these groups must be described. In order to discover their logics of action, you must examine the overall narrative; including their political rhetoric, or persuasive arguments (Bacharach & Mundell, 1993, p. 443). Third, the researcher must account for the impact that these groups’ logic of action has on the existing logic of action currently in place within the institution (Bacharach & Mundell, 1993). Some groups benefit from the status quo, and some groups benefit from changing the status quo.

The link between Bacharach and Mundell’s (1993) sociopolitical theory and Meyer’s (2006) punctuated equilibrium theory exists at the fulcrum, where status quo/institutionalized logics of action *change* as a result of micro/macropolitical groups,

denoting punctuated equilibrium. An organization stays static, stuck in its institutionalized logics of action for quite some time, and then when change occurs as a result of political action, it happens seemingly all at once. Any sociopolitical study will include analysis of both the macropolitical group(s) and the internal micropolitical group logics of action. According to Bacharach and Mundell (1993),

...the micropolitics of school organizations depend on the macropolitical environment in which schools operate. From an internal interest group's viewpoint, success in enacting a preferred logic of action will depend on obtaining resources from interest groups in the environment who may be attempting to enact similar or compatible logics of action on the school organization. From an external group's viewpoint, success will depend on making alliances with internal interest groups to enact compatible logics of action. Organizational politics is thus a power game... (Mundell, 1993, p. 446).

Consequently, care must be taken on the part of the researcher to integrate the macropolitical and the micropolitical aspects of the study. Neither can exist without the other. An alternative view of this same concept is offered by Bacharach and Mundell (1993) in stating that, "...logics of action can be understood as the overarching organizational stakes over which micro- and macropolitical actors struggle" (Bacharach & Mundell, 1993, p. 447). Though my study is not a detached, purely organizational study (as my positionality is both within and simultaneously 'out' of the organization being studied), the essence of my research used the many constructs in this theory to help me define the political actors and logics of action involved in the IPS struggle during the neoliberal turn.

Example of Sociopolitical Framework Applied to Education

As an example of a sociopolitical study applied to an educational organization, the article, *Is the Land of Oz an Alien Nation? A Sociopolitical Study of School*

Community Conflict, (Larson, 1997) provides details of a Black community's [macropolitical interest group] fight for equity within a predominantly White suburban school's administration [micropolitical interest group]. An incident occurred in which seven Black male students ripped a paper U.S. flag and displayed an African National Congress flag during a well-attended talent show (Larson, 1997). According to the article, this single act immediately brought simmering racial tensions within the school to a full boil (shift from a stable to a turbulent organizational environment). The school administration swiftly disciplined the students involved based on their breaking the rules of the talent show while choosing to ignore the underlying cause of their display – the culturally unresponsive school district and the racial micro-aggressions that the students dealt with daily (Larson, 1997). This act prompted a series of events in the Black community in order to make their voices heard (Larson, 1997).

Larson (1997) relies heavily on concepts from Bacharach and Mundell's 1993 article on examining logics of political action and uses the sociopolitical theoretical framework in this article to deconstruct the logic of action of the school district and the logic of resistance used by the Black community in responding to the actions of the school administrators. As an example, this helped theoretically weave together the functions and roles of various players in the city being studied and will assist in my understanding of how micropolitical and macropolitical forces converge in IPS during the neoliberal turn.

Critical Theory/Politics of Resistance: Giroux

While a Weberian theoretical frame is useful for examining the organizational politics of IPS and its various actors, critical/conflict theory is necessary to understand

the struggle for dominance in IPS during the neoliberal turn. As previously noted by Bacharach and Mundell (1993), the Weberian-oriented framing of sociopolitical studies and a conflict/critical orientation are not incompatible when you consider the issues being studied to be part of a larger struggle for dominance. This theory is relevant because the neoliberal turn in education is at its very core a struggle for dominance and control of public school systems – with neoliberals aiming to make them profitable and market-based (Klein, 2007; Lipman, 2011; Saltman, 2015; Spence, 2018).

The underlying goal of neoliberal ideology is to maintain concentrations of wealth in the hands of the elite class (Harvey, 2005; MacLean, 2018); therefore, conflict theory is appropriate to study neoliberalism. Inasmuch as neoliberal ideals work to influence politics and legislation to sustain their ability to amass wealth in education systems, there are activist groups working toward opposite aims (Buras, 2015; Lipman, 2011), including many critical theorists (Freire, 1970; Marx, 2009; Shor, 1992). However, for the purposes of my study on IPS, I am particularly interested in the work of Henry Giroux.

Giroux is a prolific writer on Critical Theory in education, which explored the ways in which education maintains the status quo classes of the privileged (in this case, the people that neoliberalism benefits) and the oppressed (the people that are exploited by the neoliberal turn). In his theory on the Politics of Resistance, Giroux (2003) explained that the advancement of neoliberal and market-based schooling removes democracy and humanity from our children and their systems of education. Essentially, neoliberal education does not provide students with the skills to think critically about their socioeconomic situations, thus preventing their resistance (Giroux, 2003). The discourse (narrative myths) of neoliberalism obscure social justice issues from the public view, and

therefore any chance of transformative action in remedying social problems is rendered impossible (Giroux, 2003; Saltman, 2015).

This neoliberal way of messaging about schools is crucially linked to the concept of punctuated equilibrium as we examine how the “stage was set” for a move to market-based education reforms. Linking the theories of punctuated equilibrium and critical resistance even further, Giroux (2003) proposes introducing a new discourse into the narrative by defending public education as a civic right and as being vital to democracy. He suggested joining forces with other groups interested in these issues, similar to how the Black community rallied together in the “Land of Oz” (Larson, 1997) article on logics of action. The new discourse, once widespread, could be the catalyst for reforming schools AWAY from the current neoliberal market-based trend toward a more democratic, socially just education (Giroux, 2003).

Theoretical Integration

Punctuated equilibrium as outlined by Meyer (2006) and the many valuable constructs offered in the Sociopolitical theory by Bacharach and Mundell (1993) are two theories in the same vein, as each theoretical frame is used to analyze an organization or institution undergoing change. Both theories provided the terminology necessary to identify the key players and their respective narratives involved in the struggle for dominance of IPS schools. These theories lend themselves to an organizational analysis of IPS that ran parallel to the primary focus, which is the retelling of my experiences as a board member and educational activist. Given my critical perspective of these neoliberal changes, the work of Henry Giroux (2003) on the politics of resistance will be helpful in framing neoliberalism as a struggle for dominance of public education and its insidious

efforts to thwart democracy and equitable opportunities for class mobility (Spence, 2016). Andrew Herrmann, writing about the larger aims of autoethnography as research, sums up my goals in this endeavor:

Autoethnographers recognize fully that the personal is political, and that our work involves pursuing social justice – emancipation, liberation, and hope – for ourselves and others, in part by interrogating larger cultural interpretations, grand narratives, and hegemonic discourses (Herrmann, 2017, p. 2).

Methodology

This work is a critical organizational autoethnography. The intent of my writing was to invite readers to think *with* me through a period in my life, during which I was elected to the school board with dark neoliberal money and the subsequent epiphany that occurred shortly after my swearing-in ceremony. My epiphany came as a result of constant dialogue with grassroots educational activists, which forced a gradual peeling back of the layers of neoliberal school privatization forces at play in IPS. According to Boyle and Parry (2007), "...the prime focus of an organizational autoethnographic study is to illuminate the relationship between the individual and the organization in a way that crystallizes the key conceptual and theoretical contributions to understanding the relationship between culture and organization" (Boyle & Parry, 2007, p. 185). Herrmann (2017) further illustrated this point in stating, "together, autoethnography and organizational research transform personal stories into critical investigations and interventions, *about* power, *of* difference, and *for* organizational change. Organizational autoethnography shows organizationally embedded life in action" (p. 7).

Boyle and Parry (2007) illuminated four important elements of organizational autoethnographic research. First, this method "...connect[s] the everyday, mundane

aspects of organizational life with that of broader political and strategic organizational agendas and practices” (Boyle & Parry, 2007, p. 186). Second, this method offers an insider look at the “...tacit and subaltern aspects of organization” (Boyle & Parry, 2007, p. 186). Third, the authors acknowledge the problems inherent in autoethnography, particularly the exposure of self, which could be a dangerous professional risk – and fourth, they simultaneously accentuate the positive, which is a possible appeal to younger researchers with the advent of varying forms of social media (Boyle & Parry, 2007, p. 186).

Autoethnographies, though possibly risky, as a whole are compelling in their personal storytelling and the vulnerability of the subject /the author’s personal experience; therefore, the impact of autoethnographies on readers is often felt as an emotive response (Boyle & Parry, 2007; Grbich, 2013; Holman Jones, Adams & Ellis, 2013). In order to generate an emotive response in the reader, the style of writing an autoethnography is very important. The author must be able to expressively convey emotion and draw the reader into the events (Grbich, 2013).

To this effect, I shared my personal story, a journey in which I sought to elicit real change in a school district that I love and care about deeply. I have multiple ties to this district – I attended IPS schools K-12, being at least the fourth generation in my family to do so. I taught in the district for several years, and my children have attended school in the district (the fifth generation to attend). In addition, I was elected to serve on the IPS school board, which is the focus of this study. In the 2012 general election, on the same ballot as Obama, I captured 75% (approximately 12,000) of the votes for my district on the eastside of Indianapolis, with three other candidates vying for the same seat. In this

study, I explored the process by which I was elected, which includes points of both pride in my accomplishments and pure, ‘ignorance is bliss’ intentions, and in hindsight, shame at the fact that dark money was involved in achieving that accomplishment. The autoethnographical lens shifted from within the organization in my official capacity as an elected board member to also encompassing my positionality in an outsider stance, exploring my development as an activist as opposed to the very forces that previously had helped to get me elected.

Critiques of autoethnography as a research format do exist, and these are concerns that the author must stay aware of (Grbich, 2013). These include a tendency to become too self-indulgent or obsessive, concerns with the authenticity and credibility of the author, the vulnerability/risk inherent in sharing a personal story, a lack of perspective balance (highlighting your role as author/central figure and possibly downplaying others), and also ethical concerns – “protecting the privacy of others who are linked in the story being told” (Grbich, 2013, p. 126). I addressed obsessiveness and self-indulgence by balancing my personal narrative with weaving in elements of sociopolitical analysis of the players and their associated narrative myths and logics of action surrounding the neoliberal conquest of IPS. Admittedly, I am concerned about protecting the privacy of others and am prepared to present individuals and interest groups accurately and in keeping with my own integrity. Many of the individuals and interest groups in IPS are already widely known; additionally, the point of the research is to illuminate the neoliberal network in Indianapolis and their doings – therefore, it does not make sense for me to use pseudonyms in this endeavor.

According to Grbich (2013), “the process of collecting data for autoethnographies is often a very time-consuming and emotionally complex process...” (Grbich, 2013, p. 123). The data that will be collected for this study will be both autoethnographical and, more broadly, qualitative in nature. The data will be interpreted through dual lenses of elected official and activist; I first will focus on the analysis of my own data in both of these roles. During my tenure on the IPS board, I took many personal notes and also engaged in activist work by engaging in political activity, forming activist groups, and blogging. By blogging, I aimed to keep the public informed of issues as well as to inspire action on those issues. These personal sources of information will inform my autoethnography.

In order to effectively analyze IPS as an organization and examine the effects of the neoliberal turn on IPS, I attempted to understand the network of political actors engaged in the struggle for dominance of the educational system. In order to achieve this level of understanding, I engaged multiple sources of data. The other sources of data obtained were triangulated (crystallized) with my own personal data and blogs in order to add validity to the retelling of my experiences.

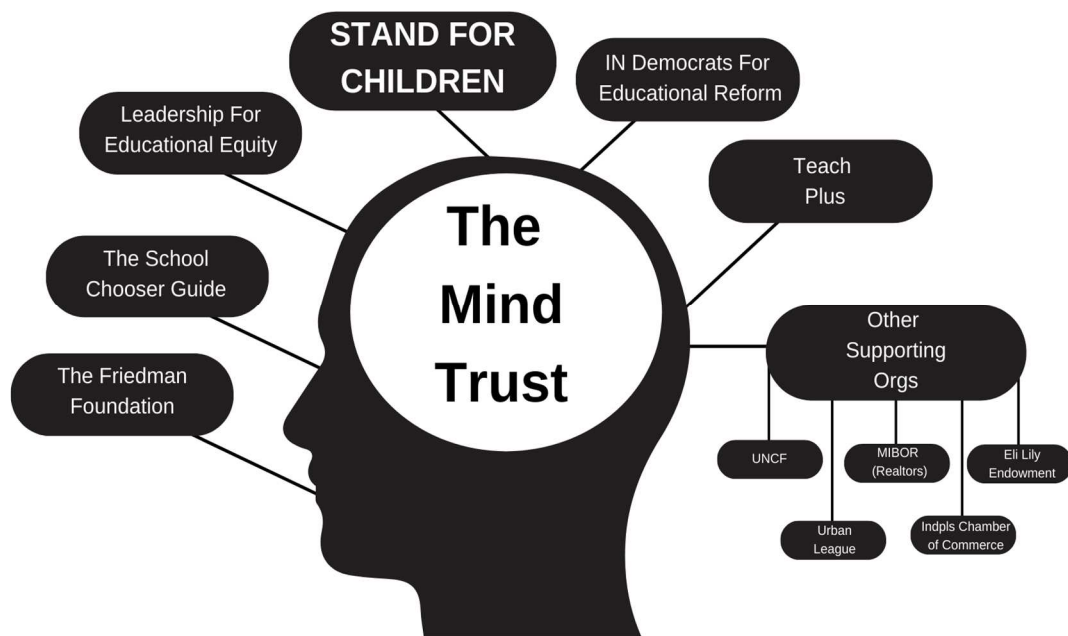
Data Sources

The first data set that was collected and analyzed are my own personal writings, notes, and correspondence related to my roles as both an elected IPS board member and as an educational activist. My own personal writings, notes, and email correspondence from both roles are in my possession. The forward-facing blog that I wrote is publicly accessible from the internet and can be printed for ease of use in analysis.

The second data source that I collected are public documents from all of the interest groups/actors, including IPS public board documents and all of the macropolitical organizations surrounding IPS at the local level; but only to the extent that the interest group has had an impact on the neoliberal turn in IPS. The other macropolitical groups included (but are not necessarily limited to): The Indianapolis Mayor’s Office of Educational Innovation, Stand for Children, The Mind Trust, The Chamber of Commerce, various iterations of anti-neoliberal grassroots activist organizations, documents from campaigns for school board and their respective campaign finance reports, local governing bodies and legislators, and ancillary interest groups such as the local NAACP and groups with religious affiliations.

Figure 1

The Mind Trust



Third, in order to gauge the political rhetoric associated with the aforementioned groups, pertinent newspaper articles and education-focused blogs from other authors

were analyzed. These sources included: The Indianapolis Star, The Indianapolis Recorder (particularly, Amos Brown's columns), Chalkbeat, the blog of Annie Roof- a former IPS board member, The Indiana Barrister - the blog of Abdul Hakim-Shabazz; a local personality/lawyer, and the blog of Gary Welsh; a local lawyer and political expose writer.

Data Analysis, Integration, Interpretation

An ethnographic content analysis method was utilized to organize the data by thematic content (Saldana, 2012). The coding for this was done in cycles. The initial exploratory cycle employed holistic coding methods to capture possible themes/categories in the research (Saldana, 2012). The first cycle of descriptive coding summarized the basic topics, then the second cycle utilized pattern coding to group those summaries into a smaller number of themes (Saldana, 2012). These themes were grouped into columns to depict the theme or code in column one, the data (direct document or excerpt) that supported the code or theme in column two, and the researcher's interpretive summary in column three (Saldana, 2012). The interpretive summary column allowed for integration/triangulation (crystallization) of outside data sources with my own autoethnographical data. The resulting themes were interwoven into the retelling of my personal experiences as a board member.

Overall, the ethnographic content method of analysis is consistent with the method of qualitative political analysis proposed by Hatch (2002). Since my study is not only an autoethnography but also sociopolitical in nature, I wanted to cross-check the thematic, cyclical nature of ethnographic content analysis with the methods of analysis employed in political studies. Hatch (2002) proposed that one of the steps in political

research involves notating data with your own ideological concerns (Hatch, 2002, p. 192). Therefore, I feel that the notation of data in political analysis is consistent with Saldana's (2012) ethnographic interpretive summary column and allowed for ease of centering my own experiences in the organizational autoethnography.

This thematically organized data was used to further identify the micro- and macro-political groups and their logics of action in the struggle for dominance of IPS. The interest groups that are involved and their respective narratives and myths provided a backdrop to the retelling of my personal experience as a board member, which is at the forefront of this study. I hope to have simultaneously told the story of how IPS became influenced by (micro- and macro-) political groups, changed their institutionalized logic of action, and hence began the privatization of a public school system (the point of punctuated equilibrium).

The examination of public documents to gather data about the multiple interest groups and their discourses/narrative myths provided an important source of triangulation (crystallization) of my autoethnographical data while also providing the reader with context for my personal story. In the analysis of public documents, I have cross-referenced data in order to check for understanding, as the discourses could be subjectively understood. I acknowledge that my positionality as a board member whose philosophies often differed from other board members is going to affect my interpretation of events (Hatch, 2002). However, if I was able to compare my interpretation of events with that of other board members, education activists, newspaper articles or board documents, I was able to chronicle multiple interpretations of the same event across

different constituent groups in the community and provide multiple layers, a richness, to the storytelling.

This work is transformative in nature. My hope is that this study will help the average Indianapolis citizen to have a better understanding of neoliberal/market-based education reform, how it took hold in our city from multiple vantage points, and to be inspired to resist these advancements by promoting new discourses. As Giroux (2003) succinctly illustrated:

Within the discourse of neo-liberalism, issues regarding schooling and social justice, persistent poverty, inadequate health care, racial apartheid in the inner cities, and the growing inequalities between the rich and the poor have been either removed from the inventory of public discourse and public policy or factored into talk show spectacles that highlight private woes bearing little relationship either to public life or to potential remedies that demand collective action...there is no vocabulary for political or social transformation, no collective vision, no social agency to challenge the privatization and commercialization of schooling, the ruthless down-sizing of jobs, the ongoing liquidation of job security, or spaces from which to struggle against the elimination of benefits for people now hired on a strictly part-time basis (Giroux, 2003, p. 8).

My intent is to educate Indianapolis citizens on the current state of their public school district under neoliberal rule and to inspire action. As a former board member, I am admitting my propensity for bias on this topic as my past intent in serving the public in my elected official capacity and in engaging with various activist groups has been to elicit transformative change, and I hope to elicit further change as a result of my dissertation.

Chapter 4: Finding Myself as a Board Member

Introduction

Let us explore my 2012 candidacy to the Indianapolis Public School (IPS) board. 2012 proved to be a pivotal year for education in Indianapolis, as several special interest groups had turned their attention to the IPS school board elections as a political lever with which to effect organizational change in IPS via punctuated equilibrium (Meyer, 2006). Punctuated equilibrium theory, based on biological concepts related to cell change, posits that the boundaries of an organization can become penetrated by outside forces, similar to the outer membrane of a cell. This school board election marked the beginning of a visceral attack on the boundaries of public education in Indianapolis by outside forces intent on privatizing the historically public school district. The focus of this chapter is to highlight and analyze data relevant to this organizational change, the mechanisms and players involved in the change process, as well as my personal experiences as an “insider looking about” (Herrmann, 2017, p. 3).

In 2012, Barack Obama was up for re-election, and there was a higher number of Black voter turnout than usual, surpassing the Black voter turnout during Obama’s first election in 2008 by two percentage points (Frey, 2013). No doubt, this high voter turnout trickled down to affect school board races as well. Due to local redistricting of voting precincts in Indianapolis, predominantly in communities that were economically challenged, or communities comprised primarily of people of color, folks were standing in extremely long lines in some areas to cast a vote. In district 2 of the IPS Board race, I won by a landslide, garnering at least 75% of the votes. (Frey, 2013).

Why I Chose to Run

I do not take much personal credit for this landslide victory I experienced. Sure, I *wanted* and was qualified to run for this seat: I was a former IPS student, from kindergarten through graduation. I taught Special Education in the district for several years prior, and my kids were students under IPS. I had multiple perspectives to bring to the table, but perhaps the most enlightening was when I worked as a teacher, which affected the principles of my campaign that I outlined in my blog, “How I got here: the sun in my eyes” -

- “The overarching need for our schools to have more autonomy, based on the fact that teachers and principals know the needs of their students better than folks at the district level (no more top down, one size fits all mandates)
- Teachers need to be freed from constrictive pedagogy focused on passing tests – teaching at its best is an art designed to inspire young minds (UGH! no more Pacing Guides to tell me what to teach by the week, day, and hour)
- Curriculum focused on teaching to the test ensures a failure rate of about half of the student population if you assume a normal bell curve distribution
- Parents, on the most basic level, have the right to choose where to send their children to school (Cosby, March 2015).”

