



*December 3, 2015*

*The Mind Trust*

## **The Mind Trust awards first-ever grants to empower IPS schools to convert to Innovation Network Schools**

*Indianapolis* - The Mind Trust today announced that George H. Fisher Elementary School #93 and Cold Spring School would receive its inaugural Educator Empowerment Grants, which will provide \$50,000 to each school to develop plans for eventual conversion to Innovation Network Schools.

In Innovation Network Schools, building-level educators are given greater management flexibility than traditional schools and are empowered to make key decisions about their schools. Converting to this status gives these schools the freedom to innovate and continue the practices that made them successful. What's more, the schools stay within the Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) system, allowing the district to hold the schools accountable for their performance.

"IPS is proud to have so many strong school leaders like the two principals selected for these grants," said IPS Superintendent Dr. Lewis D. Ferebee. "We appreciate the additional resources these principals will have to develop innovative plans for the future of their schools. We look forward to partnering with school leadership teams as they design ways to elevate their service to IPS students and families in pursuit of Innovation School status."

"IPS envisions creating more schools within the district with the conditions for success, which includes giving educators the freedom and flexibility to innovate in the classroom and fully meet the specific needs of their scholars," said David Harris, The Mind Trust's founder & CEO. "This grant will give direct financial support to the district's vision and help improve the opportunities for the kids in these schools."

All IPS schools were invited to apply for the grant, and both winning schools were led by school leaders with a strong vision for their school's long-term success as potential Innovation Network Schools:

**George H. Fisher School 93.** This school adopted the Project RESTORE model, which was created by IPS teachers to help children attending persistently low-performing schools succeed. In the past decade, RESTORE has been one of the most successful efforts in IPS to increase student achievement. So far, it has transformed two underperforming schools (Anna Brochhausen School 83 and Arlington Woods School 99) from "F" to "A" schools, and increased ISTEP+ performance by 22%.

In partnership with Phalen Leadership Academies, the school leaders applied for the grant to ensure the RESTORE model is implemented with fidelity. One hundred percent of the school's staff voted to pursue Innovation status.

"Our school adopted the Project RESTORE model because it has raised academic achievement in multiple IPS schools and shows great promise for transforming George H. Fisher into a world-class

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school," said principal Nicole Fama. "This grant will help us earn true autonomy to continue this proven and innovative approach to education and better prepare our students for college, life and career."

**Cold Spring School.** An IPS environmental magnet program, the school has experienced tremendous academic success since 2011, including yearly increases in overall ISTEP+ performance. Cold Spring applied "in order to have freedom and flexibility on instructional blocks, length of school day, funding and assessment options." Like George H. Fisher, 100 percent of the school's staff voted to pursue Innovation status.

As an Innovation Network School, Cold Spring would allow more time for science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) and more time in the day to participate in STEM-based clubs and real life, job-shadowing opportunities. The school also would expand on its successful partnership with Marian University to offer even more opportunities to students and staff.

"Students at Cold Spring School have shown tremendous academic growth over the past several years," said principal Carrie Scott. "By converting to Innovation status, we would have the school-level autonomy we need to accelerate that progress. We look forward to working with Marian University, the district and The Mind Trust to expand on our school's success and meet the needs of all of our students."

"Marian University is excited about the opportunity to grow our already fruitful partnership with Cold Spring School and IPS," Daniel J. Elsener, Marian University president, said. "I'm especially excited about the opportunity for Marian University faculty, staff and students to provide educational support, tutoring and mentoring to the Cold Spring School students and to ensure that every student is prepared for post-secondary study, whether at Marian University or elsewhere."

In addition to funding, The Mind Trust will provide the schools with individualized support and access to local and national experts as they earn the right to convert their schools. Each grantee will present a final conversion plan to the IPS Board of School Commissioners in Spring 2016 for approval.

The Mind Trust, IPS and the City of Indianapolis have been working together for the past year to launch these new schools in IPS. This partnership resulted in the Innovation School Fellowship, which selects prospective school leaders to receive salary, benefits and technical assistance while they spend up to two years developing their school model. Five such schools, including PLA@103 - which was incubated by The Mind Trust - opened in IPS this year.

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