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IPS votes to allow educators to convert two schools into Innovation Network Schools

INDIANAPOLIS – The Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) Board of Commissioners tonight voted to convert two schools – **George H. Fisher Elementary School 93** and **Cold Spring School** – into “Innovation Network Schools,” which will give them the freedom and flexibility to expand the innovative practices and programs already in place at both schools.

Innovation Network Schools are public schools made possible by recent state laws allowing school districts to convert existing district schools into new, autonomous schools exempt from most district and state practices and regulations. In exchange for this autonomy, the schools are held to the highest academic standards. While autonomous in daily operations, they remain as district schools, approved and held accountable by district school boards.

Although many Innovation Schools will replace struggling IPS schools, a handful of schools with strong leaders, strong visions and successful track records also are eligible to convert into Innovation Schools. The Mind Trust awarded each school a \$50,000 grant and worked closely with each to develop their conversion plans:

- * **George H. Fisher.** This school adopted the Project RESTORE model in 2015, which was created by IPS teachers to help children attending persistently low-performing schools succeed. Under the model, students receive daily effort and behavior grades, and weekly progress reports are sent home and signed by parents. The model also rewards positive behaviors and provides logical consequences for students who misbehave.

Project RESTORE has been one of the most successful efforts in IPS to improve student achievement, and 100% of Fisher’s staff expressed support for the new Innovation status to ensure the long-term viability of the model at the school.

- * **Cold Spring School.** An IPS environmental magnet program, the school has experienced tremendous academic success since 2011, including yearly increases in overall ISTEP+ performance. Like Fisher, an overwhelming majority of the school staff supported the change in order to have freedom and flexibility on instructional blocks, length of school day, funding and assessment options.

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

As new Innovation Schools, both will continue to serve the same group of students it serves today.

“This is an exciting opportunity to respond to the needs of our families. We have consistently heard from George H. Fisher families that Project RESTORE is the best option for their children. The level of parent advocacy has been both impactful and inspiring,” said Dr. Lewis D. Ferebee, IPS Superintendent. “Cold Spring, one of our choice schools, offers a specialized curriculum that is yielding results. We must continue to provide innovative school improvement solutions and allow our talented educators the flexibility they need to increase student achievement.”

IPS is the first district in the state to create new Innovation Schools, and The Mind Trust, IPS and the Mayor's Office formed a partnership in 2014 to launch these new schools in the district. These new Innovation Schools join several others that are open or are in development in IPS:

- There are currently five Innovation Schools open in IPS, including the far eastside's PLA@103, which was incubated by The Mind Trust and saw a 20% increase in its first year enrollment.
- Two more Innovation Schools incubated by The Mind Trust will open this fall. Kindezi Academy will open in Joyce Kilmer Elementary School 69 on the near northside, and Global Prep Academy, will open in Riverside Elementary School 44 on the city's near northwestside.
- Two fellows with The Mind Trust currently are designing two Innovation Schools for launch in 2017.
- Earlier this, week, The Mind Trust, IPS and the Mayor's Office announced five new Innovation School Fellowships, which will result in five new schools in 2017 and 2018.

"Making high quality schools available to every family in Indianapolis is one of my administration's top priorities," said Indianapolis Mayor Joe Hogsett. "The new IPS Innovation Schools are a way to better serve the children of our community and offer the sort of creative educational opportunities every family deserves."

"The Mind Trust is pleased to support these two new schools because of the strong vision of its school leaders and teachers and their demonstrated ability to excel under challenging circumstances," said David Harris, founder & CEO of The Mind Trust. "These talented educators are to be applauded for their passion and their willingness to continue bringing innovative ideas into each classroom to better serve their scholars."