My experiences before I was a teacher, my childhood, in particular, provide essential context for why I decided to run and advocate for more autonomy in public schools. In addition, providing this life history will center my unique positionality in contrast to the people I was surrounded by during my political ascent, which gives context to who I was as a board member.

Though I faced many challenges in my childhood, I did benefit from the privilege of attending IPS Magnet schools for gifted learners, where my teachers enjoyed the autonomy necessary to adequately challenge their students. Before teaching for social

justice was popular, my teachers were providing me with the critical thinking skills necessary to evaluate my environment. This is empowering. I saw my privileged experiences with IPS in contrast to the typical IPS student experience and carried this knowledge into my board campaign, where I might acquire the power to do something about the inequity that I knew existed.

I come from poverty and experienced much of the brokenness that typically accompanies it. Thankfully, I had grandparents willing to intervene where they could, and give me some semblance of normalcy in my earliest years. But growing up in poverty has a way of staying with you, implanting deep trauma, persisting, no matter what achievements you attempt to bury your impoverished past with. Despite this, or maybe more accurately, in spite of it - I was always an achiever. For me, success in school was an escape from the chaos of my everyday life: food insecurity, parenting my younger brother, housekeeping, etc. School was a constant, and I threw myself into it, basking in the joy my academic success fostered in my grandparents, who were more like parents to me. However, at around the age of 12, my world shifted because I had to leave the security of my grandparents to live with my actual parents, which thrust me into constant responsibility at home. My childhood essentially ended in that summer of my 12th year.

After a few years of acting out in accordance with this new reality – starting to cut class, smoke cigarettes, weed, and drink – I found myself pregnant as a freshman at Broad Ripple High School. I was about three months pregnant and not yet showing, cutting school, when the police descended upon a group of about eight of us. A few of my friends were able to duck and hide or run without being caught, but I wasn't that

fortunate. After a short ride to school in the back of the police car, I found myself in the Dean's office, where my father was called, and was surprised to learn of my grades and attendance record. Upon being informed of my pregnancy, the Dean demanded that I transfer to a special school for pregnant girls on the campus of Arsenal Tech. Of course, at the time, this felt like a huge punishment, but often our blessings come disguised this way.

At Arsenal Tech, I found safety in a community of girls who were all experiencing the same situation. My daughter, Sierra, was born in September of 1995, when I was 15 years old. I was lucky to be accepted into a teen parenting program that provided free daycare so that I could finish high school. I was removed from a lot of negative peer influences and ended up graduating high school a year early. I even received a \$300 scholarship. No one in my family had attended college, and I had no idea what \$300 meant, so I decided to try and find out. Ultimately, I discovered I could attend Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) with a Pell grant and started as a freshman at age 17.

I completed a bachelor's degree in both Sociology and Psychology at IUPUI from 1997-2003. My brother was diagnosed with Schizophrenia in 1998, prompting me to choose psychology as a focus of study. It seemed natural that I ended up teaching Special Education (SPED) in IPS after watching my brother's experiences as a SPED student in IPS and his later involvement in the mental health system unfold. I loved teaching my students and watching them overcome insurmountable challenges that resonated with me in a very personal way.

After graduating and pushing bureaucratically red-taped papers for the state in the Social Security Disability Determination Bureau for several years, I returned for my master's degree in Education at Marian College [University] as part of a transition-to-teaching program in 2007, dubbed the Indianapolis Teaching Fellows. Ironically, this same year was the first year the program was brought to Indianapolis; another tentacle of "the octopus" that is deforming public education by making teachers out of any type of bachelor's degree (Cosby, 2016).

So, the pathways that led me to become a first-generation college graduate and to ultimately pursue a career in education in retrospect, almost seem like a constellation of accidental incidents. I provided this context in order to paint a picture of exactly who I was as a candidate in stark contrast to the environment and people I found myself surrounded by throughout my experience.

In particular, my varied perspectives led to the development of a platform centered around increasing teacher autonomy in the classroom (breaking the chains of a standardized-test focus) and elevating parent voice. I had plenty of passion for the job and was certainly well-intentioned with the platform that I envisioned, though I was initially naive about the privatizing organizations I was about to encounter and the true intentions behind their abhorrent spending on my campaign. Little did I know, this level of spending was necessary to propagate the narrative myths (Bacharach & Mundell, 1993) that could propel the privatization machine forward, and that I was simply a pawn with a pretty enough face and a decent enough educational pedigree to be the vessel for delivery of those myths. According to Bacarach and Mundell (1993), the rhetoric that is employed in the public eye is termed a "narrative myth." Narrative myths make possible

the political change that is sought: in this case, the changing of IPS from a public entity to a portfolio district of independently operated charter, or charter-like schools. The money flowing to my campaign ensured that the myths were delivered to the community, and the stage was set for me to become an IPS board member, where it was anticipated that I would continue to do the dirty work of the privatization machine. At the close of my campaign, I had been given a little over \$78,326, more money than any candidate ever, in the history of IPS board races to date (Cosby, 2016).

Pre-Election Activities: The Courtship

As mentioned in previous chapters, in 2012, some special interest groups had already come to town. Stand for Children, an Oregon-based educational nonprofit (Hinnefeld, 2016) had set up shop in Indianapolis, apparently preparing to elect pro-reform candidates during this election cycle. Karega Rausch served as the Executive Director during the time of my election. Karega had previously served as the Director for the Office of Education Innovation for the Indianapolis Mayor's Office, where he authorized charter schools coming to Indy. He currently serves as President and CEO of National Association of Charter School Authorizers. Another monetary influencer was Democrats for Education Reform (DfER) Indiana. At the time, DfER was run by Larry Grau, who seems to swirl around education research circles. Interestingly, a former IPS Commissioner, Kelly Kennedy Bentley, was employed by DfER during the time I was campaigning (she later returned to a board seat in 2014). Both of these organizations contributed heavily to my campaign in the latter stages, once endorsements were announced.

However, the amount reported on my campaign finance reports was only a fraction of the actual spending on my campaign. Most of the money flowed behind the scenes. Stand for Children and other similar special interest organizations operate as a 501(c)(4) – a tax structure that allows the organization a fair degree of leniency in their reporting of donations. Conservative estimates posit that Stand for Children spent from \$300 - \$500k in support of their endorsed candidates during the 2014 election cycle (Brown, 2014). Other estimates range upwards from \$400,000 to \$1,000,000 campaigning for various offices between 2011 and 2015 (Hinnefeld, 2016).

In a local school board election, money can buy you a lot, and indeed it did. Eleven full-color glossy mailers were paid for and mailed on my behalf, most of them a full 8”x11” in size – the estimated cost was \$7,000 per mailer (Personal Communication, October 1, 2012), for a total of \$77,000 on mailers alone. These mailers were orchestrated by a local marketing company called Trendy Minds - Justin Ohlemiller was the CEO of this company at the time (though he took the helm at Stand for Children after Karega Rausch’s departure in 2013). The number and frequency of these mailers were viewed as disturbing to some potential voters, who would approach me in public and say things like, “You’ve got my vote. You can stop sending me those mailers now!”

My special-interest group reform backers also became quite a popular temporary employer during election season. My supporters employed enough seasonal workers to knock on 29,000 doors, place over 40,000 phone calls – with almost 7,000 of those calls occurring the night before or on the day of the election. (Personal Communication, November 10, 2012). They also paid for a full day of “volunteering” at the polling locations (Personal Communication, November 10, 2012).

This level of spending was unprecedented in IPS Board campaigns and did not go unnoticed. The flashiness of it all drew a fair amount of criticism from the community at large. Some grassroots organizing friends of mine helped raise my awareness regarding this issue, and I attempted to control or slow the spending wherever I could, advising my Ed-Reform backers to “not spend another dime” until a meeting was held to discuss where the money was coming from (Personal Communication, October 1, 2012; October 9, 2012; October 19, 2012).

Amos Brown, a popular radio show host for WTLC, fielded several callers highly critical of the amount of spending in the 2012 election (Personal Communication, October 10, 2012). In retrospect, I am glad that folks were paying attention, even in the first year of the IPS school board takeover, to the despicable amounts of money being spent by Stand for Children and their backers. However, Stand for Children took extraordinary measures to ensure their spending was covered up as much as possible - refusing public inquiries to release IRS documents and campaign finance reports (Brown, 2014). This refusal was coupled with the propagation of the narrative myth that the election was not being bought. Amos Brown, a local radio personality and seasoned investigator, was deeply concerned with the fate of IPS and would frequently host shows related to school board races, school segregation, and school privatization. He was a force to be reckoned with, as he had a wide listener base and the respect of many - he and his followers certainly were part of the grassroots interest group (Bacharach & Mundell, 1993) composed of concerned citizens.

Brown and his listener base certainly were a threat to the opposing special interest groups (Stand for Children/Mind Trust/Democrats for Education) school privatization

agenda, prompting the privatizers' obsession with controlling the narrative. They would carefully monitor the callers' messages into the Amos Brown radio show, emails flying back and forth in real-time as the show progressed. If there appeared to be an imbalance in the narratives of the callers - such that the messaging became too anti-reform agenda, they had prepared a team of people to also call into balance the overall narrative (Personal Communication, November 5, 2012).

Stand for Children paid for Trendy Minds to also create most of the mailers sent on behalf of my campaign, with one bold print heading implying "It's time someone stands for children" (Personal Communication, 2012). This tagline insinuates that no candidate for school board had ever done so before, ushering in a "new" brand of reform. One of the mailers crafted and sent without my knowledge had some negative comments about one of my opponents. This negative propaganda was not received well by the community. In order to prepare for negative community backlash in response to the negative mailer, a PR "talking points" response paper was crafted in order to address any criticism I might receive (Personal Communication, 2012). This felt underhanded and sneaky to me.

A month prior to the election, though, the spending train had long left the station. I was no longer in control of my own campaign, and my voice and my character were lost in the process. Throughout my campaign, I had been forced to smile at rich White people, rub elbows with them, make nice, and be sociable while my inner-introvert from poverty was screaming: "Wear uncomfortable clothes and shoes, go to the Hob-Knob pancake breakfast for the Chamber of Commerce, for Christ's sake!"

The messaging and public relations efforts employed by the special interest groups that were backing me and the other “ed-reform” candidates was a carefully calculated act of public deception. The 2012 IPS school board campaign was the first time that Stand for Children and Democrats for Education Reform had endorsed candidates, which is the method by which they sought to control the future of IPS. These organizations used the political/campaign battlefield to weave a broad web of narrative myths (Bacharach & Mundell, 1993) intent on furthering the agenda of the dark ed-reform groups in Indianapolis to ultimately control Indianapolis Public Schools, making a lot of individuals wealthy in the process.

The primary narrative myth that is employed in the nationwide neoliberal agenda to privatize public schools is the myth of the failing public school, and Indianapolis is no exception. The premise of this myth is that public school students do not fare well on standardized tests. Of course, this “failure” is due to a rigged system of metrics, decades in the making, which permeates all levels of U.S. governance (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). There are certainly other myths in circulation, but all those smaller myths seem to prop up this bigger umbrella myth.

The perpetuation of this myth during my campaign was accomplished in a variety of ways. Stand for Children paid for radio advertisements that directly supported the myth of the failing public school. One ad, in particular, tied my campaign objective to that of Barack Obama, who was running for re-election that year:

Gayle is running for IPS School Board to bring many of President Obama’s key education ideas to Indianapolis. Like the President, Gayle Cosby believes strongly in expanding early childhood education. She has a plan to invest in high quality pre-kindergarten programs in IPS, which will have children ready to learn from day one. Gayle Cosby will work to turn around IPS lowest performing

schools because, like President Obama, she believes all children, no matter where they live, should have access to an excellent education. And Gayle shares the President's strong belief that teachers can have a profound impact on a child's academic performance. That's why Gayle Cosby will fight to ensure IPS is attracting the most talented educational leaders and rewarding and retaining the best teachers for our children (see Appendix F).

This was an advertisement for charter schools just as much as it was an advertisement for my campaign. Reflecting on this ad which uses racialized tactics is sickening - I can now see how they used the appeal of the nation's first Black president to draw on the emotions of my voter base in district 2, which was comprised predominantly of people of color. The mention of "low performing schools" - in this advertisement also squarely places this in the realm of perpetuating the myth of the failing public school, which was a necessary component of furthering the dismantling of IPS as a public entity.

This advertisement also allies the ed-reform ("deform") movement with the Democratic Party. In my opinion, this is regrettable because I have voted primarily for Democrats in all elections, and I identified as a Democratic candidate for school board, though those races are typically considered non-partisan. As much as I (along with many other Americans) hold a particular reverence for Barack Obama and the Democratic Party in general - in retrospect, I do not agree with their neo-liberal approach to school reform via a torrential onslaught of purchasing elections at all levels of government.

After my election and swearing into the school board, it became concretely clear to me what the Privatizer/Neoliberal/Ed-deform special interest groups had intended to purchase with their financial investments. According to one of the first blog entries I wrote dated March 25, 2015:

I guess they tried to buy my vote. They were not successful, if that was their goal. I weigh every single decision I make on its own

merits...I will continue to advocate for the children and the district that I love, unafraid, until my time on the school board is over.”
(Cosby, March 25, 2015).

So, the 2012 election was successfully bought by Stand for Children and the privatizing special interest groups. Four “reform-minded” candidates were elected that year, including mine district 2 on the city’s East/Northeast side. The other four candidates that were elected in 2012 included Sam Odle (At-large/Districtwide), Caitlin Hannon (district 1/east/southeast side), and Diane Arnold (district 4/ west/south west side) (Cosby, 2016).

It would seem that we were expected to operate as a majority voting block of four on a total board of seven members. However, the honeymoon period in which I found myself in and the agreement to the expectations of the privatizers who contributed to my campaign was rather short-lived. I discovered quickly what the implied but unspoken raw underbelly of “school reform” actually meant to these organizations and individuals, and it did not resonate with me, at all.

Changing Leadership

One of the first things I did when I took my elected seat in January 2013 was to prepare to fire the sitting superintendent of IPS, Dr. Eugene White. This was the aim of the privatizing organizations as well. I thought I was firing him for my own personal reasons, but I was really doing what they also wanted. Dr. White had been superintendent for quite some time, as compared to the lifespan of typical urban district superintendents; he had been at the helm of IPS for over seven years. According to Edweek, the average tenure of an urban school district is 3.2 years (Will, 2020).

The very first order of business, as a member of this new ed-reform oriented board, was to oust Dr. Eugene White. From what I could ascertain as to the ed-

reformers' reason for this - Dr. White only played in the sandbox when it truly benefited IPS. He had clearly dipped his toe in the water of ed-reform, as evidenced by his membership on The Mind Trust's board of directors. However, one thing I can say that's positive about Eugene White is that he was somehow able to defend the boundaries of IPS, preventing the onslaught of ed-reformer organizations and entities seeking to achieve punctuated equilibrium - he was able to resist opening those boundaries up to charter school operators who could capitalize off the resources that the public tax dollars provided (Meyer, 2006). For that reason, once the ed-reformers bought their board members, they wanted Eugene White gone.

Personally, I held no particular affinity for Eugene White. He had been the sitting superintendent the entire time I served as a teacher for IPS. My tenure as an IPS Special Education teacher could be defined as a continual onslaught of policy changes, newfangled pre-planned curriculum that was forced into the classrooms, and series after series of useless professional development training. As a teacher, I had never interacted with Dr. White one-on-one. I do recall that the back-to-school rallies that we were forced to attend in order to hear his speeches were groan-worthy. I remember one year in particular, he droned on and on about the need for female teachers not to wear shirts with low necklines to school. I wondered why he did not have anything better to address in his back-to-school speech, and most teachers I knew in the district were not particularly fond of Dr. White. I blamed a lot of IPS issues on the shortcomings at the top levels of administration, and this fueled my desire to run for a seat on the board. I did feel leadership needed to change, as did many other teachers on the front lines of IPS.

Dr. White was very hospitable toward us as incoming board members; he prepared presentations and binders full of information - mostly highlighting his accomplishments over the past seven years. He was no fool; he saw the political writing on the wall and wanted to make sure the new board saw him as worthy of the job. Despite the image he projected as a willing participant in whatever direction the new board wanted to take, ultimately the incoming board members made their intentions clear to see him depart the district. Within days of our swearing-in ceremony, Dr. White announced his intention to retire from IPS on January 15, 2013 (Wyk, 2013).

This came at a great cost to district taxpayers - Dr. White was bought out of the remaining two years of his contract, at the cost of over \$800,000, which included luxuries like a car allowance and a hefty contribution to his retirement plan. He went on to become the president of Martin University - apparently, he wasn't *really* ready for retirement, after all.

After Dr. White retired from IPS, the board conducted a quick search for an interim superintendent. We landed on Peggy Hinckley, a former administrator from the neighboring Warren Township district. Peggy was tough, but I kind of liked her. One of the first things she did was announce that IPS was experiencing a \$30 million shortfall (Brown, n.d). She proposed layoffs and budget cuts in order to align IPS with this, and pursued them relentlessly, though all we really wanted and needed in an interim superintendent was to "keep the busses rolling." It was definitely an interesting time.

In the spring of 2013, Annie Roof, a fellow board member, and I attended a national conference for school board members and sat in a session titled "First 100 Days of a New Superintendent." At the end of the session, a younger looking man stood up to

ask a question of the panelists. He was currently serving as the Chief of Staff for Durham Public Schools in North Carolina (Newsom, 2018). I was impressed with his poise and presence, as well as the fact that his work history revolved around public school systems. I leaned over and told Annie that I was going to give him my card and inform him of our current superintendent search for IPS.

The search for a permanent superintendent was indeed very interesting. The search itself was spearheaded by a headhunting firm named Hazard, Young, Attea, and Associates. After milling through many profiles and applications of candidates, we ended up with three finalists in late June of 2013 (Adams, 2013). The three finalists' names were revealed to the public, and those three candidates were introduced publicly to crowds at the downtown Education Center. Three African American men, Thomas Darden, Millard House, and Lewis Ferebee, gave their final pitches to a packed house at the IPS Education Center (WTHR, 2013).

Of the three finalists, Lewis Ferebee proved to be the most dedicated to preserving the promise of public education. He was the descendent of generations of previous educators and had served solely in public school districts. The other finalists had obvious charter school ties. At this point, I had already found myself allied with the board members that were elected in 2010, so we had a grassroots majority of four. We knew we wanted to find someone that would keep IPS intact and whole, as an institution that served the public and did not line anyone's pockets or facilitate a deeper neoliberal/gentrification agenda. Of the three finalists, Lewis Ferebee fit this bill most closely. Unfortunately, we did not grasp the power with which the privatizers were operating. In retrospect, anyone who had been chosen to lead IPS would be in danger of

corruption by the obscene amount of money being thrown at making the educational landscape in Indianapolis “fit” with the vision that the movers and shakers had of a gentrifying and economically exploding tax base for Indy’s urban core. Lewis Ferebee was no exception. Though he talked a good enough game for the IPS board majority to grant him the job, it was not long before his public-school persona started singing a different tune: “money talks”.

One of Lewis Ferebee’s first announcements to the public was to dispel the “myth” that IPS had any type of budget shortfall. Instead, he stated that IPS had a surplus of 8.4 million, and that he believed previous administrators Dr. Eugene White and interim Peggy Hinckley had intentionally misled the school board and the public in order to protect district cash reserves (Elliot, 2014). This discovery of a surplus was prompted by an audit by the Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce - the same organization that paid for one of my campaign mailers and invited me to their skyscraper offices replete with a beautiful view of the Indianapolis skyline during my campaign to strategize. I can only speculate as to the reasons why the Chamber of Commerce was interested in finding a budget surplus for IPS rather than a shortfall, but there was something fishy going on. The in-house accountant from the previous administration was summarily fired, and a new, Ferebee hand-picked person took over the management of the IPS financial books from that point forward.

Throughout this entire conflict and for the remainder of my time, I found that my philosophies about what IPS truly needed were more closely aligned with the three board members that were elected in 2010, prior to the involvement of special interest groups. Their campaigns and election processes seemed foreign to me, but in an alluring

and endearing sort of way. We typically voted alike (with a few exceptions) for the remainder of their terms, which ended before mine.

I found myself wishing that my own campaign had not been so rudely interrupted (it was more like a hostile takeover, once I was “endorsed” by Stand for Children), and allowed to flourish naturally into a grassroots effort humbly funded and powered by my friends and neighbors - a true “kitchen-table” campaign, like that of the three board members who were elected in 2010. These three down-to-earth, diehard servant supporters of IPS made a lot of sense to me. I quickly realized that I could align with their viewpoints on several issues, and we developed a mutual respect for each other – despite the money that had bought my seat, which rightfully caused a certain amount of skepticism and perhaps initial disdain. Thankfully, they only playfully teased me about it for about the first year that I served on the board.

