

## First 'Innovation Fellows' Chosen to Help IPS Turnaround Efforts

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By Rachel Morello

How many educators does it take to help turn around low-performing public schools?

Indianapolis Public Schools hopes four: two IPS administrators, a local charter school entrepreneur and a former senior analyst with the U.S. Department of State. The district selected these educators for a fellowship program to help IPS design new models for three failing city schools.

IPS and The Mind Trust selected the winners from more than 60 entries in its [Innovative School Contest](#). The competition aims to solicit ideas for creating a new crop of charter-like schools in the IPS system, which has seen a growing number of students opt for charters over their local schools in recent years.

The Mind Trust announced Thursday those chosen as fellows:

- Lauren Franklin, a 15-year IPS educator who spent the last four years as principal of IPS' Francis W. Parker Montessori School, transforming the school from an F to an A in the state's letter-grading system. Franklin plans to launch a Montessori inspired school serving students in kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grades. It will be the second K-12 school in IPS and among only a handful of high schools in the country to include a Montessori model.
- Earl Martin Phalen and Marlon Llewellyn, who will work as a team to launch IPS' first "blended learning" school, combining technology with classroom instruction. The proposed K-6 school will be based on the same model as the George and Veronica Phalen Leadership Academy, a public charter school Phalen launched in 2013. In its first year, the Academy increased the percentage of students on track in math by six-fold and nearly doubled the percentage of students who are on track in reading.
- Heather Tsavaris, a former senior intelligence analyst with the U.S. Department of State, will use that experience to build on the theory that positive contributions can divert youth from participating in negative behaviors. Her school will create a learning environment centered on entrepreneurship to engage students, and help prevent behaviors such as dropping out of school.

As a team, Phalen and Llewellyn will receive a one-year fellowship and will launch their school in 2015. Franklin and Tsavaris each will receive two-year fellowships to give them the time needed to develop their new school models and will launch their schools in 2016.

The fellows begin work in July.

Earlier this year, the Indiana General Assembly passed [a law allowing the school system to operate Innovation Network Schools](#) to replace underused or chronically low-performing schools. The new schools will have significant autonomy, somewhat similar to charter schools, as well as access to district resources.

They will be part of the IPS system and have to meet specific standards set by Indiana Public Schools, but will be free to develop their own curriculum, hire their own staff and structure their school days free of many of the mandates on public schools.

Indianapolis Mayor Greg Ballard said the program will further cement Indianapolis' position as a national leader in education reform.

"The Innovation School Fellowship is another great tool to improve schools in our neighborhoods," Ballard said in a statement. "These innovative new school concepts, when implemented, will help prepare our children for future success in life and make Indianapolis an even more attractive place to live."

In an [editorial](#) published earlier this week, the Chicago Tribune praised the program, suggesting Chicago Public Schools consider following Indianapolis' lead.

The Mind Trust will operate the fellowship in partnership with the IPS Board of School Commissioners, IPS Superintendent Dr. Lewis D. Ferebee and the Indianapolis Mayor's Office. Lilly Endowment Inc. recently made a grant of \$1.5 million to support the initiative.

The Mind Trust plans to award up to nine fellowships over the next three years.

IPS currently charters 37 schools, up from 12 in the early 2000s. One of the state's largest school districts, IPS operates 60 schools and serves over 30,000 students.

<http://indianapublicmedia.org/stateimpact/2014/06/26/mind-trust-grants-awards-fellowships/>