



Indiana Charter School Board 2012 – 2013 Annual Report



For more information, please visit the
Indiana Charter School Board website:
<http://www.in.gov/icsb>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In an effort to develop high-quality charter authorizing policies and practices that will result in the growth of high-performing charter schools throughout Indiana, the ICSB has benchmarked with national authorizers and partnered with a diverse array of national and local organizations. We are indebted to each of these organizations for their significant partnership.

We are particularly grateful to The Fund for Authorizing Excellence and the Walton Family Foundation for supporting our start-up, strategic planning, and implementation. We would also like to express our sincere thanks to the National Association of Charter School Authorizers for serving as a source of strong, consistent guidance on best practices in charter authorizing, and to SUNY's Charter Schools Institute; Molly McGraw Healy at the University of St. Thomas (formerly with VOA Minnesota); education consultants Shari Berland, Michael Buerger, Jim Ford, and Matt Shaw; and Jeanne Nowaczewski with the Illinois State Charter Commission, for sharing their significant experience and expertise with us, and for modeling a firm focus on quality in charter school authorizing.

At the local level, we would like to thank the Indianapolis Mayor's Office and Ball State University for their ongoing assistance and partnership. We would also like to thank our leading partners including the Indiana Department of Education, the Center for Education and Career Innovation, The Mind Trust, and Teach for America.

Finally, we would like to express our deep appreciation to Public Impact for their work on this report and case studies of *Carpe Diem-Meridian* and *Phalen Leadership Academy*, and for their advice and thought partnership in strategic planning, and in developing and executing our implementation plan.

Information for this report was drawn from Indiana Charter School Board documents, schools authorized by the ICSB and their charter applications, and state-reported results.

For more information, please visit the Indiana Charter School Board website: <http://www.in.gov/icsb>



Thurgood Marshall
Leadership Academy

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MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

Since its creation by the Indiana General Assembly in 2011, the Indiana Charter School Board (ICSB) has focused with singular purpose on supporting the responsible growth of high-quality public charter schools in Indiana. We studied some of the best charter school authorizers around the country to learn how to design and implement quality, sustainable charter school authorizing practices. We also used a facilitated strategic planning process to develop a mission, goals, and objectives all focused on quality.

One of the consistent themes that emerged during strategic planning discussions was the desire to foster the launch of innovative school models that deliver outstanding academic outcomes. We have designed our resource materials to encourage new applicants to think differently about designing the school day, and to better use teacher time and talent. Other focus areas included the critical importance of an outcomes-based accountability system that respects the autonomy of school operators but enables us to ensure that student outcomes reflect our high standards.

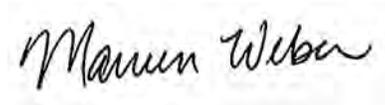
We have made tremendous progress in a short time. All of our application and accountability processes have been developed, and these are nationally recognized as rigorous and well thought-through. We have conducted five charter application cycles, leading to a total of 41 complete applications submitted, and have launched our sixth cycle. We have held 25 public hearings in 13 locations around the state. With a portfolio of eight schools, and three more scheduled to launch in 2014, we have taken positive steps toward serving the varied needs of students across the K–12 continuum.

However, our board members recognize the great challenge of starting a new school and ensuring that it operates with excellence academically, operationally, and financially. Starting any new organization is challenging and time-consuming, yet ultimately a rewarding experience. Despite a rigorous application screening process and careful monitoring during the pre-opening period, not every school approved to open has succeeded in opening its doors to stu-

dents. Hurdles, such as financing and facilities, continue to create barriers. We appreciate all who have submitted their applications to us, who share our belief in high-quality education options for students, even if they have not succeeded in opening a school or obtaining a charter.