I could have easily chosen the golden chalice as the other ed-reform candidates did and justified it all by brewing my own Kool-Aid to serve up to others to gain the acceptance and approval of the capitalist, neoliberal brand of education that was being ushered into the city. Why didn't I drink the Kool-Aid? Why did I buck this newly emerging system, so carefully and longitudinally developed by the ed-deform movers and shakers in the city? It was my conscience. You see, I was one of those kids in the IPS system. I was an IPS teacher. I was an IPS parent. I could not turn a blind eye to the people of IPS. People over profits, always.

The Secret Meeting at Eli Lilly: Unveiling the NEO Plan

I was officially an IPS Commissioner-Elect effective the evening of Tuesday, November 6, 2012. The results came in rather quickly, almost before I could make it to

my own celebration. I had stayed behind talking to people in line at a polling place for over an hour beyond the poll closing.

So, I (and everyone else) knew I was elected, but the official swearing-in ceremony wasn't until January 2013. What to do? The movers and shakers in Indianapolis had it all planned out for me, apparently.

Interestingly, the movers and shakers and the organizations that they belong to are all interconnected. The origins of the ed-reformer circle that was present during my campaign and elected term on the school board all seem to trace back to Bart Peterson, a Democrat who served as the mayor of Indianapolis from 2000-2008. Karega Rausch (who was the Executive Director of Stand for Children) served under Bart Peterson as the Director of the Office of Educational Innovation from 2007 to 2011. David Harris, the CEO of the Mind Trust during my tenure on the board, was the predecessor to Karega Rausch, serving from 2000-2006 in the Mayor's Office as the Indianapolis Charter Schools Director, leaving only to become the founder of the Mind Trust, with Bart Peterson as a founding board member of the organization. After leaving the post as Indianapolis's mayor, Bart Peterson became the Senior Vice President of Corporate Affairs and Communications for Eli Lilly and Company, which was his position at the time I was campaigning and elected to the school board.

So, I was invited to attend a meeting at the headquarters for Eli Lilly and Company, a local pharmaceutical giant and the preeminent philanthropic player in the city, where Bart Peterson had clearly exerted his influence. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the "Neighborhoods of Educational Opportunity" (NEO) Plan, which had finished in the top 20 finalists in the Mayors' Challenge competition sponsored by

Bloomberg Philanthropies. Mayor Bloomberg of NYC had himself directed \$10,000 to my school board campaign, passing it through the coffers of Indiana Democrats for Education Reform (Marion County Election Board, 2012). This meeting and the unveiled NEO Plan allowed me to start connecting some of the dots among the players in the educational privatization game, including the former Mayor and his protégés and their deeper intentions.

The NEO Plan is premised on the phenomenon of white flight from the urban core, which occurred as a result of school desegregation. This is exemplified by the following from the Executive Summary of the NEO plan (see Appendix G), “Families are increasingly searching *outside our urban neighborhoods for better schools*, [emphasis added] leading to steep enrollment declines that coincide with population declines in our urban core. For example, IPS enrollment dropped from 108,000 students to only 32,000 over 50 years.” This statement begs the question: Which families are searching for better schools outside urban neighborhoods? It does not address the fact that once white flight occurred, there were still many (predominantly families of color or families living in poverty) with students enrolled in IPS schools. This statement served as an indication that the families of primary concern to the NEO plan, issued from the Indianapolis Mayor’s Office, were families that were *returning* to the urban core in waves of gentrification - half a century after the urban core was left to decay following the desegregation of public schools. In essence, the function of the Mayor’s Office of Educational Innovation and the Neighborhoods of Educational Opportunity plan was to find ways to make urban public schools more palatable for the White middle to upper-

class folks who had gotten quite comfortable with the exclusivity of the schools of suburbia; including their homogeneity and their increased tax base.

Similar to the Neighborhoods of Educational Opportunity (NEO) plan document from the Mayor's Office of Educational Innovation, another privatizing powerhouse surfaced, which was dubbed the Lewis Hubbard Group, which was led by Maggie Lewis (then-president of the City-County Council) and Allan Hubbard (local businessman, former Deputy Chief of Staff in the George HW Bush administration). This document also corroborated the historical reduction in IPS enrollment coinciding with the desegregation of IPS by citing specifically that the peak enrollment of 108,000 students occurred in 1968 and that the projected enrollment for the 2013-2014 school year was 29,600. Please pay special attention to the 1968 date – the year of Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination, and the year that civil rights legislation preventing discrimination in housing was signed into law.

Arguably, these two events may have been more predominant determining factors in the minds of White families fleeing the urban core of Indianapolis for the suburbs, since the 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education* ruling was ineffectually slow in delivering IPS students from separate and unequal schooling conditions. White flight, evidenced by the 1981 ruling, which specifically mandated busing as the means to desegregate IPS, 26 years following the initial *Brown vs. Board* school desegregation order (Cavazos, 2016).

You may be asking yourself why the Indianapolis Mayor's office was concerned with the city's educational offerings to this substantial degree. One can infer from reading the NEO Plan in its entirety that the mayor's office interest in the Indianapolis

educational landscape is two-pronged. First, the Mayor's Office of Indianapolis is unique in that it can serve as a charter school authorizer. Because the Mayor's Office as the charter authorizer stands to profit, there is a clear interest in painting the picture that traditional public education has failed the citizens of Indianapolis, so that the case can be made for a constant injection of the newer, "better" charter school model of education; a common narrative myth (Bacharach & Mundell, 1993) that is necessary for the destruction of traditional forms of public schooling and the replacement of those systems with charter schools or portfolio-based school districts.

Secondly, and perhaps more important, is the issue of gentrification of the urban core of Indianapolis. Of course, the Mayor's office has a vested interest in seeing "30,000 high-quality seats of education" be made available via the NEO Plan. "A lack of high-quality options is a key driver in this exodus of residents [read: white flight] which negatively impacts our city's fiscal health and competitive position by decreasing tax revenues, as well as social and economic capital" (see Appendix G). Without directly stating it, the Mayor's Office aims to draw wealthier White residents back from the suburbs by privatizing the city's public education system, thereby increasing the tax base. To any average Indianapolis resident - especially those that stayed in the urban core during the exodus and watched the eventual return via gentrification - this is painfully obvious as houses in inner-city neighborhoods are exploding in cost, and the nature and composition of neighborhoods changes (Paschall, n.d.).

So, after I was elected but before I was a sitting board member, I was presented with this information. It became clear to me at this time that I, and the other incoming board members, were 'bought' with the intention to perfect this last piece of the puzzle,

to privatize this last public holdout, the Indianapolis educational system. Our current IPS public school system, according to the city's movers and shakers, was the perceived barrier to bringing the White wealth back from the suburbs, the families who had fled 50 years ago in search of schools not in danger of being integrated, because there were no Black residents to speak of in the suburbs in those early years. Maybe the commute had become too burdensome, or maybe it was just the trendy thing to do, to move back into the city.

Whatever the reason, The Indianapolis Mayor's Office smelled the opportunity, and apparently, Mayor Bloomberg of NYC agreed, as did other prominent Indianapolis folk, including the president of the city council and Eli Lilly officials, presumably via their affiliations with former Mayor Bart Peterson. The NEO Plan was born of these partnerships, and the plan of offering "high-quality" educational seats in Indianapolis extended to the 2023 school year.

Interestingly, this plan can no longer be found online - luckily, I retained a paper copy. Had it been moved underground, but still happening? Was it abandoned or renamed? The Indianapolis Mayor's Office of Educational Innovation (OEI) remains an entity with an online presence; however, the NEO Plan is not publicly posted on their website. Instead, the OEI office appears primarily concerned with monitoring and assessing the ~45 charter schools authorized by the Mayor's Office, with yearly annual reviews posted for public consumption. This office is also largely responsible for generating the charter school churn in Indianapolis – approving proposals for new schools, some of which never open, closing other schools for 'failing', or allowing other

‘failing’ schools to shop for other authorizers, allowing them to stay open (Indianapolis Mayor’s Office of Educational Innovation, 2020).

With time and the continual enlightenment of my grassroots friends, pieces of the neoliberal privatization puzzle began to coalesce more solidly in my mind. I began to understand how the Mayor’s Office of Educational Innovation, The Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce, The Mind Trust, Stand for Children, and Democrats for Ed Reform (DfER) were all tentacles of the same octopus (Cosby, 2018) designed to dismantle the promise of public education, and divert its resources to a myriad of opportunists who had branded themselves as charter school CEOs.

Not only did I begin to identify all of the interest groups and their positions and interests toward IPS, I began to piece together each group’s motives, and their degree of organization. I found that I had earned the respect of the more “woke” or knowledgeable voters in my district, as they watched me battle. This gave me an inner strength to continue speaking truth to power. I found that the teacher’s union, and teachers as a whole, were happy to have an educator on the school board that they deemed as an ally. The grassroots, largely composed of concerned citizens, parents, and activists, had enlightened me following my election, and now saw me as their spokesperson on the board. The urban intellectuals, the university folk, felt largely aligned, but some stood to gain from the charter school movement. All of this newfound knowledge became unsettling, and being who I am; I felt something needed to be done about this new knowledge.

Raising My Voice

I was one of the more outspoken board members, even in the first 2 years when I felt aligned with the three sitting board members who were elected without ed-reform dollars in 2010: Samantha Adair-White, Rev. Michael Brown, and Annie Roof. Samantha was definitely the fieriest out of the four of us; she got into at least one good shouting match during an official board meeting (Glavan, 2014). Samantha did not take no mess; I always admired her spunk. Rev. Mike Brown was a west-side IPS institution unto himself. The more astute politician out of the four of us, a self-identified Republican (which I never understood and teased him about relentlessly), he had the tendency to ‘reach across the aisle’ at times, which I secretly admired yet also sometimes resented, depending on which side of the aisle I was on! Annie Roof is a fellow east-sider, who is simultaneously sweet, approachable, and a hard-ass, like most lifetime east-siders are. I liked her immediately. Of the four of us, I was the nerd, the “private investigator.” I was the person they could count on to dig up data (and the dirt) on issues – information we could bring to the board meetings and raise the hard questions. These were the three board members I could look to for support in defeating any ed-reform issues, but I often found myself concerned with a broader audience outside of the board members and outside of those immediate IPS circles. What did the public understand about neoliberalism and the privatization of IPS? What did the public understand about the inherent racism at all levels of public schooling in our city? What did the public understand about the intersection of gentrification, racial segregation, and public-school options? These were gaps that I attempted to address as a board member.

I lost my three comrades on the school board in the 2014 election cycle; their kitchen table campaigns could not withstand the torrential influx of ed-reform money flowing to support their opponents. I worked my ass off behind the scenes on their campaigns, striving to get them re-elected. I knew it was IPS only hope for fighting off this privatization onslaught. In partnership with my friend John Harris Loflin and other grassroots folks from all walks of life (pastors, university professors, and classroom teachers), we developed the “Our IPS” campaign to counteract the buying of seats by the ed-deform circle. John coined the name – it was very clever as it stood in stark opposition to the recent rebranding of IPS as “My IPS.” I created and maintained the Our IPS website during the election - designed to inform voters about the ed-reform dollars that were flowing. We also used the website to promote our candidates and solicit donations for their campaigns. I strategized, created walk lists for canvassing, canvassed myself, designed and printed palm cards for polling sites, organized volunteers, held meeting after meeting, to no avail. In 2014, Lanier Echols defeated incumbent Rev. Mike Brown in district five, Mary Ann Sullivan defeated Annie Roof at-large, and Kelly Kennedy Bentley (who was paid to work on my campaign under DfER) defeated Samantha Adair-White in district 3 (Colombo, 2014). The big-money players in the game were largely the same: Stand for Children, the Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce, etc. The money won, and I was the lone dissenting voice of the board for the last two years of my board tenure.

I was well-researched, I was concise, I carefully prepared my remarks in advance, I spoke my truth in the meetings, but I was only one voice out of seven on the board, “the board’s main dissenter” (Miller, 2016), and whenever I would make important comments

in meetings, several of the ed-reform board members would make sure to comment after me, even if they had said the same exact things before my comments, picking apart my arguments to the best of their ability, or even worse, framing their comments in a way that would insinuate that I didn't care about IPS students or their families. My voice was getting drowned out. Also, the questions still remained – what does the public know and/or understand about what is happening with IPS? The average person does not attend the IPS board meetings, watch them on TV, or read the minutes. I found myself wondering how I could reach a broader audience without my message being misconstrued and distorted by six opposing ed-reformers. Ultimately, I decided to follow in the footsteps of my recently defeated comrade, Annie Roof, and write a blog.

My blog was borne of utter frustration. In December 2014, the very last meeting I had with my comrades still alongside me, we “stuck it to the man” by voting down the first “Innovation Network Schools” proposal from Phalen Leadership Academy IPS Board Agenda, 2014 (Board of School Commissioners & Bernlohr, 2002; Phalen Leadership Institute, 2014). Rather than capitalize on its strengths as I had hoped, IPS superintendent, Dr. Lewis Ferebee, decided to tango with the Mind Trust on something called “Innovation Network Schools,” the local brand name for a nationwide privatization effort more broadly termed as “Portfolio Schools” – an effort devised by the Center for Reinventing Public Education (CRPE, affectionately pronounced “creepy” by grassroots public education supporters). CRPE was founded by known ed-reformer Paul T. Hill and based out of the University of Washington-Bothell (Center on Reinventing Public Education, n.d.).

I wrote the blog out of frustration because the very first thing the newly minted board members did in January of 2015 was overturn our previous “stick-it-to-the-man” decision and ratify the Innovation Network School agreement between IPS and Phalen Leadership Academy (PLA) (Board of School Commissioners & Bernlohr, 2015). In order to make sure the public understood exactly what was happening, my first blog describes the unfolding of the Innovation Network School process itself, how I (Board Vice-President) and Annie Roof (Board President) only got to see a finalized 5% of the applicant pool (see Appendix E), and how PLA, an already established charter school chain, did not fit the intent of the program (Cosby, 2015). During the year 2015, this post was viewed 17,300 times, and almost 10,000 times in 2016. In retrospect, I feel that this particular blog was impactful, as it reached such a wide audience. I wonder if the IPS board documents website was accessed as frequently as the blog concerning it!

According to a later blog I wrote dated April 26, 2015, Phalen was set to receive “A free building, complete with water, sewer, electricity, heating and cooling, snow removal and lawn maintenance, facilities maintenance, security services, transportation. IPS even throws in a few copier machines for good measure. IPS also will provide the staffing and oversight for ALL SPECIAL EDUCATION and ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER programs” [emphasis original] as well as \$175k in preoperational funds and per-student fees payable monthly in excess of the publicly allotted amounts (Cosby, 2015). I was outraged, mainly because if this type of investment had been made into traditional public IPS schools, it would be bound to affect school improvement, thereby circumventing the need for “Innovation Network Schools” to exist in the first place. If our traditional public schools were properly resourced, they

would not fail. We see evidence of this in the disparities between standardized test score performance in under-resourced urban school districts as compared to their suburban/wealthier counterparts (Vaughn, 2015). Instead of choosing to invest resources into our already existing paradigm of public schooling, (a no-brainer), we were going to invest millions of dollars into an outside organization to run our schools. In my opinion, it looked like we were acknowledging that we (IPS) were unable to improve ourselves, we had to pass the bag of money along to an outside entity that could come in and save the day. We were placing the fate of this east side school community into the hands of a charter school chain that *had not yet been given a state accountability grade in Indiana* – there was no track record of “success,” even by flawed state accountability grade standards (Cosby, 2015). This plan is a prime example of the twisting of the overarching narrative myth used to propagate charter schools - the use of accountability measures. The ed-reformers would use this narrative myth; however, it best suited their agenda to wrest control of IPS.

A primer on this umbrella narrative myth which was used to support the chartering (privatization) of public schools, state accountability measures: school accountability measures, created at the state level by lawmakers with no clue what is happening at the ground level of education, provide a quick and dirty benchmark for the unassuming public to rate schools based on A-F letter grades. Not surprisingly, the letter grades are strongly correlated with the wealth of the district being measured. The wealth of the district is strongly correlated with the property taxes collected to support and fund it. In Indianapolis, as in many other urban areas, redlining and white flight have clearly demarcated the areas in which property taxes are sufficiently funding the local public

school systems (Guastaferrero, 2020); combined with a systemically racist formula for school funding, urban schools are suffering financially (Elliott & Cavazos, 2015). One has to wonder if this lopsided funding system is by design - intended to mis-educate the poor, Black and Brown, as Ms. Lauryn Hill (Hill, 1998) taught us? Or, is it intended to force urban districts to play the best hand they have - to outsource the education of the children in their charge, hoping that privatization would produce better learning outcomes for them? Nevertheless, in 2015, IPS played the privatization card by instituting Innovation Network Schools, and I was determined to alert the public to the truths behind the narrative myths.

Thankfully, the people were reading my blogs related to the Innovation Network System. The blogs concerning the PLA/IPS agreement were immediately viewed over 1,000 times and shared on Facebook more than 200 times (Cosby, 2015). I continued to blog about every questionable agenda item I encountered as the lone dissenter on the board for those last 2 years. It certainly helped me face my ed-reform opponents, as I felt buoyed by a group of readers who understood the issues and the fight I was facing.

The public response was mostly positive; however, my truth-telling did not sit well with my fellow board members who supported privatization. They mostly took to Facebook to attempt to debunk my message. I greatly appreciated the fact that they shared my blog post further and wider in their attempts to discredit me. However, there was a response from Stand for Children that was a bit more carefully crafted that I must admit was troubling. Stand for Children was politically astute enough to tap into the unsuspecting parents that they had brainwashed as a resource of political pawns. They frequently sent their parent foot soldiers into the dirty work of giving speeches before the

board, lobbying at the state house, and writing blogs, all prepared for them by Stand for Children staff. One particular parent blog was written in response to my stance on Innovation Network Schools. The blog characterized me as “insulting”, and “talking down” to parents who really care about their children’s education (Johnson, 2015). Further, the blog implored readers to email me, and ask me to stop “attacking” parents who want to improve their child’s school (Johnson, 2015). The narrative myth web constructed by these organizations in order to further privatization was very dark at times, and only the most illuminated citizens could see their way through the web of lies.

In addition to blogging, I spent a lot of time during the last two years of my tenure attending community meetings and speaking to groups about topics such as neoliberalism, privatization, and race issues within IPS. Just before I began doctoral studies in the Urban Education Studies program at IUPUI in 2015, I worked with Dr. Khaula Murtadha and Jim Grim (both of the IUPUI Office of Community Partnerships), and Mary Louise Bewley (former IPS PR Director) to host an Education, Inc. documentary screening and panel discussion on the IUPUI campus, which was well-attended (Personal Communication, August 4, 2015). In November that same year, Dr. Nate Williams (also of the IUPUI UES doctoral program) moderated a panel featuring Dr. Jim Scheurich, Education Professor at IUPUI, myself, Doug Martin, the author of “Hoosier School Heist” and Julia Vaughn of Common Cause of Indiana.

Folks like us were working overtime to combat the web of narrative myths constructed by the special interest groups. It is interesting to reflect on the fact that the people interested in combating school privatization in Indianapolis, the ones at the grassroots tables, came from all walks of life. There were teachers, there were IPS

parents, there were professors, there were retired folks. The main political groups that engaged with the ‘Our IPS’ grassroots efforts were the Concerned Clergy, the Teacher’s Union, and an online Facebook teacher’s group called Indy Apples. In the very beginning, the local NAACP was also involved, but we soon realized that they were basically controlled by the financial contributions of someone who supported privatization. Though the local NAACP had the opportunity to follow suit with their national organization and strongly pursue a moratorium on charter schools, they only paid lip service to their national organization’s stance in the local arena. This is a probable example of why Indianapolis is referred to as “Naptown”; there are so many people asleep here.

Approaching the 2016 school board election cycle, I sincerely hoped that the efforts of the grassroots advocacy were building momentum toward a different election outcome. I knew the months that it took for me to prepare to run, and I wanted to open the door for people to come to talk to me about possibly running, to begin to craft a strategy to keep my former district 2 seat within the community, instead of turning it over to the ed-privatizers. I was ready to serve as a resource in whatever capacity I was needed, and engage as strongly as I could in the fight toward keeping (or obtaining) as many seats as possible in the 2016 election cycle. Thus, ‘Our IPS’ was formed as mentioned previously, in conjunction with John Harris Loflin and other grassroots supporters. We endorsed four candidates; ultimately none of which were successful in securing a seat.

In retrospect, engaging in activist work toward electing grassroots folks to the school board was frustrating at times. One valuable lesson I learned about myself was

that I was not necessarily the best person to serve in a role as a community organizer...it definitely put the phrase “herding cats” into a new perspective. The campaign I had known in 2012 was easy, thanks to the money provided by the ed-deform organizations. Things could be bought easily, in stark contrast to the experience that the true grassroots candidates were having in 2014 and 2016. We could not afford to pay people to make thousands of phone calls. We could not pay thousands of dollars to send mailers to the whole voting bloc in a district. We were all average people, with jobs and families and other obligations, trying to devote what little spare time we had to change the tide of privatization happening in IPS. We desperately wanted to see that tide turn with this election cycle, and we gave it our all.

