

EDUCATION WEEK

Three Fellowships Awarded to Create 'Innovation' Public Schools in Indianapolis

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An Indianapolis Public Schools veteran who turned around a failing school, a former U.S. State Department counter-terrorism analyst, and team of a businessman and school administrator were chosen this week as the first "Innovation School Fellows," who will get the opportunity to design and run their own Indianapolis public school.

The Innovation School Fellowship was launched under [Indiana's Public Law 1321](#), which was signed this year. It allows the Indianapolis Public Schools to partner with outside operators to run persistently low-performing schools or to share space with charter operators in underutilized buildings. The students who attend these schools will be counted as district public school students.

The school system decided to take advantage of the freedoms offered under the law by partnering with the [Mind Trust](#), an independent research and advocacy group, and the Office of Mayor Greg Ballard to launch the competition. Applications were solicited from near and far for the best ideas to improve the city's schools.

The new schools will have full autonomy and will be exempt from district regulations, including its collective bargaining agreement with the teachers' union.

Sixty-three applicants took up the challenge, proposing ideas as varied as single-gender schools, boarding schools, year-round schools, STEM-focused academies, flipped classroom models, and others that emphasized public citizenship, volunteerism, and community engagement.

Applicants came from all over, from Massachusetts, Georgia, even China, and their backgrounds were as varied: retired school superintendents, school founders, instructional coaches, environmental engineers, college professors, and a former newspaper editor.

[Education Week wrote about](#) the fellowship after the applicants submitted their proposals. And this week, the [Chicago Tribune](#) wrote an editorial on the program, suggesting that the City of Chicago take a page from Indianapolis' playbook.

In announcing the winners this week, IPS Superintendent Lewis D. Ferebee, a member of the selection committee, said they represented the very best in educational leadership.

"We're excited to see the winners begin their work and launch schools providing excellent educational opportunities for our students," Ferebee said.

Here are the winners:

Lauren Franklin, a 15-year-veteran of the Indianapolis school system, proposed launching a K-12 Montessori-style school, with wraparound services— such as counseling and healthy meals—and theater, drama, and arts. The new school will be among the few public high schools in the country to use the Montessori model. Franklin spent the last four years as the principal of the district's Francis W. Parker Montessori School, which she transformed from one that received an F on the state grading system to an A.

Heather Tsavaris proposed building a school modeled on her experience as a senior intelligence analyst with the state department, where she focused on youth engagement as an anti-terrorism strategy. The school will focus on entrepreneurship as a way to build student engagement, motivate critical thinking, and reduce dropouts.

Earl Martin Phalen and Marlon Llewellyn proposed the district's first "blended- learning" school that will combine cutting-edge technology with classroom instruction. It will be a neighborhood public school, but based on the successful model used at the George and Veronica Phalen Leadership Academy that Phalen launched in the city last year. As founder and CEO of George and Veronica Phalen Leadership Academies, Phalen runs a number of charter schools in the state. He also runs a summer academy for students.

Llewellyn is a long-time educator and the dean of scholars at Arlington High School, a state-controlled school in Indianapolis. He has worked in a number of public school systems, including in Indianapolis, and also at a training academy for principals.

The fellows will receive salary and benefits worth about \$129,000, and, beginning in July, will spend the next year or two at the Mind Trust "incubating" their designs and learning about school operations and finance.

Phalen, who will not take a stipend during the fellowship, and Llewellyn hope to launch their school in 2015. Franklin and Tsavaris received two-year fellowships and will open their schools in 2016.

The final decision on whether the fellows get to run the schools will be made by the Indianapolis Public Schools' Board of Commissioners.

The Mind Trust hopes to award up to nine such fellowships over the next three years. In addition to the Mind Trust resources, the Lilly Endowment, Inc. recently awarded the group \$1.5 million to help fund the initiative.

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/District_Dossier/2014/06/three_fellows_chosen_to_create.html?cmp=SOC-SHR-TW