The time I had devoted to grassroots campaigns and activist work, the constant conflict inherent in my position as the lone dissenter on the board, trying to achieve balance with married life and parenting three children, the youngest of which was a toddler at the time, as well as starting a new doctoral program in 2015 - I had more on my plate than I could possibly handle. Something had to give.

My Departure

In January of 2016, I publicly announced my decision to not seek re-election to the IPS board (McCoy, 2016). I carefully weighed the decision to announce my departure from the board at this time. At my final board meeting, I delivered an impassioned speech (“Former IPS board member,” 2016). In the speech, which I would characterize as fiery but succinct, I summarized my lived experience as an IPS student, teacher, and parent, and then I focused on the reason for my continual dissension on the board:

“I didn’t come here to be popular...and I also did not come here to be polarizing or divisive. I came here to represent the people of the east side – the parents, families, taxpayers and residents of the only place I’ve ever called home. I brought everything I had to this task...all of my life experiences. It’s impossible to make every single person happy every single time, but I did this job with passion, and I did it to the best of my ability...I stand firm in my conviction that capitalism has no place in our education system. Capitalism works based on winners and losers, which is fine when you’re talking about McDonald’s or Burger King, but is completely inappropriate when we are competing for the hearts and minds of children. What I have seen, and remain extremely concerned about is a profit motive being embedded in the structure of these schools. A cursory review of the financial documents of many of these schools offers proof that too many of our tax dollars, intended for public education, are sent to charter school CEO salaries while teachers are underpaid and students lack resources. My conscience and my “teacher gut” will not allow me to support the conversion of our public school system to a corporatized, profit-driven system of schools built on this type of capitalistic foundation...a foundation that will be further expanded under the new leadership in Washington, DC.” (“Former IPS board member,” 2016).

Despite my early announcement to vacate the district 2 seat and all of the grassroots efforts to combat the buying of the board in the 2016 election cycle, none of the “Our IPS” endorsed candidates were ultimately successful in their campaigns. There was one interesting upset, though. Elizabeth Gore won the At-Large seat on a budget of \$1,500, beating both the ed-reform incumbent, Sam Odle, and the Our IPS-endorsed candidate, Jim Grim (Wang, 2016). Though Elizabeth Gore had a long history of serving on the IPS board as more of a political “moderate,” she had expressed concerns over the chartering of the IPS district, so there was a sliver of hope for the grassroots people still alive. There was a voice of reason still present on the board.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

Neoliberal ideology has effectively usurped all of the means by which we live. It is being thrust into arenas where it truly should have no business; our food, our water, and our means of tending to our health. When we need to eat, someone profits. When we need clean water to drink, someone profits. When we need to take care of an ill loved one, someone profits. When we need to educate our children, because we work and cannot do it ourselves, someone profits. When we go to work and earn a paycheck, someone at the top profits. When we seek higher education in order to increase our paychecks, someone profits. When our police state incarcerates our people, someone profits. Our society has been corrupted with the profitization, the privatization of absolutely everything possible (it seems). *And what did we relinquish in exchange for this new, profit-generating way of life? We let go of our ancestral knowledge of how to sustain ourselves. We don't know how to grow our own food or secure clean water. We lost touch with our means of healing ourselves, birthing our own babies.* Life itself has become privatized.

The privatization of public schooling is one of the last strongholds - one of the last public commodities, or common spaces, or services to be claimed for profit by neoliberal advances. We, as a society, have already seen health care systems swept up into capitalism, and especially with Coronavirus, business is booming for the privatized portions of the healthcare industry. The response to Coronavirus from the 'public' health side, i.e. the public health departments responsible for contact tracing, is severely

underfunded (Holpuch, 2021), while the privatized side of healthcare sees a hefty profit from the spread of COVID-19.

COVID-19 in a neoliberal, capitalist economy such as in the U.S. has also exacerbated access to quality healthcare along racial lines. The recent global pandemic of COVID-19 has magnified the depths of the system's failings and pervasive stratification.

With only five percent of the world's population, the U.S. accounts for nearly twenty-five percent of the pandemic's fatalities...Black Americans, over a quarter of those fatalities, are more than three times likely to die from Coronavirus compared to White Americans (APM Research Lab Staff, 2021; Sterba, 2020).

The disparate impact of COVID-19 on Black and Brown communities illuminates the racialization of poverty, a lack of access to quality healthcare, predisposition to chronic illnesses, and those who have to continue to work in industries where exposure to the virus continues, despite the risk.

The nasty tentacles of the neoliberal octopus are also encroaching on America's water supply. According to American Prospect's reporter Robert Kuttner (2020), about 83% of Americans currently have publicly supplied water (Kuttner, 2020). Black and Latino communities are more at risk for water privatization. As cash-strapped mayors offer to sell their water supply for a one-time financial boon, the residents are left to long-suffering (Kuttner, 2020). The public sells an irreplaceable resource like water, and the residents bear the brunt of that decision indefinitely. Where conversions to privately owned water companies have happened (in states like New Jersey and Illinois), customers are charged up to 95% more than their public counterparts (Kuttner, 2020).

This points to a desperate need to fund public measures to ensure the well-being of all residents in an equitable manner.

In addition to the privatization of our water supply, the production of food is also being privatized. Monsanto and other agribusiness giants have effectively monopolized the seeds from which we grow our food, hybridizing and genetically modifying them such that they will not yield next year's crop (Reset, n.d.). Monsanto owns the 'intellectual property' of their modified seeds and collects royalties from the profits. Thus, it could be said that Monsanto owns the process of life itself, as farmers are unable to collect seeds from plants to use for next year's crop. This monopoly makes the average farmer dependent on huge agribusinesses like Monsanto on a yearly basis to purchase new seeds as well as for pest control products. This is a prime example of quantity over quality: packing plants in the land so tightly that specialized seeds and pest control are necessary from the agribusinesses - none of which translates to increased profit or quality of life for the farmers themselves. Transnational agribusinesses have long ago displaced many small to medium-scale farms in the U.S.; now they are encroaching on other countries such as India, where many farmers have committed suicide (Todhunter, 2016).

Additionally, we have long since seen neoliberal ideology creep into prisons, where similar to charter school CEOs, their executives enjoy raking in exorbitant amounts of tax dollars for their salaries (Kelsey, 2016). Similar to students in public schools lacking resources, we see that America's prisoners bear the brunt of neoliberal greed, suffering unnecessarily in an underfunded and overcrowded prison industrial complex (Clark, 2016). Most inmate services are outsourced, including food service and health care, to the lowest bidder - squeezing every drop of tax money possible into the

overinflated CEO salary (Clark, 2016). Of course, this same story rings true as we consider how neoliberal ideology took hold in Indianapolis education and the resulting evolution and actualization of establishing a portfolio school district in Indianapolis.

Macro-Level Theoretical Analysis

When we consider the big picture, or macro level, of school privatization occurring within Indianapolis Public Schools, we can see that IPS, as a historically public institution, had to be weakened to the point where privatization was possible. How did these once strong, public boundaries which constituted IPS become porous to the extent that outside organizations could take a piece of the taxpayer pie? This overarching phenomenon is best illustrated theoretically by a concept known as ‘Punctuated Equilibrium’ (Meyer, 2006). In the case of privatizing IPS, there were a number of measures being enacted way above IPS, at the city, state, and federal level, that set the stage for the moment in time, or the fulcrum point, for the punctuated equilibrium of IPS to occur.

At the macro level, there is a “grand” narrative myth that makes the privatization of our public schools possible. It is the myth of the failing urban public school (Berliner & Biddle, 1996; Buras, 2011; Ravitch, 2013; Spence, 2016; Verger et. al., 2016). In essence, politicians decided what constitutes a failing school, and then used metrics based on standardized test results to justify predetermined chaotic measures to “improve” the nation’s “failing public schools.” The parameters by which “failing” schools are defined had been set by politicians at all levels, dripping downward from President Bush’s alarming national policy with the 2002 No Child Left Behind Act (Levy, 2009). State

and local governments followed suit, enacting neoliberal policy in accordance with these new federal measures of accountability for public schools.

The equilibrium of IPS as a public institution was punctuated when Dr. Lewis Ferebee was hired in August of 2013 (O'Connor, 2019). Throughout the interview process with the IPS Board of Commissioners, Dr. Ferebee presented himself as an advocate for public schools, in stark contrast to the other finalists with charter school ties. The IPS board majority at the time certainly felt he was our best hope for retaining IPS as a public institution, even amidst the swirling legislative attacks designed to privatize public schools. As it turned out, Dr. Ferebee became a superintendent who was amenable to being convinced by the upper echelon of Indianapolis and by special interest groups that privatization was the best way forward for IPS.

Dr. Ferebee began entertaining the idea of a Portfolio School model, meaning that IPS would ultimately be composed of traditional public schools, magnet schools, and 'Innovation Network' schools managed by outside charter school companies. There was legislation already in place to cripple public schools, making the idea of Innovation Network School "partnerships" more appealing. Namely, in 2011, legislation was passed in Indiana to make vacant school buildings available for purchase by charter schools for \$1.00 (O'Connor, 2019). This was the main reason that Dr. Ferebee cited to the IPS Board for ushering IPS into the Portfolio Model; to avoid losing more IPS assets to charter school competitors for \$1.00 each, as had happened when KIPP [charter] Schools invoked the law to acquire IPS School #11. A combination of macro-level *strategies* coalesced during this time; the combination of the oppressive legislation forcing 'failing' schools to be reconstituted or closed, the increasing competition from charter schools

pulling students from IPS enrollment, and the \$1.00 charter school building law all were ultimately successful in forcing IPS to its organizational knees; to a state of ‘partnership’ with charter school companies.

From my vantage point as a board member, I can only speculate as to the conversations that the powerful elite of Indianapolis were having with Dr. Ferebee, as a newcomer to Indianapolis and IPS, but I am quite certain there was undue *influence* to fall in line with the cause that they were sinking their money and effort into: Charter Schools. A lot of the influential folks in education privatizer reform circles in Indianapolis seem to stem from association with Bart Peterson, who served as Mayor of Indianapolis from 2000-2008, and who had the privileged position of being the first US mayor who was enabled to authorize charter schools (Martin, 2014). Ferebee’s decision to vocally support (read: lobby for) Indiana Code Article 25.5 titled “Portfolio Schools” and House Bill 1063 in 2014 created a floodgate of opportunity for charter school entrepreneurs from all over the world to flock to Indianapolis.

Meso Level Theoretical Analysis

Having analyzed how Indianapolis Public Schools converted from a mostly public organization to a more privately owned one, there are multiple interest groups to consider [table 1]. Each interest group has a position on privatization (pro, con, or ambivalent), a degree of organization (high or low), and a particular logic of action (the issue being struggled over). Each interest group’s logic of action contains within it different strategies. These strategies entail differing degrees of power - including *influence*, (resources, expertise, or position in the formal hierarchy); *authority*, (final decision-making capability); *coalitions*, *negotiations*, and *compromise* (Bacharach & Mundell,

1993). The interplay of all of these combined factors contributes to the punctuated equilibrium, or the macro level erosion of the boundaries which comprised the once public IPS. Each interest group has been analyzed using this framework, beginning roughly with the interest groups at the grassroots level and progressing to the interest groups that are higher in the formal hierarchy of the IPS organization.

Table 1

Indianapolis School Privatization as Punctuated Equilibrium

<i>Pro/Con</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>Position/Interest</i>	<i>Degree of Organization</i>
Pro	IPS Administration	After competing with charter schools for several years, a change in superintendent created opportunity for ‘partnership’	high
Con	IPS Teachers and Union	Many IPS teachers are wary due to possible loss of job from increased charter ‘partnerships’ - charters use their own (lower) pay scale and do not allow unions	low
Ambivalent	IPS Parents	Many parents believe the myth of school failure and view privatization as an opportunity for improvement (pro). A smaller number of politically savvy parents understand privatization and are opposed (con). Some parents are focused on detailed/school specific issues such as curriculum or schedule changes (mixed).	low
Pro	IPS School Board	Special interest groups took control of campaign financing for school board elections in 2012 and all subsequent elections to date; creating a privatization minded supermajority	high

Pro	Mayor's Office	Indianapolis is the only Mayor's Office in the U.S. that authorized charter schools. Beginning in 2001, under direction of then Mayor Bart Peterson, they oversee 39 charter schools in the city.	high
Pro	The Mind Trust	Special interest non-profit created in 2006 by former Deputy Mayor of Education David Harris, who oversaw charter schools for the Mayor's office. He is still connected to former Mayor Bart Peterson, who is not an executive at Eli Lilly, one of the Mind Trust's biggest Funders.	high
Pro	Stand for Children	Special interest non-profit with a 501(c)(3) and a 501(c)(4) tax designation, established in Indianapolis in 2011. S4C influences privatization by large donations to IPS school board campaigns and recruiting IPS parents through Stand UP University in IPS schools to work campaigns, lobby, and speak at IPS board meetings.	high
Con	Grassroots Organizations: Indianapolis Public Schools Community Coalition, NAACP, Concerned Clergy, Indy Apples, others	There are several grassroots groups that work to inform the public about the perils of privatization via meetings, social media, and IPS board member candidate forums.	Medium
Con	Urban Intellectuals	Universities without a financial interest in K-12 privatization are generally opposed, but not typically engaged at the institutional level in the processes. Some are engaged at the individual level in the various grassroots organizations.	low

IPS Parents and Students

IPS parents and students are the consumers of the services that are offered by Indianapolis Public Schools - whether those services occur in a traditional public school or one of the schools that are part of the Innovation Network (privately “owned” or enclosed away from the commons). Most students and parents are aware of whether their child attends a traditional public school or a charter school, but their understanding of the forces at play in the system typically stops there. The meso-level narrative myth in Indianapolis, stemming from the macro-level myth of school failure, has sufficiently convinced most families that charter schools are somehow superior to traditional public schools. This convincing has been accomplished via slick marketing - billboards and signs portraying charter schools as a shiny new alternative to the failure of public schools (see Appendices A, B, & C). A great number of parents accept this superior charter school myth at face value, with only the savviest educational consumers researching school letter grades (though this is only a metric that is created to reinforce the macro-level myth of school failure).

Some super-involved parents may attend school board meetings or become vocal when an impending measure threatens their child’s educational stability, as in the case of the parent described in my findings who was coaxed by Stand for Children into writing a blog post about my opposition to a conversion of their child’s school (Johnson, 2015). Parents don’t often realize their own political power. Many parents who have taken the initiative to negotiate before the IPS board about issues related to privatization have ultimately formed a coalition with various grassroots organizations. The opposite also happens - some parents who become politically vocal regarding their children’s education

also end up forming a coalition with the predatory special interest group Stand for Children, which specializes in harnessing the political and social capital of IPS parents in order to champion pro-privatization causes by lobbying to the state legislature or to the IPS board, or working to elect neoliberal-reform candidates. Thus, IPS parents and students constitute an interest group that is *not well-organized*, and is ambivalent or split; with some sitting on both sides of the charter school/school privatization fence. However, whichever side they are on, they harness a great deal of political *power*, which they may not realize, and succumb to their political power to other interest groups who use it to their advantage.

Grassroots Organizations

Educational grassroots organizations as an interest group have existed in Indianapolis for quite some time, predating the 2012 election, which ushered in the neoliberal privatization of schools. Most grassroots organizations that existed prior to 2012 were loosely organized parent groups focused on specific issues. However, the advent of neoliberal education reform in Indianapolis necessitated the formation of grassroots organizations that could provide a counter-narrative to neoliberal ideology. The primary organization providing a counter-narrative specifically in the IPS realm is currently called the Indianapolis Public Schools Community Coalition (IPSCC); a formalized 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) organization, though previously existing groups have served the same intent as IPSCC. Previous counter-narrative interest groups were named SAGE, Parent Power, and E-CAT (Loflin, 2021), going all the way back to the Better Schools League (BSL) and the Citizens School Committee (CSC) of 192 (Loflin, 2021). IPSCC is a local chapter of the Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools (AROS).

IPSCCs strength lies in its ability to form strong *coalitions* of representatives from other organizations, such as the Indianapolis Educational Association (the IPS teacher's union), the Indiana State Teachers Association (ISTA), and the Concerned Clergy, among others. There are people from all walks of life represented, including teachers, professors, pastors, parents and students. This is encouraging, as according to Saltman (2015) and Baptist and Rehmann (2011), the grassroots must rise above identity politics in order to contend with the highly organized and well-funded neoliberal networks of interest groups. In IPSCC, there is a *medium degree of organization*, with scheduled monthly meetings taking place regularly among the dedicated members. However, the money which backs the neoliberal privatizers is (not surprisingly) absent from this group, as noted by Saltman (2015). The challenge is using manpower and mind power to battle the vast wealth of the opposition. Though this group has summoned a fair amount of power, mainly through the cumulative influence of its members and their individual positions in society, their lack of financial resources in comparison to the special interest groups makes them less visible in the community at large.

IPSCC has employed various *strategies* to combat the onslaught of privatization efforts in IPS. The primary focus of this group has been to shed light on the influx of money into the IPS school board campaigns. IPSCC has hosted school board candidate forums, in which the candidates are questioned about their platforms and sources of campaign donations in a public venue, whether in person or virtually due to COVID (Weddle, 2020). IPSCC also supports a slate of grassroots-minded school board candidates in each election cycle for the IPS School Board. While this support is

typically limited financially, IPSCC is able to provide a fair amount of campaign coordination, volunteers, and a knowledge base for their chosen candidates.

IPSCC also operates a visible presence on social media, which is beneficial because, as Baptist and Rehmann (2011) note, it is important for the grassroots to engage in non-academic work, looking for ‘good sense strongholds’ (Baptist & Rehmann, p. 118). The Facebook page for IPSCC is a platform for a constant counter-narrative to the ed-reform organizations and the decisions of the IPS Board and Administration. It is a frequent site of contention, as privatization advocates tend to keep an eye on what is being said there, and will comment - sometimes resulting in the virtual equivalent of an all-out brawl. This is especially true when Brandon Brown, the current CEO of The Mind Trust, decides to impart his “wisdom”.

When possible, members of IPSCC also engage by monitoring IPS board documents and minutes or attending IPS school board meetings in person. At times, members will speak at the meetings on certain topics. You can also frequently find IPSCC members represented at various community meetings across the city.

Urban Intellectuals

Urban Intellectuals in Indianapolis comprise a *loosely organized* interest group in the neoliberal education reform sphere. Some local professors begrudgingly form *coalitions* with charter school companies out of a necessity to place their student teachers into their buildings. Other Indianapolis area professors lend their voices to the grassroots cause, and are quite vocal about their opposition to privatization. And yet other professors champion the idea of school privatization - maybe even profit from it in some way. Though professors of Education in Indianapolis would carry a certain amount of

influence, they do not collectively join forces in any way as a whole. Instead, as individuals, they fall into other more organized groups depending on their viewpoints.

An exception to this may be taken from a more institutional standpoint. Marian University, a private Catholic university located on the northwest side of Indianapolis, has become known as the home of pro ed-reform teaching programs such as Teach for America and The New Teacher Project's 'Indianapolis Teaching Fellows' programs, recruited into Indianapolis by a special interest group called The Mind Trust (The Mind Trust Annual Report, 2020). I received a master's degree in education from the Indianapolis Teaching Fellows program (2007-2009), beginning as a student in the first year of its inception. Back then, Marian University was Marian "College," presumably because they did not offer graduate degrees until our class matriculated. The School of Education at Marian during that time was, to choose a word, quaint. In contrast to what is happening now, after 14 years of training teachers for the ed-reform crowd, the School of Education at Marian University has been dubbed the "Fred S. Klipsch Educators College" (Cision Distribution. n.d.). Certainly, Fred S. Klipsch, who is a board member for Marian University, earned this renaming with his \$12 million donation in 2017 - the kickoff to a fundraising campaign aiming to raise \$250 million by 2025, to serve its 4,000 students. (Cision Distribution, 2017).

The well-to-do Klipsch's are the same family that the outdoor amphitheater in Indianapolis is named for (formerly known as Deer Creek Music Center) and are the owners of the famous Klipsch audio engineering/speaker making company. The current president of Marian University is Daniel Elsener, who formerly served as the Christel DeHaan (charter school CEO) Family Foundation Executive Director, and holds

positions on both the Indiana (state) Chamber of Commerce and the Indy (city) Chamber of Commerce, so the motives for the slant toward privatization is obvious (Catholic Business Exchange, 2013).

Far from being the ‘quaint’ School of Education I received a master’s degree from, I would say Marian University has evolved into a pretty slick operation, churning out hundreds of unsuspecting folk ready to fill vacant first-year teaching positions in urban schools all over Indianapolis, both in IPS and charter schools. They are pumped full and running high on *narrative myths*; they believe they are truly making a difference. According to the Teach for America website, “Too many children in America are denied access to an excellent education. Teach for America catalyzes leadership to make educational equity a reality” (Teach for America, n.d.) Similarly, the Indianapolis Teaching Fellows program purports to “develop talented people into exceptional teachers for our underserved students” (Indianapolis Teaching Fellows, n.d.). Thus, the recruitment strategies of these alternative teacher certification programs utilize not only the narrative myth of the failing public school, but also hint at notions of educational justice and equity by alluding to the students in urban schools being underserved. The Indianapolis Teaching Fellows website states, “Socioeconomical [*sic*] and systematic racism have denied too many students of color the educational opportunities they deserve” (Why Teaching Fellows, n.d.). Conversely, Kristen Buras (2017) augments this point in relation to New Orleans, ground zero for neoliberal education reform,

...unionized public school teachers in New Orleans — majority Black and a substantial portion of the city’s Black middle class — were dismissed en masse without due process and replaced by mostly White, inexperienced recruits who had no roots in New Orleans. These recruits were provided by Teach for America (TFA) and other edu-businesses known for lucrative contracts to

supply transient teachers in low-income communities of color (Brogan & Buras, 2016).

While socioeconomic disadvantage due to systemic racism is a very real phenomenon, recruiting unsuspecting folks to the ranks of the neoliberal teaching regime is hardly the solution to this problem, as fast-tracked teachers often enter the classroom ill-prepared to deal with the issues of race and politics embedded in the American educational system.

Teachers Unions

The Indianapolis Education Association (IEA) is the local (IPS only) teacher's union. The IEA bargains for the contracts of all IPS teachers, whether or not they are dues-paying members. From a teacher's perspective, this provides little incentive to actually pay the dues, although there is a measure of reassurance in knowing that the IEA would provide some coverage in the case of litigation. Regardless, membership in the IEA has been under attack with each additional school that converts to an Innovation Network (charter) school because charter schools in Indianapolis do not allow their teachers to participate in the IEA or other teacher's unions. This fact, coupled with the lower pay and decreased benefits that the charter schools offer their teachers, has created an air of distrust among traditional public school teachers when it comes to charters. However, in general, the neoliberal reform movement in Indianapolis has been more successful than not in breaking the back of the teacher's union simply by disqualifying a growing number of charter school teachers from joining the union ranks.

As a group, the authority and influence of the IEA is hindered by their dwindling membership and the fractioning of the school district via privatization. However, individual members of the union can be very vocal and exert authority and influence on their own. For example, Ann Wilkins, the former president of the IEA who passed away

recently, was a valued, contributing, active member of the counter-narrative grassroots group, IPSCC. Not all of the IPS teachers have a full understanding of how neoliberalism functions to destroy public schools, but when they do, they can become invaluable allies to the grassroots cause. Thankfully, other members of the IEA continue to attend IPSCC meetings, so the partnership continues.

IPS Administration

The point of punctuated equilibrium, the fulcrum points in which the IPS administration changed and Dr. Ferebee became the leader in 2013, re-positioned the IPS administration as a more powerful player in the Indianapolis educational landscape. Prior to Dr. Ferebee's leadership, the IPS Administration was not amenable at all to a partnership with charter schools or other privatizing entities. Thus, his entry into the Indianapolis education scene provided a fresh start for educational privatizers to seek alignment from IPS - which ultimately positioned the IPS Administration as a *highly organized* interest group in favor of its own privatization.

As mentioned previously, the IPS Board that hired Dr. Ferebee did so because they were ultimately convinced that out of the three finalists chosen from the pool managed by a headhunting firm, Dr. Ferebee was the most pro-public school candidate that we had interviewed. However, within the first year of Ferebee's arrival, the board began to hear talk of the Portfolio School model and possible partnerships with charter schools.

In this case, the power and authority of the IPS Administration were elevated when Dr. Ferebee took over, just based on the promise of a fresh start. However, it did not take long for that newfound sense of power and authority to fall in line with the logics

of action of the elite crowd in Indianapolis, which favored the privatization of public schools.

*

It was 2014, the second year I was serving on the school board. I was the Vice-President of the board and Annie Roof was the President. I was at this humble west-side bar that I had never visited before, soaking in the ambiance of the original 1910's wood bar countertop and cabinets, the mottled sunlight filtering in through the glass block windows and highlighting the decades of good times scuffed into the linoleum floor. I was enjoying a cherry coke - the kind made with syrup, that can only be handcrafted in certain institutions of a particular vestige - and a burger, when my phone rang. It was Annie, telling me that Dr. Ferebee wanted us to fly down to New Orleans to see how their portfolio schools were going and to speak to some of the individuals involved in chartering New Orleans public schools. Apparently, we would be traveling via Al Hubbard's (former Secretary of Staff to VP Dan Quayle and ed-reform philanthro-preneur) private plane along with Maggie Lewis (City-County Council President), Dr. Ferebee (IPS Superintendent), Wanda LeGrand (IPS Assistant Superintendent), Caitlin Hannon (IPS Board Secretary), and David Harris, the founder, and CEO of The Mind Trust. As Annie asked me how much I weighed (apparently the weight of human cargo is carefully considered when flying on private aircraft), I disdainfully regarded my burger and pushed it aside. "I can't go," I responded. "My daughter is being awarded with a scholarship on that day."

*

Special Interest Groups

Special interest groups began building ground in Indianapolis in 2008, both at the invitation of The Mind Trust as well as resulting from their Education Entrepreneur Fellowship, an incubator to grow new education entrepreneurs in Indianapolis (The Mind Trust Annual Report, 2020). The Mind Trust was established in 2006 by former mayor Bart Peterson and his former deputy mayor of Education, David Harris (The Mind Trust, August 4, 2021). The Mind Trust has raised about \$135 million since its inception from some heavy-hitting funders; the Indianapolis-based pharmaceutical giant Eli Lilly being one of them, along with the Walton Family Foundation, Bloomberg Philanthropies, The Michael and Susan Dell Foundation, and the John and Laura Arnold Foundation (Strauss, 2018b; The Mind Trust, March 31, 2021). The dollars that The Mind Trust rakes in from its elite donors have supported the launch of a total of 38 schools across Indianapolis, with 9 of them just having launched in the fall of 2020 - and five more schools in the pipeline to launch in the future (The Mind Trust Annual Report, 2020).

In addition to funding the “re-launch” of existing public schools deemed as failing by the construction of narrative myths, The Mind Trust is excelling at inserting itself into the education scene in Indianapolis in other ways. They provided “targeted support” to over 100 schools and offered workshops for teachers and administrators (The Mind Trust Annual Report, 2020). The Mind Trust also supports the local teacher training programs mentioned previously, which are housed at Marian University; boasting that they have trained over “1,640 new teachers through their partnership and investment in The New Teacher Project, Teach for America, and Relay Graduate School of Education Teaching Residency” (The Mind Trust Annual Report, 2020, p. 4).

If neoliberal education reform in Indianapolis was indeed an octopus (which is a visual I have frequently used in my blogs), then The Mind Trust would be the brains (or the head and body) of the octopus, with its tentacles representing the organization's money - which buys its *power* and *influence* - reaching all over the city. The Mind Trust has single-handedly "built a network of 14 education nonprofits that support students and families" (The Mind Trust Annual Report, 2020). Their network is explicitly named and includes both national and local organizations, including Relay Graduate School of Education, Stand for Children, Surge Academy, Teach for America, and The New Teacher Project, as national organizations that have been recruited to Indianapolis. In addition, The Mind Trust has launched the following organizations based in Indianapolis through its education entrepreneur program: Center for Innovative Education Solutions, EmpowerED Families, Enroll Indy, FosterED, Global Citizen Year, Summer Advantage USA, Teach Plus, and The Expectations Project (The Mind Trust Annual Report, 2020). This network multiplies the organization's power by diversifying the political impact across other organizations. Indeed, before I ran for school board in 2012, The Mind Trust had recruited the nonprofit organization Stand for Children that would serve as the tentacle responsible for the purchasing of the Indianapolis Public School board seats.

Stand for Children has been very secretive about the actual amount of money that they have spent in orchestrating the purchasing of seats on the Indianapolis Public School board. The Executive Director, Justin Ohlemiller, has been directly questioned about the amount in public forums and has refused to answer (Brown, 2014). As a result, some community members have compiled estimates of Stand for Children spending to support neoliberal minded education reform candidates for IPS school board; in 2020, a collective

200k in donations from Stand for Children was actually reported on candidate campaign finance reports (Peers, 2020) while grassroots whistleblowers (including myself and other IPSCC members) continue to point out that most of the money flowing into the neoliberal IPS board candidate coffers is routed through 501(c)(4) organizations that are not required to itemize spending (Cosby, 2016; Hinnefeld, 2021; Miller, 2016).

The Mayor's Office of Indianapolis

The Mayor's Office involvement in the neoliberal privatization of IPS was initiated by former democratic Mayor Bart Peterson alongside David Harris, who then served as the first Deputy Mayor of Education. This duo is largely responsible for the onslaught of privatization. David Harris established the foundation for the Office of Education Innovation (OEI) before leaving in 2006 to found The Mind Trust. Mayors who have succeeded Bart Peterson (Greg Ballard from 2008-2016, and Joe Hogsett from 2016-present) have continued to prioritize and expand this office and, as a result, the presence of charter schools in the city. This office is a highly organized interest group with a great deal of *influence and power*. This office, "... is responsible for overseeing the academics, finances, and operations of mayor-sponsored public charter schools that educate about 18,000 students across the city" (Indy, n.d.). They also have the *authority* to approve new charter school applications or close existing charter schools based on how they fare on student performance metrics.

Indianapolis Public Schools Board of Commissioners

At the top of the formal hierarchy of Indianapolis Public Schools sits an elected body of school board commissioners with the ultimate *authority* to govern the decisions presented to them by the IPS Administration, specifically by the superintendent. The

school board collectively employs the superintendent, and through monthly meetings, either approves or rejects the agenda items presented for consideration. This interest group is *highly organized*, and holds a lot of *power* in the fact that they collectively are the ultimate authority of IPS. Each board member has a great deal of *influence* individually, as generally they have large amounts of social capital, having campaigned visibly in the community to be elected to their seat. What is not commonly known by the voters who elect them are the greater forces at work behind the scenes - that the energetic and financial backing of the special interest groups ultimately determines whether privatization of IPS continues or is derailed. Since 2012, wrapped in the tentacles of the mother organization The Mind Trust, special interest groups have been successful in maintaining an IPS board that is pro-privatization.

Micro Level Theoretical Analysis

When I made the decision to begin writing a blog in 2015, I was faced with the task of briefly describing myself and my purposes for writing. This is what I came up with, my tagline of sorts: “Atypical politician: unconditional truth-teller, seeker and conveyer of wisdom. Tell it like it is, shoot from the hip, can't afford to waste any more time. Let's go” (Cosby, 2015).

This tagline indicates the sense of urgency I felt around the issues that were unfolding within IPS at the time, and my responsibility in doing all that I could to illuminate them. I was the lone voice of dissent on a board of seven, with the six other board members bought by special interest groups to continue the privatization of IPS. That was the overarching agenda, and it seemed that all decisions being made ultimately centered on furthering that agenda, shrouded in the perpetuation of narrative myths about

school failure. On the whole, I did not get the sense that the everyday folks of Indianapolis, including the students and their families, could see beyond the shroud. I felt compelled to write as a way to deal with the frustrations of being the only one on the board that actually viewed the current state of IPS as a massive web of deceptions. I needed people to understand, to question, to attempt to part the shroud with me.

During the time of my candidacy and election, I was fortunate to know a small group of people who were wary of what was developing. These folks were savvy enough to think critically about the amounts of outside money being poured into the 2012 IPS board elections, and bold enough to talk to me about where my money was coming from. It took some time, and some convincing on their part, but I'm forever grateful to the members of Parent Power and the Education Community Action Team who took the time to help me frame an understanding of how IPS was being attacked by outside forces. I became a regular at their weekly breakfasts at the Kountry Kitchen (ironically, the same place that I selected to meet the millionaire donors as well).

Once I started blogging, opportunities to discuss my viewpoints started to manifest. As mentioned in Chapter 4, I was engaged in multiple grassroots activities each week. I assisted in planning a viewing of the documentary *Education, Inc.*, which chronicles the buying of the school board in Douglas County Schools, a suburb of Denver. I also was regularly invited to speak on panels and give presentations in conjunction with organizations like the NAACP and Kheprw Institute (see Appendix D).

How does the *purpose* of public schooling tie into the neoliberalization of public education? The purpose of public education has shifted with the times, in order to fit the needs of our capitalistic society. During a time in our history when we had large influxes

of immigrants arriving, the public schools functioned to assimilate children into becoming ‘Americans’ (Meyer, 2006). Later, during a time when factory work was booming in the United States, high school graduates were matriculating prepared to join the ranks of factory workers (Meyer, 2006). Presently, it is argued that the public social institutions in the U.S. serve to ‘manage’ or house surpluses of Black and Brown bodies, deemed “functionally redundant” to the system - and privatizing public education ensures that this process of managing bodies can also be profited from (DeLissovoy et al., 2015, p. 34).

How does the curriculum in public schools, (both traditional public and charter schools) ensure that the surplus Black and Brown bodies “stay in their place” in society? You only teach them what they need to know in order to join the ranks of the gig economy. You make the curriculum irrelevant to their lived experience, ‘banking’ their brains full of facts that they are unlikely to retain or use in the future (Freire, 1970). You don’t teach them anything relevant to achieving liberation from the oppression they are experiencing. You do not allow them the freedom to explore topics that are meaningful to them. Then, they don’t see the value in the educational system, and as a (quite logical) result, they do not invest in themselves.

In addition to an oppressive curriculum, many schools (charter schools especially) have been criticized for “no-excuses” disciplinary methods, which contribute to a pipeline to prison, another institution in our society that manages a surplus of Black and Brown bodies (Strauss, 2021). In a surprising article from a former member of the D.C. Public Charter School Board, (Strauss, 2021), Steve Bumbaugh describes some of what he witnessed in D.C. area charter schools during his 6-year term. He describes spending

a morning witnessing a mostly White staff turning away mostly Black mothers with their children because of minor uniform violations. He recalls lines painted on hallway floors for students to walk on, 4-year-olds being snapped at for not paying attention, students trained to track teachers with their eyes or hold their mouths in certain positions. This is a description of an oppressive system at work. I witnessed similar measures being taken in both traditional public and in IPS charter schools: students being yelled at in a hallway and forced to retrace their steps for not walking correctly. Students with “bubbles in their mouths,” or doing “hallway hugs,” essentially wrapping their little arms around themselves - or with hands behind their backs. The reader can ascertain the similarities between what is happening with behavioral and disciplinary measures in these schools and draw parallels to prison, another public institution designed to manage the surplus of Black and Brown bodies in society.

Neoliberalism as a Driving Force in School Privatization

A wise friend of mine, John Harris Loflin, recently made an important point regarding the current state of neoliberal education. Those who wish to privatize public education understand the importance of controlling the narrative via the curriculum being offered in those institutions of learning. Theories regarding the *current purpose* of public schools in the neoliberal era posit that they are not only a custodial institution, particularly for students of color and/or students living in poverty, they also sustain the stark differences in American wealth by providing a substandard education to some along racial and socioeconomic lines (Alexander, 2010; Buras, 2015; Lipman, 2011; Ravitch, 2013; Spence, 2016). In following with John’s idea, it seems as if the powerful elite know that in order to maintain their wealth, they must control the narrative in terms of the

purpose of public schooling as well as the curriculum. This control perpetuates social stratification as we know it today.

As a sitting board member, I publicly addressed the purpose of an education in Indianapolis Public Schools. In February 2016, I wrote a blog in response to Dr. Lewis Ferebee's vision for IPS students centered around the three E's (Cosby, 2016). Dr. Ferebee proposed that an IPS education results in one of his three E's: (further) Education, Employment, or Enlistment. I proposed that an IPS education should result in the following E's instead: Emancipation, Enlightenment, and Empowerment. I argued that students should find that their education equipped them with the skills and tools necessary to emancipate themselves from oppressive circumstances; that education should provide a safe space for students to enlighten themselves about the topics that excite them; and is empowered to utilize the previous two E's as an opportunity to practice self-determination. Unfortunately, my three E's were never even acknowledged, much less supported by IPS Administration.

This begs the question, what happens to the Black and Brown bodies being managed in our public school system? Once they exit or graduate from high school, what are their options - do they achieve ANY of the E's, whether my version or Dr. Ferebee's? Consider what jobs are typically available to students in our current neoliberal state; the gig economy provides job opportunities for recent high school graduates or those without a diploma that pay next to nothing and offer no benefits or job security. Working at places like Amazon, Uber, Doordash, Shipt, etc. are the types of positions I speak of. In order to make ends meet, most folks find themselves working two or more of these types of jobs (Cosby, 2018; Spence, 2015; Yellend, 2015). Without a radical departure from

the current curriculum and pipeline to prison disciplinary practices, the educational system will continue to provide a steady supply of workers - and profits - to these predatory gig employers.

Unfortunately for educators who would strive to ‘do the right thing,’ to integrate as much teaching for social justice as possible into the prescribed curriculum, the process of American schooling is not designed for students to actually learn. If we are keeping it 100% real, we know that students tracked through traditional public K-12 public schools are being prepared to function as low-wage workers in a capitalist society. As stated previously, it is simply the management of a redundant surplus of Black, Brown, and/or poor bodies (DeLissovoy et al., 2015). Now only if the standardized tests actually matched up with the actual purpose of public school in America, could we call that test valid and reliable. The first problem with using standardized test results as an indicator of “failing schools” is that learning is not universal, standardized, or measurable in ways that find an easy statistical fit. Granted, we know some things about child development, and we possibly know some things about how the brain categorizes and assimilates information. We know that there are different types of learners, and we as teachers are charged with the task of adapting our teaching methods in order to reach them (University of Massachusetts, 2021). However, standardized tests do not differentiate their testing methods to suit different types of learners, as teachers are charged with doing. The kinesthetic learner, the visual learner, and the auditory learner all receive the same, standardized test format. Therefore, one must question whether the test is an accurate representation of the knowledge that the student possesses in the first place, as the methods for imparting the knowledge and the methods for measuring the knowledge

are not aligned. Can we conduct a study to see how many public school graduates or former students work for Walmart and Amazon, vs. how many private school graduates? That would be a more valid measure of the functionality of public schools which are designed to perpetuate the wealth inequality inherent in our capitalist system.

If there was ever a need for evidence to support the fact that the uber wealthy elites in the U.S. support school privatization, we need to look no further than some of the donors for my school board campaign. I received money from (then) Mayor Bloomberg of New York City, which was funneled through a fellow candidate's campaign finance report. But to uncover other donors, you have to dig a little deeper. Similar to the information that is now being uncovered by the Pandora Papers (in which the uber-wealthy use shell corporations to hide assets), the elites use non-profit organizations such as The Mind Trust and Stand for Children as a layer of a shroud meant to conceal the fact that they use their wealth to shape public education, and thereby leave an imprint on the young minds enrolled there. Thus, what our students are learning in the public school classrooms is shaped by elites like Walmart (The Walton Family Foundation), Microsoft (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation), Amazon (Bezos and Scott), Netflix (Reid Hastings), and Facebook (Mark Zuckerberg). It would only make sense that these uber-wealthy donors are contributing to causes that ultimately align with the system of oppression that keeps the money concentrated in their hands, and those of their wealthy peers.

Implications for Future Research

This research into the inner workings of privatizing IPS should be eye-opening for those interested in educational politics and organizational change. This research

described the sociopolitical forces at play in order to sufficiently disrupt a long-standing public institution, and convert it (piece by piece) into an institution that not only perpetuates the oppression of class and racial inequity to the benefit of the elite, but also serves as a money-maker for them at the same time. Unfortunately, the case of IPS illustrated in this study is not the first school system to experience this demise, and it likely will not be the last.

Future research into school privatization would benefit from a deep analysis of the Center for Reinventing Public Education, as this think tank is focused on measuring the “progress” of Portfolio School districts across the nation. The website (www.crpe.org) can serve as a blueprint for analyzing where privatization has already been implemented, how successfully they deem the implementation, and which cities are at risk of being targeted next. For those interested in preventing further decimation of our public education systems across the U.S., this is a crucial first step in determining where our efforts would be best focused. From this vantage point, scholar-activists can work on macro-level policy changes or grassroots level activism work to prepare citizens to fight the influx of money and power that is sure to follow.

Additional areas of research may include exploring the deeper links between gentrification of urban centers in the U.S., displacement of populations along racial and socioeconomic lines, and migration patterns in enrollment across institutions of education (public, charter, and private). Another layer of examination in this type of research that would be especially revealing is focusing on where populations of students receiving special education services are enrolled, and the impacts that all of this movement ultimately has on measures of school performance.

For those interested in stemming the tide of school privatization, we have to unearth the truth of why privatization is occurring, and where to anticipate it next. The privatization “train has left the station” in many U.S. cities; let us pinpoint the next stations and inform those citizens of the early warning signs of school privatization. Perhaps, then we can stop those trains before they even leave. Perhaps we can work to defund the organizations that promote privatization; or work to curb the behind-the-scenes money that flows (legally, at this point) through elections.

Conclusion

Though the Indianapolis school privatization train left the station back in 2012, and I indeed took a brief ride on this train through my election and confirmation to the IPS school board, I still hold onto hope that we can work within this flawed system to disrupt the perpetuation of the oppressive racist and classist facets of education, though Audre Lorde cautioned us against using the master’s tools. Clearly, the neoliberal “masters” (like The New Teacher Project and Teach for America, quoted above) pay lip service to social justice, but they don’t demonstrate a true understanding of what this means in the classroom. The more conservative “masters” are bold enough to try to outrightly dismiss tools such as Critical Race Theory (Fortin, 2021). We can do this by both continuing to fight at the macro level and by insurrecting long-term change by teaching for social justice.

I am still engaged in the fight against privatization at the macro level, though I am not currently holding a political seat. I am still invested in supporting grassroots candidates to reclaim the seats on the IPS school board that the ed-deform elites purchase every election cycle. In the 2020 election cycle, I endorsed and assisted Daqavise

Winston, a grassroots candidate for my former district 2 seat. My endorsement was very visible, including written statements and photographs on printed campaign promotional materials. I also supported the other three candidates selected by the grassroots organization IPS Community Coalition, in my role as the treasurer of the organization. I conducted virtual candidate interviews that were live-streamed on Facebook, and decently well-attended by the community.

In terms of fueling the future insurrection, if we are not teaching anything remotely related to breaking the chains of the capitalist system which seeks to enslave our young people to work that only serves to benefit the elite - if we are not teaching children how to find their passion and pursue it, then why are we teaching in the first place? What other purpose is there, really? If we, as teachers, continue to perpetuate this neoliberal system, by turning out students unable to think outside of the capitalistic matrix, then our hands are (almost) as dirty as the elite profiteers.

True teaching for social justice empowers students to accurately see the system and their potential in breaking it. A recent prime example of how this could be applied critically in our current society is the examination of the “Pandora Papers”. Almost 12 million pages of documentation stating that the uber-elite are stashing money not only in offshore accounts, but also in states like Nevada, Delaware, and South Dakota, where the laws have been crafted to support tax evasion for those with fat bank account balances that typically preclude prosecution for such offenses (Gladstone, 2021). This hoarding and covering of assets allow the uber-wealthy to sidestep contributing taxes to the betterment of the public good, such as public education. The disinvestment of the

wealthy, in terms of their tax contributions to public education, is a disinvestment in the minds of students of color, and students living in poverty.

As for me and how my story ends - I am currently an instructor in the School of Education at Ivy Tech Community College, Indiana's statewide system of community colleges. For now, this is where I belong; me, the former teenage mother who struggled to make it out of high school, a surprise first-generation college student, and a full Pell grant recipient who has been given the grace to work with students at Ivy Tech from similar backgrounds. Yes, this is the work that I feel called to do presently. I give aspiring teachers tools that might, with time and passion, deconstruct some of the myths that they've been fed about themselves and their future students who look like them, who've experienced the trauma of economic and racial bondage. In my classroom, we untangle that bondage, carefully examine it, flip it over, reflect on it - sometimes with hurting, yet hopefully open hearts, then arrange those chains into neat rows and boxes, a foundation we can build on and then label as "curriculum" and "best practices." Laying those chains flat into boxes is uncomfortable for some of my students to witness, but incredibly liberating for most of us, myself included.

"If you have come here to help me you are wasting your time. But, if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together." - Lilla Watson

Appendix A

Charter School Advertisement



Appendix B

Charter School Advertisement



Appendix C
Charter School Advertisement



Appendix D

NAACP Community Program Flyer

The IPS Innovation Network (Portfolio Model)

Who is ALEC? What role do they play in Education Reform?

Why was Indiana HB 1321 (IPS Innovation Network School) repeal to HB 1009 (All School Corporations)?

Are IPS Board Elections influenced by outside groups?

Is IPS the model for a larger education reform movement in the State of Indiana?

Is the new IPS operating a segregated school system?

Is The Mind Trust an Organization or a Network?

Join a discussion with Dr. Jim Scheurich Professor IUPUI Urban Education Doctoral Program with doctoral students along with Dr. Doug Martin author "Hoosier School Heist" and Julia Vaughn, Common Cause of Indiana as they examine critical questions regarding education reform and public education.
Featured Moderator: Dr. Nate Williams

Monday July 25th | 6:00pm-8pm
Julia Carson Government Center | 300 East Fall Creek Pkwy North
For more information call (317) 925-5127

"This is a Public Forum Parents and Community Stakeholders are Welcome"

Dr. Jim Scheurich, Julia Vaughn, Dr. Doug Martin, Dr. Nate Williams

Appendix E

Innovation Network School Selection Committee Agenda



To: The Innovation School Fellowship Selection Committee
CC: Dr. Lewis Ferebee
From: David Harris and Patrick Herrel
Date: June 17, 2014
Re: Innovation School Fellowship Selection Committee Logistics

Thank you for agreeing to serve on the selection committee for the Innovation School Fellowship on **Thursday, June 19, 2014. We will have breakfast at 8:30 a.m. and will begin our interviews promptly at 9:00.** This memo provides logistical information regarding preparation for and participation in the final interview day. If you have additional questions, please reach out to me or Patrick Herrel, Vice President of Education Initiatives at pherrel@themindtrust.org or [REDACTED]

Interview Preparation

The Mind Trust received 86 applications for the Innovation School. The attached document outlines the backgrounds and proposals of the finalist candidates. You will notice that these summaries are written anonymously so that we preserve the confidentiality that we promised to applicants. You will receive additional information on candidates during the interview day, but the summaries should give you a sense of the applicants' backgrounds and proposed schools.

Interview Day Logistics

Date:	Thursday, June 19	
Time:	8:30-9:00 a.m.	Breakfast
	9:00-9:10 a.m.	Welcome and Overview of the Day
	9:10-10:40 a.m.	Candidate A
	10:40-10:50 a.m.	Break
	10:50 a.m.-12:20 p.m.	Candidate B
	12:20-12:30 p.m.	Break and Lunch Setup
	12:30-1:15 p.m.	Lunch
	1:15-2:45 p.m.	Candidate C
	2:45-2:55 p.m.	Break
	2:55-4:25 p.m.	Candidate D
	4:25-end	Debrief

Location: Christian Theological Seminary
Canfield Room
1000 W 42nd St
Indianapolis, IN 46208
Enter at the "main entrance" signs and turn left to park in the West Lot. Enter the building through the main entrance and follow signs for the Canfield Room.

The final selection committee will gather for back-to-back interviews of all the finalist candidates. After all interviews are complete, the selection committee will immediately discuss all candidates. Your input on which candidates should receive Innovation School Fellowships will be of great value to IPS and The Mind Trust.

Candidates will begin their time with a brief introduction and an overview of their proposed school model. We will use the remainder of the time for questions from the selection committee.

We will provide breakfast, lunch, and snacks for the selection committee. Please email Patrick Herrel (pherrel@themindtrust.org) if you have any dietary restrictions.

Again, thank you for participating in the selection committee. We have included the full selection committee below for your reference.

Selection Committee

Sekou Biddle
United Negro College Fund

Dr. Wanda Legrand
Indianapolis Public Schools

Christine Collier
Indianapolis Public Schools

Jason Kloth
The City of Indianapolis

Gayle Cosby
Indianapolis Public Schools Board

Elizabeth Odle
United Way of Central Indiana

Dr. Lewis Ferebee
Indianapolis Public Schools

Andrea Roof
Indianapolis Public Schools Board

Dr. Gerardo Gonzalez
Indiana University School of Education

Ariela Rozman
The New Teacher Project

Dr. David Hampton
Light of the World Christian Church

Kameelah Shaheed-Diallo
The Mind Trust

David Harris
The Mind Trust

**Innovation School Fellowship
Finalist Executive Summaries**

Mission/Vision	To provide an excellent Montessori-inspired education to students while ensuring students' physical and emotional needs are met. The candidate is exploring the option of adding a boarding component at a later date.
Grades Served	K-3 at launch, adding a grade until serving grades K-12
Candidate's Professional Background	Principal, IPS PreK-8 School <i>+80 % Free or Reduced Lunch</i> <i>+75% passing both Math and English Language Arts ISTEP+</i> <i>Took school from a D to an A under IDOE's accountability rating system</i> Assistant Principal, IPS High School Assistant Principal, IPS Middle School Assistant Principal, IPS Middle School Magnet Coordinator, IPS Middle School Teacher, IPS Montessori grades 4-8 School
Candidate's Educational Background and Honors/Awards	M.S. in Educational Administration, Butler University M.E. in Curriculum and Instruction, Indiana Wesleyan University B.A. in Elementary Education, DePauw University Most Valuable Principal, Eastern Star Church, Featured Panelist, Indiana Department of Education Panel on ELA Gains

Candidate A

9:10-10:40 a.m.

School Model Overview:

Montessori-Inspired

Candidate A aspires to build a "Montessori-inspired school" focused on ensuring students' physical and emotional needs are met. The school would be Montessori-inspired, meaning the school would use the Montessori philosophy but would not go through the certification process with national Montessori boards. The candidate believes the Montessori-inspired model would be better than a strict Montessori model because it provides more freedom to ensure standards are taught and all students' needs are met. The candidate also believes that the Montessori-inspired model would present cost savings compared to a true Montessori model.

The Montessori method of teaching was developed by Dr. Maria Montessori, who spent significant time studying how children learn and navigate the world. The Montessori method encourages multi-age classrooms and learning through discovery. Students are given extended periods of work time and have choice over how to learn. Older students in the multi-age classrooms serve as role models for their younger peers. The lessons teachers present are accessible to all students.

regardless of their designated grade level. Under the approach, students working above or below grade level can receive appropriate instruction without leaving their classrooms.

Teachers encourage students to embrace their natural curiosity and learn using a hands-on approach. Candidate A described Montessori by saying, "Students are given freedom within limits and have the ability to choose, not whether they learn, but how they will learn required information." The candidate would also draw from the community focus in the Montessori method and emphasis on connecting to nature. Candidate A hopes to integrate an outdoor learning space into her school if selected to launch an Innovation Network School.

Character Education

The candidate wants to incorporate a strong character education component into her school. In her application, she described plans to utilize service learning and the "Grace and Courtesy" portion of the Montessori curriculum to "truly instill courtesy, kindness, and respect for others" within students. The school model would ensure students are civically engaged in the community outside of the school to develop students who are "globally minded."

Boarding School Component

While Candidate A has a strong desire to develop a neighborhood school, she also is interested in exploring the possibility of providing a boarding school option to students. Candidate A feels strongly that when students are provided a stable environment and their physical and emotional needs are met, their academic performance accelerates. Parents of students opting for the boarding option would be able to visit and engage with the school, as long as it did not interfere with the structure of the school day. For students engaging in the boarding option, after-school hours would be focused on study time, social time, and activity time. Additionally, students would be taught proper grooming habits. Candidate A understands the logistical and financial challenges of starting a boarding school. As such, she is interested in launching a more traditional school while continuing to explore ways a public boarding school might be feasible, including learning from DC's public boarding school, [The SEED School of Washington, D.C.](#)

Candidate Background:

Candidate A is an experienced educator with significant experience in the classroom, as well as leadership roles within Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS). The candidate graduated from Broad Ripple High School and knew she wanted to be a teacher. After graduating from DePauw University with a degree in Elementary Education, she taught math in IPS for seven years at a Montessori school serving grades 4-8. While teaching, she received her M.E. in Curriculum and Instruction from Indiana Wesleyan University. Candidate A worked for one year as a magnet coordinator while she worked on her M.S. in Educational Administration from Butler University. She then served as an assistant principal in several IPS schools until she was chosen to lead an IPS PreK-8 school as principal.

While the candidate was a classroom teacher, she founded an after-school mentoring program for females in grades 5-8. The group focused on a variety of issues the parents and students thought important. The mentoring program was successful and received attention from various political officials. Because of the candidate's success launching this program, she was invited to help develop another mentorship program for the Center for Leadership Development.

When the candidate first became principal of her current school, the school was on a downward trajectory, having received a D the year before she took over. In her first year, the school continued its downward trend and received an F from the Indiana Department of Education, despite the changes the candidate made to staffing and teacher supports. During the second year under the candidate's leadership, she worked tirelessly to increase performance at the school. She developed a comprehensive professional development calendar, reorganized the staff, and heightened the school's focus on data to inform instruction. She also hired new, excellent teachers who were a strong fit with the school model. As a result of the candidate's leadership and changes, the percentage of students passing both the Math and English Language Arts portions of ISTEP+ grew by nearly 12 points, bringing the school's grade from an F to a B. The following year the candidate continued these efforts and the school again saw significant gains on ISTEP+, with the percentage of students passing both Math and English Language Arts growing by 6.5 points. Consequently, more than 75% of students at Candidate A's school passed both Math and English Language Arts on ISTEP+ during the 2012-13 school year.

Strengths:*School Leadership Experience*

The candidate has extensive school leadership experience, having worked as an assistant principal or principal for seven years within IPS. Not only does the candidate have experience leading a school, she has experience drastically improving the academic outcomes of students at a persistently failing school. The commitment and urgency she displayed in transforming her current school from its downward slide to its current success is essential to successfully launching and leading an Innovation Network School.

Additionally, the candidate has worked exclusively within IPS, providing her additional context and relationships in the district. She has a deep understanding of the work required of a principal in IPS.

Data-Driven Management

When working to improve her current school, Candidate A took a data-driven approach. During her initial interview, she spoke of a weeklong workshop where she worked with all of her teachers on developing strategies to improve instruction. They collected all of the data they had and brainstormed strategies to improve instruction. They then talked through strategies, identified those most likely to be successful, and developed a year-long professional development calendar to integrate the highest-impact strategies. This strategic and data-driven approach to leadership led to drastic academic gains, and this type of aggressive data- and student-centered approach will be essential to the success of an Innovation Network School.

Work Ethic and Persistence

Throughout the candidate's interview, she demonstrated grit and an achievement mindset. She repeatedly mentioned "embracing challenges" and speaking of the "F" her school received, she said "that F was hard for me to swallow...that isn't who I am." The steps she took to improve her school, including working longer hours and changing her approach indicate a strong work ethic and persistence in working through challenges.

Clear School Vision

Candidate A has a very clear understanding of her school vision. She has been the leader of a school with a similar curricular model and has achieved success. She is willing to take on the challenge of exploring a boarding aspect in her school because she feels it would be in the best interest of students. The candidate has already identified what aspects of the Montessori method she wants to embrace and what her needs are to implement the model with fidelity.

Strong Instructional Leader

In her current role, the candidate has proven herself to be a strong instructional leader. During her interview, she said, "Instruction is not something I struggle with as a principal, I am able to give consistent and constructive feedback to my teachers. We have constant feedback in our school, and we provide professional development opportunities every week to our teachers." The candidate has shown experience selecting good educators and developing educators who are not meeting her bar of excellence. Her extensive experience in this realm would be incredibly valuable as an Innovation School Fellow.

Indianapolis Public School Roots

The candidate was a graduate of an IPS school, and her entire career has been spent serving IPS schools. She explicitly stated, "IPS has always held a special place in my heart." Candidate A's history with IPS would allow her to develop deeper connections to families in the community, as well as greater partnerships.

Candidate B – Two-person team

10:50a.m.-12:20 p.m.

Mission/Vision	To ensure all scholars thrive with high academic and social standards by utilizing a blended learning model with an emphasis on academic success, exceptional educators, an extended school day and year, rigorous curriculum, enrichment courses, and close collaboration with parents.
Grades Served	K-6
Candidate 1's Professional Background	Founder and CEO, Local Charter Network Founder and CEO, National Education Nonprofit CEO, National Education Nonprofit Co-Founder and CEO, National Education Nonprofit Teacher, K-6 School
Candidate 1's Educational Background and Honors/Awards	J.D., Harvard Law School B.A. in Political Science, Yale University Social Entrepreneurship Award, <i>Fast Company</i> President's Service Award (President Clinton) Award Recipient, Charter School Growth Fund Featured Panelist, MSNBC, BET, WGBH-TV Shine A Light Award, BET Top 40 Under 40, <i>The Network Journal</i>
Candidate 2's Professional Background	Dean of Students, Local Charter Network Coordinator of Accelerated and Alternative Education, Local Charter Network

https://ps-p06-ips.k12.in.us/ps-website/?id=1279971a-444a-418a-f18b-ee75d85b5c3a&REF=55A196511PS_PRODMAIN.PG2.200.2000002.1.7A34915... 4/3

	Assistant Principal, Local Charter School Program Manager, Local Summer School Program Behavior Specialist/Dean, Indianapolis Public Schools In School Suspension Facilitator, Indianapolis Public Schools Business Manager, Fortune 500 Company Lead Teacher, Chicago Public Schools
Candidate 2's Educational Background and Honors/Awards	Academy for Teaching and Learning Leadership, Marian University M.B.A., Indiana Wesleyan University B.S. in Journalism/Advertising, Ball State University First Robotics Rookie of the Year and Robotics World Championship Coach Ryan Fellowship Finalist

School Model Overview:

The candidates envision a K-6 school model borrowing from their existing successful charter network's design. The existing school uses blended learning to individualize instruction for students. Use of technology gives each student more focused instruction and practice with an adult and allows for more individualization. The school model also incorporates character-building, enrichment learning opportunities, and parent and community involvement practices. The existing school has seen dramatic gains in its first year. With two months left in the school year, the percentage of students "on track" increased from 31% at the beginning of the year to 83% on track, based on the DIBELS exam, which is strongly predictive of ISTEP+ performance. Based on i-Ready's nationally normed assessments, students moved from 3% "on track" to 51% in math and from 33% "on track" to 88% in reading. The proposed school would be a part of this existing network but would not operate with a charter.

Blended Learning

Blended learning, defined generally, is any school model that utilizes technology to better individualize instruction for students. Adaptive software allows students to move at their own pace, giving struggling students more time for practice and providing successful students with more difficult topics. Second, students' time with technology frees a teacher's time to focus on smaller groups of targeted students for remediation, re-instruction or acceleration of content. The candidates plan to utilize blended learning in each block of instruction. Each reading and math block consists of four stations:

- *Whole-group instruction.* One teacher and one teaching assistant lead each classroom of 32 students, allowing for an adult-to-student ratio of 1 to 16.
- *Practice of skills in the online learning lab.* Scholars are guided by a content specialist who provides individual tutoring as needed and a paraprofessional who supervises students in the lab.
- *Small group instruction.* One teacher leads a group of no more than 11 students for targeted instruction based on students' needs, as determined by data from the online learning modules.
- *Independent/Guided study.* Students engage in self-paced learning under the guidance of a teaching assistant.

Data-Driven Instruction

Each student receives an individualized learning plan that addresses his or her needs. The goal of the four stations is to provide students with multiple "touch points" that meet their academic needs in a variety of ways. All stations feed information into a central online platform that immediately provides student data to the teachers, parents, and leadership staff. Currently, teachers use this data to identify content that needs additional instructional time or flag students who are struggling in particular areas.

Highly Effective Teachers

The candidates plan to utilize their proven process for identifying and selecting talented educators if selected to launch and lead an Innovation Network School. The process includes identifying candidates' instructional strengths and weaknesses; their ability to respond to potential scenarios with parents, scholars, or peers; and their ability to develop a plan in response to student data. Each teacher would be required to complete more than 55 hours of pre-service professional development. Additionally, all teachers would be evaluated using a rigorous performance evaluation system.

Enrichment

A key part of ensuring the school's students have a well-rounded learning experience is enrichment time. In their application, the candidates describe their plans for instruction: "On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, scholars will take courses in STEM, health, and physical fitness. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, scholars will take courses in social studies, art, music, and drama." The candidates plan to identify community partners to ensure these enrichment experiences do not put undue burden on the teaching staff and are of high quality. In addition, students participate in character courses throughout the year to develop a strong school culture.

Extended Learning Time

In order to ensure scholars have adequate time to achieve success, the school day and year would be extended. In their application, the candidates cite multiple research studies that emphasize the importance of increasing learning time. All scholars also would also be provided an additional 25 learning days during the summer through a partnership with a local program addressing summer learning loss.

Parental Engagement

As with the existing school, parents would be actively involved in the school. All teachers would be trained on how to effectively engage and partner with parents. Teachers also would begin their partnerships with parents early by calling them before the school year begins. The candidates also plan to have all parents "sign a pledge expressing their commitment to support their child's learning."

Candidate Background:

Both candidates have proven track records and a history of commitment to urban education. Candidate 1 is a proven social entrepreneur with a history of success launching organizations committed to improving education for disadvantaged students. Candidate 1 has been launching and leading education non-profits for two decades and has gained respect in the Indianapolis community for his work with a nonprofit designed to prevent summer learning loss. That organization has seen

success in Indianapolis and across the country. He has developed community partnerships to support his existing charter school and has shown the ability to work with diverse stakeholders to do what is best for students.

The organizations Candidate 1 has launched have seen great success. For example, at the existing school only 44% of kindergartners began the year on track based on DIBELS. Third quarter data indicate that 97% of those students are now on track. Similar gains have been seen in the summer learning program he launched and leads. Students in that program see on average 2.1 and 2.9 months of growth in reading and math respectively from the 25-day summer program.

Candidate 2 has extensive school-level administrator experience. He has served various administrative roles in both IPS and the charter sector. He is in the process of receiving his K-12 Building Level Administrator License, with a planned date of receipt of summer 2014. He has led initiatives including FIRST and VEX Robotics at his schools to ensure students have access to STEM initiatives. In addition to his building level experience, Candidate 2 also has an intimate knowledge of the existing school proposed for replication as an Innovation Network School. He has served as a founding board member of the school network and as a Program Manager for the summer learning program Candidate 1 founded.

Strengths:

Proven School Model

The existing school model has proven successful in its first year. Mark Russell of the Indianapolis Urban League recently [wrote](#) about his transition from skeptic to fan after a visit to the existing school. Additionally, the summer learning loss prevention program Candidate 1 founded has seen success. Both the school and program have been lauded for their success improving education opportunities for disadvantaged students. Having a proven model that will have had two years to identify weaknesses and solutions is a certain advantage when launching an Innovation Network School. In their initial interview, the candidates were already identifying small tweaks that need to be made to the school model. One example they noted is identifying community partnerships to lead enrichment so teachers have more time to focus on academics.

Operations Experience

The proposed school would be able to rely on the existing operations infrastructure and experience Candidate 1 has from launching and leading a successful charter school and summer learning loss prevention program. This experience and existing infrastructure would allow the candidates to spend more time developing community partnerships and gaining stakeholder support in the community of the Innovation Network School.

Blended Learning

The blended learning component of the school allows teachers to individualize instruction in a way that traditional instruction does not. Teachers are free to work with scholars in small-group or individualized settings to provide additional support. The data provided from the online platforms gives teachers constant information on progress students are making. Blended learning has been successful in many schools across the country and at Candidate 1's existing school. For example, at the existing school, one of the kindergartners was reading at a third grade level early in the year, and she was able to receive instruction at her level because of the blended learning platform.

IPS/District Experience

Both candidates have experience working with IPS and other large districts. Candidate 1 has developed partnerships with large districts across the nation through two organizations he founded to provide tutoring services and summer learning loss prevention programs. His proven ability to work collaboratively with traditional districts, including IPS, would be advantageous as a leader of an Innovation Network School. Candidate 2 has experience working as a Behavior Specialist/Dean and In-School Suspension Facilitator in IPS and as a teacher in Chicago Public Schools. His experience in these roles would help him navigate a district like IPS and understand the dynamics in the community in which the Innovation Network School is located.

Candidate C

1:15-2:45 p.m.

School Model Overview:

Mission/Vision	To provide a whole-child approach to promoting high academic achievement through inquiry-based learning. Students' social and emotional needs will be met while providing an excellent education.
Grades Served	PreK-8
Candidate's Professional Background	Teacher, IPS High School Field Interviewer, RAND Corporation Research Fellow, University of Southern California Engineer, Ford Motor Company
Candidate's Educational Background and Honors/Awards	Ph.D. in Educational Leadership, Indiana State University (expected) M.A. in Teaching, Marian University M.A. in Landscape Architecture, University of Michigan B.S. in Mechanical Engineering, Tuskegee University Principal's Award for Excellence, IPS High School Policy Fellow, Teach Plus

Candidate C aspires to build a school focused on developing the whole child while significantly raising the academic performance of each student. She desires to create an elementary school because of her daughter's elementary experience at a K-8 school, where she describes the culture as "a family" supporting each student. Candidate C describes the primary design elements of her school as "the Thinking School model with an emphasis on inquiry, social and emotional learning, and literacy." She plans to foster social and emotional wellbeing while developing critical thinking through the [Thinking School](#) model.

Thinking School Model

In her application, Candidate C describes the Thinking School in this way, "Thinking Schools are communities of educators and learners who actively think deeply about their work and everything going on around them." This approach would utilize six key points for thinking: reflective questioning, thinking skills, visual mapping, collaborative networking, developing dispositions, and structuring a thinking environment. The candidate feels strongly that this method encourages

students and teachers to explore content by asking questions and allowing students to “engage more deeply with what they are learning.” This approach to instruction would challenge students to be critical thinkers and prepare them for academic success in the proposed school and beyond.

Developing the Whole-Child

Candidate C feels strongly that developing the whole child is essential to a student’s academic success. This belief shapes the proposed school design; the candidate desires to provide supports for nutrition, health, and physical needs to her students. The candidate would integrate social-emotional learning into the school curriculum. She identifies five core competencies of social-emotional learning in her application: “Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills, and Responsible Decision-Making.” She also cites research that connects social-emotional Learning to improved academic outcomes.

Candidate Background:

Candidate C is an accomplished teacher at an IPS high school. She made the transition to teaching from engineering and landscape architecture seven years ago. Since transitioning, she has seen more than 95% of students passing the Algebra I End of Course Assessment in several of her middle school classes. She has also received her principal’s award for excellence during her teaching career. The candidate was selected as a Teach Plus Policy Fellow. Through this fellowship she studied education policy issues and published reports with other mid-career teachers. She has also been selected to serve as a New Teacher Selector for Indianapolis Teaching Fellows, and in this role she identified promising prospective teachers to transition to teaching from other careers. She’s also been an engaged in the community conversation about teaching – for example by publishing editorials in local newspapers urging the community to reconsider education issues and involve teachers in the discussion.

Candidate C has her Indiana Building Level Administrator’s license and is currently working on her Ph.D. in Educational Leadership from Indiana State University. She expects to earn that degree in 2015.

Prior to entering education as a career, the candidate was successful in other industries. After receiving her engineering degree, she began work at Ford Motor Company as a casting operations manufacturing engineer. At Ford she received two company awards for her teamwork and her work in the implementation of a new program. From there, she received her M.A. in Landscape Architecture from the University of Michigan and continued work in the private sector at the RAND Corporation, where she refined her data driven approach to research. Her experience in these different industries would help her succeed as the leader of an Innovation Network School.

Strengths:

Whole-Child Model

Candidate C is committed to developing the whole child through her proposed school. Extensive research shows that students learn more effectively when all physical, social, and emotional needs are met. As a result, the candidate has proposed a school with significant attention to wrap-around services to meet the academic and social needs of each student.

Clear Track-Record of Successful Student Outcomes

Throughout her interview, the candidate displayed a clear commitment to and history of pushing for student outcomes and using data to inform her instruction. Having experience using this data would be beneficial as leader of an Innovation Network School where assessing student performance and identifying interventions will be essential to meeting performance goals.

IPS Roots

The candidate was an IPS student herself and grew up in Indianapolis. She entered her teaching career in Indianapolis and has children in IPS. We believe her history with IPS would allow her to establish deeper community connections with students and parents if selected to lead an Innovation Network School.

Mission/Vision	To empower students through an experiential entrepreneurship school centered on problem based learning. Students would use entrepreneurship as a vehicle to develop a growth mindset, entrepreneurial thinking, and "maker skills."
Grades Served	7-8
Candidate's Professional Background	Director of Strategy and Planning, nonprofit focused on entrepreneurship Adjunct Professor, community college Strategic Communications Advisor, U.S. Department of State Senior Intelligence Analyst, U.S. Department of State
Candidate's Educational Background and Honors/Awards	M.B.A. in Entrepreneurship, Strategy, and Marketing, New York University M.A. in International Affairs, George Washington University B.A. in English and History, The Ohio State University Pushing the Envelope Award, Ohio-Based Community College Pat Roberts Intelligence Scholar Program Fellow, U.S. Department of State Director's Award, New York University's Stern School of Business Best New Analyst Award, U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Intelligence and Research

Candidate D

2:55-4:25

School Model Overview:

Candidate D is proposing a school inspired by entrepreneurship. The candidate has experience working in disadvantaged communities internationally and was inspired by the way entrepreneurship empowered youth, and she aspires to use those tools to impact youth education. The school would be centered on three pillars: positive mindset, entrepreneurship, and "maker," or technical, skills. The candidate plans to integrate core subjects (science, technology, math, history, art, and literature) through these three pillars.

Mindset Curriculum

The candidate plans to utilize the work in positive psychology to inspire students to be more productive and successful. She believes that a growth mindset would "heighten students' sense of self-efficacy." In her application, she cites research by Dr. Carol Dweck who "found that students' mindset has a direct influence on their

grades and that teaching students to have a growth mindset raises their grades and test scores significantly." The candidate plans to "deliver mindset change curriculum to the students using on-line platforms and workshops already developed by Dr. Dweck and would supplement with other materials and activities proven to change mindset." Faculty and staff also would be trained in developing a growth mindset.

Entrepreneurship Curriculum

Candidate D plans to put a significant focus on entrepreneurship education to "help lead students to create successful businesses, organizations, enterprises, or one-off projects." The school would be centered on helping students identify challenges in their own lives, in the lives of Indianapolis residents, or challenges facing the broader community. Each challenge would empower students to think critically and learn writing, reading, math, science, and history lessons as they creatively develop solutions and master state standards. She plans to work with students to develop skills in all aspects of entrepreneurship and will draw upon her experiences studying entrepreneurship, working with a nonprofit focused on entrepreneurship, and teaching entrepreneurship at her local community college. The candidate also plans to develop partnerships with entrepreneurship professors and students at Butler University. The candidate plans to teach entrepreneurship by using case studies of local organizations and businesses and by exposing students to youth-run organizations.

Maker Skills Curriculum

The proposed school would teach students technical skills to use in solving real-world problems. The students would apply these so-called "maker" skills throughout the problem based learning instruction. In her application, the candidate asserts, "the school will be outfitted with a design studio/maker space and have access to the best technical facilitators available."

The candidate is passionate about providing this aspect of the curriculum so students can learn through discovery and by testing their inventions and hypotheses. She believes that providing "a kind of playground to learn and tinker with devices, processes and technologies whereby they have to learn about math and science along the way" would permit deeper learning than traditional instructional methods.

Instructional Medium

The candidate plans to deliver all instruction through problem based and experiential learning. Most instruction would be delivered via group projects, and teachers would work together to develop curriculum. The candidate also plans to provide teachers access to resources such as subject-matter experts and thought leaders around the world. In her application, she states, "Project based learning is so fundamentally important to our school as it is focused on empowering students to be the experts in the classroom by giving them ownership over their learning and by extension promoting engagement."

Candidate Background:

This nontraditional candidate has experience in government, the private sector, and academia. In all three sectors, she has studied entrepreneurship. During her time at the U.S. Department of State, she worked in counterterrorism efforts and studied what attracted young people to terrorist groups. In this work, she found that youth felt empowered when terrorism recruiters selected them but found that youth could

feel similarly empowered when they launched a business. As part of her State Department work, she studied radicalization of minority Muslim youth in the Netherlands. While there, she saw youth choosing entrepreneurship over terrorism and was inspired to study that theory in the United States. Her ongoing focus has been on engaging disadvantaged youth. As one of her recommenders noted, she organized nature trips for youth in Southeast Washington D.C., taught entrepreneurship workshops to students in Ohio, and worked with at-risk youth who engaged in "terrorist thinking" in Amsterdam.

The candidate worked extensively in the U.S. Department of State in both counterterrorism efforts and intelligence efforts. She was highly regarded within the department and won several awards, including a two-year sabbatical to attend New York University's Stern School of Business to earn her MBA. She focused her studies on understanding the role entrepreneurship could play in empowering marginalized communities. While completing her MBA, she worked with several businesses to refine her business skills.

While the candidate does not have direct experience working in K-12 education, she has developed and taught an entrepreneurship class for a diverse group of individuals with business ideas or existing businesses. Her students range from high school students to retirees interested in improving their business savvy. One of her recommenders who is familiar with the candidate's entrepreneurship class, said she has been very impressed with the rigor the applicant places in her classes and the outcomes her students see in terms of increased self-efficacy and skills.

Strengths:

Unique School Vision

The candidate has a distinct vision for her school inspired by her personal experiences. She has spent extensive amounts of time studying the benefits of this approach and the ways to integrate her workshop methods into a school design. The candidate is planning to implement a problem based learning design and several aspects of positive psychology into her school. Because the candidate does not come from an education background, she has the potential to think outside the box and identify creative solutions.

Accomplished and Diverse Background

The candidate has experience in a variety of sectors including private industry, government, nonprofit, and academia. In each field, the candidate has been highly successful and has been recognized for her achievements. Her experience in these sectors would provide her a unique perspective when leading and launching a school.

Passionate and Adept Leader

The candidate feels very passionate about her school design and her mission to share the tools of entrepreneurship as a means to empowerment. Her passion was evident in her interview as she spoke about "breaking down barriers" to student learning and encouraging students to explore topics rather than learn from a textbook. The candidate also showed competencies for working with diverse stakeholders. She spoke about working with 16-year-old students alongside retired factory workers in her entrepreneurship workshops. One of the candidate's recommenders talked about the candidate urging her to pursue starting her own business after she ended her tenure with a previous employer. She said, "I can't imagine that I would have taken such a leap [to starting my own business] without

[the candidate] in my corner." This passion and skill for community engagement would be necessary to lead an Innovation Network School.

Appendix F

Trendy Minds Obama Radio Ad Script



:60 Cosby/Obama Education Vision script

This November 6, voters have an opportunity to support a school board candidate who believes in President Obama's education agenda.

That candidate is Gayle Cosby.

Gayle is running for IPS School Board to bring many of President Obama's key education ideas to Indianapolis.

Like the President, Gayle Cosby believes strongly in expanding early childhood education. She has a plan to invest in high quality pre-kindergarten programs in IPS, which will have children ready to learn from day one.

Gayle Cosby will work to turn around IPS's lowest performing schools because, like President Obama, she believes all children, no matter where they live, should have access to an excellent education.

And Gayle shares the President's strong belief that teachers can have a profound impact on a child's academic performance. That's why Gayle Cosby will fight to ensure IPS is attracting the most talented educational leaders and rewarding and retaining the best teachers for our children.

This Tuesday, vote for Gayle Cosby for IPS School Board. She believes in Obama's vision for education. And she believes in excellence for IPS.

Paid for and authorized by...

Appendix G

Indianapolis Mayor's Office Neighborhoods of Educational Opportunity (NEO) Plan

**MAYORS
CHALLENGE**
Indianapolis, IN



Grant Overview

Neighborhoods of Educational Opportunity brings together an unprecedented community coalition to strengthen neighborhoods and revitalize Indianapolis by launching a holistic, standardized process to double the number of high-quality student seats.

The Problem

Nothing is more important to the future of Indianapolis than ensuring every student in every neighborhood has access to a high-quality education, defined as a “seat”. A preliminary analysis showed more than two-thirds of Indianapolis students do not attend a school with high-quality seats. Consequently, students and families are leaving our urban neighborhoods in search of better schools. This trend leads to fewer life prospects for children, higher crime rates in neighborhoods, and hundreds of millions of dollars in lost tax revenue. Unfortunately, current education improvement efforts have lacked the resources and coordination necessary to create system-level change.

The Solution

The Neighborhoods of Educational Opportunity (NEO) plan reverses this trend by providing a holistic, systematic approach to creating 30,000 high-quality seats (see Figure 1) over 10 years. A diverse and growing coalition of partners, including district and charter schools, have joined forces to simultaneously scale the four research-based core elements leading to high-quality seats:



1. Creating and replicating high-performing school options
2. Expanding talent pipelines
3. Improving and expanding school performance
4. Monitoring and evaluating performance

Indianapolis is unique for a city its size since it already possesses the organizations necessary to achieve transformation. Each organization within the coalition plays a critical role in simultaneously scaling each of the core elements and has committed to doing so. This unprecedented coalition has put individual interests aside to unite under one shared vision, to provide every student in every neighborhood access to a high-quality seat.

Figure 1. High-Quality Seat Definition

Elementary and middle school			High school		
Quality Rating	Proficiency	AP	Quality Rating	Proficiency	College & Career Readiness
	(% of students)	(% of students)		(% of students)	(% of students)
High	80%+	20%+ graduation rate	High	70%+	50%+
Medium	70%+	10%+ graduation rate	Medium	60%+	30%+
Low	60%+	0%+ graduation rate	Low	50%+	10%+
Very Low	50%+	0% graduation rate	Very Low	40%+	0%+

Vision

The Neighborhoods of Educational Opportunity (NEO) plan brings together a broad coalition of community organizations aimed at creating 30,000 high-quality student seats. High-quality seats are created by a school achieving proficiency on state standardized tests or having a high percentage of students classified as college or career ready. These seats will provide educational opportunities for more Indianapolis students, thereby improving the health of our neighborhoods and the economic and social vitality of our city.

Indianapolis has too few high-quality seats to serve the needs of students and families. Stand For Children, a national education advocacy organization, in partnership with other Indianapolis education organizations, completed a preliminary analysis of 2010-2011 data and found only 26% of seats (36,031 out of 140,840) citywide were high-quality. In contrast, 44% of all public school seats (61,969) were low-quality or very low-quality. According to the Indiana Department of Education, in 2011, only 65% of students enrolled in Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS), our city's largest district, graduated from high school within four years. By multiple quantitative measures, our education system is not fulfilling its promise to our children and community.

This lack of high-quality seats directly impacts neighborhood health and economic vitality. In a recent community-wide discussion about the future of our education system, 83% of respondents agreed the quality of local schools is a critical factor in where they choose to live. Families are increasingly searching outside our urban neighborhoods for better schools, leading to steep enrollment declines that coincide with population declines in our urban core. For example, IPS enrollment dropped from 108,000 students to only 32,000 over 50 years. At the same time, population within the district has dramatically declined from 337,000 to 142,000 residents. This population decline is predominately representative of middle income families with school-aged children. A lack of high-quality options is a key driver in this exodus of residents, which negatively impacts our city's fiscal health and competitive position by decreasing tax revenues, as well as social and economic capital. It is critical to our city's health that every student in every neighborhood has access to a high-quality seat.

The NEO plan is a holistic, systematic approach to create 30,000 high-quality seats in schools for Indianapolis students. The plan consists of four core elements:

1. **Create new high-performing school options.** Provide schools with grants to start-up or replicate while ensuring accountability for results.
2. **Expand talent pipelines.** Scale proven preparation programs to ensure every school has effective teachers and outstanding leaders.



3. **Create demand for high-quality schools** by providing families with access to greater information about school options. Engage in robust, neighborhood-based, advocacy efforts. Provide NEO schools with cross-functional supports and enable them to take advantage of economies of scale.
4. **Monitor and evaluate performance.** Ensure partners are meeting commitments to the plan. Monitor progress towards the 30,000 seat goal and evaluate the effectiveness of each NEO organization and intervention.



The NEO plan will build upon lessons learned from other cities. New Orleans is incubating high-performing schools. Similarly, Chicago has brought together organizations to explore the elements necessary to improve the quality of schools. Building upon this research, the NEO plan introduces three bold innovations.

Holistic and systematic solution: process innovation

The NEO plan is a systematic process to simultaneously scale the four core elements that create high-quality seats commensurate to one another. Our plan has engaged partner organizations within each element to provide resources that when combined and launched together create 30,000 high-quality seats over 10 years. From this goal, we mapped out the number of schools that must be created or replicated, the number of highly effective teachers and leaders to fill these schools, and the targeted outreach for neighborhoods and families. The combination of these elements creates a standardized process for creating high-quality seats at the individual school level.

Backbone organization: internal structure innovation

Our coalition intends to formalize our governance structure by creating a backbone organization to implement NEO. This organization will be accountable to a diverse board aligned with the mission. It will employ minimal staff to support implementation over the ten year timeframe. Specific responsibilities will include convening the planning partners to make key decisions, raising and disbursing funds, reporting on grants, and managing outreach to additional community partners (e.g., neighborhood organizations, funders, and government entities). The backbone organization increases the likelihood of success and sustainability by ensuring there is an entity solely responsible for moving the work forward. This bold innovation, where a central entity monitors the activities of many organizations, sets our plan apart from other uncoordinated efforts to improve education. The coalition is still working to determine the specific structure, focus and home of this entity.

Diverse coalition operating with a shared vision: network innovation

Our local coalition is unique in that it consists of organizations with the capacity and will to work towards a common vision. Our coalition put individual ambitions aside to achieve larger, more ambitious collective goals. Each of these organizations plays a critical role within one of the core elements as described in the implement section. The coalition to date includes Eli Lilly Corporate Foundation, Goodwill, GreatSchools, Indiana Charter Schools Board, Indiana Public Charter Schools Association, Indiana University, Indianapolis Principal Fellowship, a member of the Indianapolis Public Schools Board, La Plaza, Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), Mayor's office, Notre Dame, School Choice Indiana, Stand For Children, Stanford University, Teach For America, The Mind Trust, The New Teacher Project, UNCF, Urban League and Woodrow Wilson Teaching Fellows. These organizations have contributed to the planning process and remain dedicated to implementation.

Conclusion

The NEO plans greatest strength lies not in one individual innovation, but in the combination of the backbone organization and a community-based coalition with the will and resources to launch a new systematic approach to creating high-quality seats

Post-Launch Implementation Timeline

NED Outcomes	Total Seats	Schools	Teachers	Leaders
	30,260	65	1,278	143

Assumptions: Total seats assumes 1,860 voucher seats and 1,000 seats for existing charter schools to scale to capacity.

Schools	SV2014	SV2015	SV2016	SV2017	SV2018	SV2019	SV2020	SV2021	SV2022	SV2023	Total
Elementary	3	2	3	3	3	2	2	2	1	0	21
Middle	2	2	1	2	1	2	1	3	2	0	16
High School	2	2	3	4	3	4	3	3	2	2	28
Subtotal	7	6	7	9	7	8	6	8	5	2	65

Assumptions: Building in feeder patterns from elementary to middle to high school; focus on high school seats

Leaders	SV2014	SV2015	SV2016	SV2017	SV2018	SV2019	SV2020	SV2021	SV2022	SV2023	Total
Elementary	7	4	7	7	7	4	4	4	2	0	46
Middle	4	4	2	4	2	4	2	7	4	0	33
High School	4	4	7	5	7	3	7	7	4	4	62
Subtotal	15	12	16	20	16	17	13	18	10	4	143

Assumptions: Two leader per school; Assume a 10% attrition rate.

Teachers	SV2014	SV2015	SV2016	SV2017	SV2018	SV2019	SV2020	SV2021	SV2022	SV2023	Total
Elementary	60	40	60	60	60	40	40	40	20	0	420
Middle	40	40	20	40	20	40	20	60	40	0	320
High School	38	36	56	77	38	77	54	56	38	38	536
Subtotal	138	116	136	177	118	157	118	158	98	38	1,278

Assumptions: Elementary and middle school enrollment is 500 with a target class size of 25; High school enrollment is 500 with a target class size of 26.

Teachers	SV2014	SV2015	SV2016	SV2017	SV2018	SV2019	SV2020	SV2021	SV2022	SV2023	Total
Program 1	32	44	32	65	70	78	65	80	56	38	601
Program 2	57	44	37	66	57	55	44	55	37	34	479
Program 3	15	13	15	19	15	17	13	17	13	4	141
Program 4	46	39	45	58	45	52	39	52	33	13	427
Subtotal	150	140	129	207	187	206	161	204	137	70	1,648

Seats	SV2014	SV2015	SV2016	SV2017	SV2018	SV2019	SV2020	SV2021	SV2022	SV2023	Total
Enrollment from Y1 Schools	1,400	2,100	2,800	2,800	2,800	2,800	2,800	2,800	2,800	2,800	2,800
Enrollment from Y2 Schools		1,200	1,800	2,400	2,400	2,400	2,400	2,400	2,400	2,400	2,400
Enrollment from Y3 Schools			1,400	2,100	2,800	2,800	2,800	2,800	2,800	2,800	2,800
Enrollment from Y4 Schools				1,800	2,700	3,600	3,600	3,600	3,600	3,600	3,600
Enrollment from Y5 Schools					1,400	2,100	2,800	2,800	2,800	2,800	2,800
Enrollment from Y6 Schools						1,600	2,400	3,200	3,200	3,200	3,200
Enrollment from Y7 Schools							1,200	1,800	2,400	2,400	2,400
Enrollment from Y8 Schools								1,500	2,400	3,200	3,200
Enrollment from Y9 Schools									1,200	1,800	1,800
Enrollment from Y10 Schools										400	400
Vouchers											3,860
Charters reaching capacity											1,000
Subtotal	1,400	3,300	6,000	9,100	12,100	15,300	18,000	21,000	23,600	25,400	30,260

Assumptions: Each school starts at 50% of total capacity at a minimum (depending if it is district or charter that could be higher) and scales up by 25% each year until it reaches full capacity; 80% of new seats created are high-quality.

Budget

The draft budget below outlines the overall cost to achieve our goal of creating 30,000 high-quality seats. This model varies widely depending on the number of schools that are incubated and replicated and the addition of new partners. The coalition will continue to refine and determine costs as the plan evolves. The Bloomberg grant would be used to continue planning efforts through the creation of a backbone organization. We will work to develop a comprehensive planning approach to raising the necessary resources to achieve our goals.

Backbone Organization	17/2014	17/2015	17/2016	17/2017	17/2018	17/2019	17/2020	18/2021	17/2022	17/2023	Total
Subtotal	\$275,000	\$270,000	\$195,000	\$180,000	\$195,000	\$195,000	\$195,000	\$200,000	\$205,000	\$210,000	\$1,680,000
Research Cost	\$2,214,000	\$2,215,000	\$1,920,000	\$1,920,000	\$1,920,000	\$1,920,000	\$1,920,000	\$1,920,000	\$1,920,000	\$1,920,000	\$17,880,000
Subtotal	\$2,489,000	\$4,285,100	\$3,947,985	\$3,983,824	\$3,985,000	\$3,477,520	\$2,899,360	\$2,246,896	\$1,845,000	\$364,470	\$30,829,855
Network Fee	\$1,201,400	\$1,201,400	\$1,201,400	\$1,201,400	\$1,201,400	\$1,201,400	\$1,201,400	\$1,201,400	\$1,201,400	\$1,201,400	\$12,014,000
Subtotal	\$3,201,400	\$4,133,158	\$5,210,885	\$6,140,394	\$5,882,407	\$6,224,875	\$5,184,084	\$6,238,540	\$4,747,516	\$1,577,329	\$50,487,545
Network Support	\$1,341,593	\$1,341,593	\$1,341,593	\$1,341,593	\$1,341,593	\$1,341,593	\$1,341,593	\$1,341,593	\$1,341,593	\$1,341,593	\$13,415,927
Subtotal	\$2,341,593	\$2,827,348	\$2,851,848	\$2,235,079	\$2,214,896	\$2,141,798	\$2,205,530	\$2,135,021	\$1,871,358	\$1,400,432	\$20,348,164
Network Staff	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$1,500,000
Subtotal	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$1,500,000
Total Budget	\$8,925,344	\$10,996,619	\$11,815,788	\$12,899,491	\$12,557,393	\$12,391,133	\$10,728,342	\$11,170,856	\$8,819,518	\$6,102,419	\$106,406,964



Impact of NEO on an Indianapolis citizen: Maria's story

Maria is a mother with two young children, a twelve year-old son, Andrew, and a nine-year old daughter, Liana. Maria has lived in Indianapolis her whole life and lives close to the neighborhood where she grew up. Five years ago, Andrew attended a failing school in her neighborhood because there wasn't another public option available and she couldn't afford to send him to a private school. Andrew was beginning to fall behind in reading and wasn't supported or challenged by his teachers. Maria worried that she would be forced to send Liana to the same school. She was considering moving out of her neighborhood in order to give her children a better future. She saw this happen time and again, her friends and neighbors with school-aged children moving to the suburbs to find better school options.

Not long after Maria contemplated leaving her home, a local coalition of neighborhood organizations announced they were going to greatly improve Indianapolis schools and a new charter school for middle school students was placed in her neighborhood. A local advocacy organization knocked on Maria's door to inform her about the new school and its focus on math and science. Andrew loved both subjects and after a visit where he met the teachers and leaders, Maria enrolled her son. Maria is continually impressed with the caliber and rigor of the teachers in each of Andrew's classes. In addition, the principal has opened up the school to parents and the community and charged teachers with holding high expectations for all children. Andrew is taking honors classes and is talking about becoming an engineer so he can build robots. In addition, the neighborhood school district applied for a replication grant and put a new classical school model focused on reading and writing into the old elementary school building. This is a perfect option for Liana. After attending tutoring with passionate teachers from the school, Liana is reading above grade level and participating in activities like book club and the school musical. Maria could not be more pleased with the schools her children are attending.

Now that her neighborhood has two great schools, Maria has noticed more families moving back into her neighborhood, leading to fewer empty houses and less vandalism and crime. With the increase in residents, the city added a bus stop not far from Maria's house and reinvested in the roads and the community center. These efforts are revitalizing the neighborhood and make Maria proud of where she lives.



Replication

There is no limit to how far our idea can spread. Our vision is that Indianapolis will serve as a national proof point for how to systematically and rapidly create high-performing schools.

Ideas Camp further confirmed the enormous need for solutions to improve education, not only for students, but also for the greater economic and social vitality of cities. Cities such as Denver, Detroit, Kansas City, Memphis, and Phoenix are already well-positioned to implement NEO by bringing existing organization together to simultaneously scale the core elements. Other cities will need to do more groundwork to make the plan successful. There are two main challenges cities will need to consider and plan for in the process.

The first challenge is identifying and attracting organizations that can provide the four core elements that create great schools. 1) There must be an organization to fund incubator grants for schools looking to start up or replicate and an organization or multiple organizations ensuring there is high-quality oversight of school performance. Any education nonprofit or foundation could be asked to fund incubation grants, and any school board or charter authorizer can play the oversight role. The caveat is that these organizations must be committed to accountability, which includes closing underperforming schools if they are not serving students well. 2) There must be talent pipeline organizations to fill the schools with outstanding leaders and effective teachers. Most large urban cities already have programs like Teach For America or other alternative certification programs, but the coalition would need to reach out and determine which additional partners they want to expand or engage in their city depending on the quality of the program. The key is to be objective and focus on the results of the organizations' leaders and teachers. 3) Communities need to engage their neighborhood and advocacy organizations to build demand and awareness. Typically, communities have these organizations in place, but cities will need to identify which organizations can support students and families and build demand. 4) Cities will want to partner with a research firm to monitor and evaluate performance. There are a multitude of institutions able to do this effectively.

The second challenge is to engage these partner organizations and to turn them into a strong, active, and relevant local coalition. Cities can overcome this challenge by identifying an entity to be an education champion and then, in concert with that entity, developing a separate backbone organization to engage, convene, and monitor the partnership. Cities could create a new nonprofit or utilize an existing nonprofit to provide these services. This backbone organization is critical because it serves as the central body that rallies the coalition, solicits their input into the plan, raises the funds to scale the organizations, and monitors implementation and performance.

Although some cities are already well-positioned to replicate the NEO plan, any city can create the conditions for success. Cities will need to successfully identify, recruit, and partner with organizations that have the capacity to scale the four core elements leading to high-quality schools. Once a city establishes the coalition and the governance structure, they will be well-situated to overcome challenges faced during implementation.

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Curriculum Vitae

Gayle S. Cosby

Education

Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis

Aug. 2015 - May 2022

Major: Urban Education Studies

Minor: Special Education

Ph.D.

Marian University

May 2007 - June 2009

Major: Education

Concentration: Special Education

Master of Arts

Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis

Aug. 1997 - May 2003

Majors: Sociology and Psychology

Bachelor of Arts

Awards

Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis

Aug. 2015 - May 2019

School of Education, Dean's Fellowship

Professional Experience

Ivy Tech Community College

Jan. 2020 - Present

Faculty Instructor, Education

Instructor for the following courses:

Children's Literature (Ivy Tech). Taught course that examines children's literature for the preschool child through adolescence. Students will also study the relationship to literacy development.

Multicultural Education (Ivy Tech). Led students in exploring social and cultural conditions, including the effects of race, exceptionality, gender, ethnic, socioeconomic and religious factors on learning. Facilitated confronting potential bias and provided instruction in culturally responsive teaching methods and strategies.

Introduction to Education (Ivy Tech). Facilitated instruction for a general introduction to the field of teaching. Students explore careers, teaching preparation, professional expectations, and requirements for teacher certification. Current trends and issues in education will be examined.

Scientific Inquiry (Ivy Tech). Provided the education major with background in the science process skills. Students will explore science through active participation and reflect on content, skills, and dispositions as a member of a learning community. Students will learn how to ask inquiry questions related to the natural world, plan investigations and formulate explanations.

Introduction to Physical and Health Education for Elementary

Teachers (Ivy Tech). Educated elementary teacher majors on knowledge and skills for planning and implementing health and physical education curriculum to promote physical fitness and healthy living for children Pre-K through 6th grade are covered in the course.

Child and Adolescent Development (Ivy Tech). Taught theories of child development, biological and environmental foundations of development, and the study of children through observation and interviewing techniques are explored.

Interim External Relations Support, Development Coordinator: Mar. 2020 -

Present

Office of Diversity, Equity & Belonging

Provides interim external relations support for the Office of Diversity, Equity & Belonging in coordination with the Chancellor's office and the Office of Development.

Responsibilities include:

- Lead coordinator for multiple community partnerships, and participant on several committees.
- Liaison for external training and development of external partners.
- Strategist for fundraising and donor program initiatives with a lens of diversity, equity & belonging.
- Appointed leader on the Diversity, Equity, Belonging and Inclusion Chancellor's Task Force.
- Developed and facilitated "Equity-Based Syllabus" for Academic Affairs Division.

Adjunct Instructor

Multicultural Education and Special Education

Coach, Student Teaching, Block IV

Instructor for the following courses:

- Diversity in Learning (Multicultural Education) in which pre-service teacher candidates are expected to critically reflect on culturally responsive teaching and learning in classroom teaching strategies that respond positively to the diverse cultures of their students.
- In Families, Schools, and Society (Special Education), students with theory, principles, and capacities for fostering collaborative partnerships among families, professionals, students, and other stakeholders that lead to mutual empowerment and positive outcomes for individuals with disabilities and their families. Further, the course explores theoretical and social foundations for how disability is defined across family and societal contexts, emancipatory interpretations of disability, and historical and legal foundations for the relationships between individuals with disabilities, their families, and schools.

Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis

Jan. 2017 - Dec. 2019

Graduate Assistant, Full Service Community Schools Grant

- Graduate Assistant to Dr. Monica Medina on the full service community schools grant. Assisted in collection and organization of data, as well as preparing manuscripts for publication. This is the largest community school effort in the state of Indiana, encompassing 5 public schools and a network of over 70 partnerships supporting those schools.

Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis

Aug. 2015 - Dec. 2016

Graduate Assistant, Great Lakes Equity Center

- Worked on several initiatives to educate the public on equity in civil rights including mailers, websites, and compiling data. Also, supported the center's direct work with regional school districts in rectifying civil rights violations, especially concerning dis/ability and racial issues.

Transitions Academy

Sep. 2014 - Aug. 2015

Special Education Teacher, Residential Facility (at-risk youth)

- Responsible for direct, self-contained instruction for a classroom of 10 students with Sexual Maladaptive Behavior, and a classroom of 10 students with Developmental Delays. As the sole Special Education instructor in this facility, I also served as a Compliance Monitor in handling all IEP preparation and case conferences, ensuring that the facility remains in compliance with Article 7 laws. I serviced all students with an IEP according to the outlined services and accommodations.

Edna Martin Christian Center

Apr. 2013 to Mar. 2020

Consulting, Curriculum and Director for Out of School Program

- Directed the Out of School Program for Edna Martin Christian Center (EMCC). Required the performance improvement planning and strategic initiative support. Redesigned EMCC Youth Programs through policy, practice, and programming development. Created a professional plan for employees.

Indianapolis Public Schools

May 2007 to June 2011

Special Education Teacher, variety of settings

- Taught special education students at the elementary school level in a variety of classroom settings and grade levels. Collaborated with staff in planning and curriculum design. Worked with students and their families to assist in meeting basic needs. Fostered positive communications and relationships among students, families, and the school. Led the Special Education team at one building and coordinated all service schedules. In addition, served on various Building Based Teams and Site-Based Decision-Making Committees. Designed culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy and practices to support diverse students and learning styles.

Teaching Experience

Children's Literature (Ivy Tech). A course that examines children's literature for the preschool child through adolescence. Students will also study the relationship to literacy development.

Multicultural Education (Ivy Tech). Led students in exploring social and cultural conditions, including the effects of race, exceptionality, gender, ethnic, socioeconomic and religious factors on learning. Facilitated confronting potential bias and provided instruction in culturally responsive teaching methods and strategies.

Introduction to Education (Ivy Tech). A general introduction to the field of teaching. Students explore careers, teaching preparation, professional expectations, and requirements for teacher certification. Current trends and issues in education will be examined.

Scientific Inquiry (Ivy Tech). Provides the education major with background in the science process skills. Students will explore science through active participation and reflect on content, skills, and dispositions as a member of a learning community. Students will learn how to ask inquiry questions related to the natural world, plan investigations and formulate explanations.

Introduction to Physical and Health Education for Elementary Teachers (Ivy Tech). Knowledge and skills for planning and implementing health and physical education curriculum to promote physical fitness and healthy living for children Pre-K through 6th grade are covered in the course.

Child and Adolescent Development (Ivy Tech). Basic theories of child development, biological and environmental foundations of development, and the study of children through observation and interviewing techniques are explored.

Diversity in Learning (IUPUI). Teacher candidates are introduced to content from the fields of multicultural education. In this course, candidates will examine concepts related to race through historical, social, and societal lens and perspectives. Candidates will be expected to critically reflect on culturally responsive teaching and learning in classroom teaching strategies that respond positively to the diverse cultures of their students.

Families, Schools, and Society (IUPUI). This course provides pre-service educators and educational practitioners with theory, principles, and capacities for fostering collaborative partnerships among families, professionals, students, and other stakeholders that lead to mutual empowerment and positive outcomes for individuals with disabilities and their families.

Student Teacher Coach (IUPUI). In Block IV (typically the last semester of enrollment) at the IUPUI School of Education, teacher candidates are embedded in a local classroom for their student teaching experience, and I served as the university coach for a group of aspiring teachers. This position involved the preparation and delivery of seminars, coaching related to curriculum and pedagogy, as well as informal observations and formal assessments of teaching.

Professional Presentations and Invited Seminars

2019 “Raising Critical Consciousness Through Autoethnography: Being a Pro-Public School Board Member in the Neoliberal Turn”. Social Justice in Education. Honolulu, Hawaii

2019 “When Education-Focused Neoliberalism Comes to One City, Indianapolis, Local Scholar-Activists Join the Community-Based Resistance”. American Educational Research Association (AERA). Toronto, Canada

2019 “Resistance Takes Many Forms: High School Students of Color Discuss Race”. International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry (ICQI). Champaign-Urbana, IL

2019 “Neoliberalism Fireside Chat”. International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry (ICQI). Champaign-Urbana, IL

2018 “The Role of Teachers in Full Service Community Schools”. American Educational Research Association (AERA). New York, NY

2017 “Digital Community Based Scholarly Activism: New Media Counternarratives”. Critical Race Studies in Education (CRSEA). Indianapolis, IN

2017 “Examples of Using Social Media for Radical Activist Research”. International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry (ICQI). Champaign-Urbana, IL

2017 “Blurring the Color Line: Autoethnographies from Three Racially Ambiguous Women”. International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry (ICQI). Champaign-Urbana, IL

2016 “Resisting State-Sanctioned Educational Genocide: Storytelling from those fighting free-market urban education reform”. Critical Race Studies in Education Association (CRSEA). Denver, CO

2016 “Do Black Lives Matter in Indianapolis Public Education Systems?”.
Discussion held at Kheprw Institute, Indianapolis, IN

2015 “Understanding Autonomy and Innovation Schools”. Discussion held at
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).
Indianapolis, IN

Publications

The Success of Full Service Community Schools in the US. Edited by Mavis G Sanders and Claudia L Galindo. (2020). Routledge.

Chapter 5: Community Engagement through Partnerships: lessons learned from a decade of Full-service Community School Implementation. Monica A. Medina, Gayle Cosby, and Jim Grim.

Professional Organizations

American Educational Research Association (AERA)	Jan 2015 - Dec 2019
Critical Race Studies in Education Association (CRSEA)	Jan 2016 - Dec 2019

Relevant Extracurricular Activities

Treasurer, Indianapolis Public Schools Community Coalition (IPSCC)

Mar. 2017 - Present

local chapter of the Alliance to Reclaim our Schools (AROS)

Member, Board of School Commissioners, Indianapolis Public Schools

Jan. 2012 - Dec. 2016

Vice President, 2014.

President, Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

Aug. 2017 - June 2019

Indianapolis Public School #56, Francis W. Parker Montessori.

Relevant Professional Activities

Future Teachers of Color. Based on the review of disparities in performance data within the Ivy Tech Education department and discussions with Education faculty, formed an affinity group to strive toward a more socially just and equitable college experience for Education majors at Ivy Tech.

Equity & Excellence Series: Pedagogy/Andragogy. A series of lectures and workshops presented by Ivy Tech – Central Indiana Office of Academic Affairs & Office of Diversity, Equity, and Belonging – Central Indiana, served both as a facilitator, host, and presenter for these important discussions (topic of presentation: Critical Andragogy & Education for Social Justice).

Workshop: Equity Syllabus Design. A data-centered workshop that aims to be standardized training curriculum for School of Arts, Sciences, and Education faculty. It focuses on practical applications for faculty in syllabus design, curriculum and instruction in an effort to reduce evident disparities in student achievement data based on socioeconomic factors.