Looking ahead in 2014, we remain committed to our mission to authorize and hold accountable a portfolio of high-performing charter schools in which students achieve high levels of growth and graduate prepared for college and careers. We feel particularly excited about some of the innovative schools within our portfolio and their promising early results. For example, Carpe Diem, a pioneer in blended learning, reported an average of three years of growth for students enrolled in its first year; in its second year, enrollment has doubled, so we are looking forward to great results for even more students. In addition, Goodwill Education Initiatives' Excel Center adult high school now operates nine locations in Central Indiana, four of which are outside of Indianapolis and authorized by the ICSB. These schools provide a second chance to students who previously dropped out, allowing them the opportunity to gain a valuable high school diploma as well as to earn technical certifications.

Thank you for your interest in the Indiana Charter School Board. For more information, please visit our website: www.in.gov/icsb. We welcome your suggestions and feedback, and invite you to contact the ICSB staff with any questions.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maureen Weber". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Maureen Weber, Chair, Indiana Charter School Board



Carpe Diem-Meridian

INDIANA CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD BACKGROUND

History

The National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) recommends the establishment of statewide independent chartering boards (ICBs) as a key facet of creating the conditions under which strong charter sectors can develop. ICBs can be established as bipartisan entities, without many of the conflicts of interest common to other types of authorizers.

In line with NACSA's advice, the Indiana General Assembly created the independent, bipartisan Indiana Charter School Board (ICSB) in 2011. The express purpose of the ICSB was to authorize charter schools throughout Indiana, but state leaders had in mind a more specific aim. Faced with an acute need for more high-performing K–12 public schools, Governor Mitch Daniels, Indiana Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Bennett, and legislative leaders saw the ICSB as a way to expand *high-quality* charter schools throughout the state. Through its concentration on quality, the ICSB intends to help Indiana charter school students receive a rigorous education that prepares them for college and careers.

“Statewide, independent authorizers like the Indiana Charter School Board are crucial to the success of high-quality state charter systems,” says Greg Richmond, NACSA’s president and CEO.

Legislation creating the ICSB took effect on July 1, 2011. ICSB staff started work immediately, conducting extensive research on best practices in charter school authorizing. They were guided by NACSA advice and resources, which in turn connected the ICSB with authorizers and charter school experts across the country. The ICSB, adapting some of the practices of carefully vetted authorizers and experts, created systems and processes associ-

“Statewide, independent authorizers like the Indiana Charter School Board are crucial to the success of high-quality state charter systems.”

—Greg Richmond,
President & CEO, National
Association of Charter
School Authorizers

ated with proven quality authorizing. Over the summer, staff members also met with legislative leaders, community members, leaders of high-performing charter schools, and experts to understand key issues facing charter schools in Indiana. Thus the staff could bring the founding board members up to speed immediately after they were appointed in September 2011.

With their mandate to expand high-quality educational options for Indiana students, ICSB board members and staff set out to authorize at least one high-quality charter school ready to serve students by fall 2012. To that end, the ICSB launched its first application cycle at the end of September 2011 to allow sufficient time for a comprehensive application evaluation process and charter school start-up activities for successful applicants.

Through that cycle and a second application cycle completed in May 2012, the board awarded charters to nine operators out of 28 applicants—an approval rate of one out of three. Three schools—Carpe Diem-Meridian, Excel Center-Anderson, and Thurgood Marshall Leadership Academy—opened their doors in the fall of 2012.

Early in the development of its organizational philosophy, the ICSB decided to prioritize awarding charters to strong boards of directors—those with the expertise and capacity to oversee the successful start-up and ongoing operations of new schools.

Four applicants have been awarded multiple charters, including highly regarded national blended learning charter networks Carpe Diem and Rocketship Education. For successful non-profit boards of directors with proven track records, the ICSB aims to eliminate barriers and allow them to serve more students by awarding multiple charters, subject to the requirement that the organizer show success before opening more schools. Holding multiple charters may help recipients secure top talent, facilities, and philanthropic investment. For all charter recipients, even those awarded multiple charters, the ICSB may close any individual school that fails to meet performance standards or adhere to charter terms, and the ICSB must grant permission for each subsequent school to open. Furthermore, recipients of multiple charters must stagger school openings over an extended period, enabling the ICSB to ensure that a charter recipient's existing schools are meeting high expectations before moving ahead with the opening of additional schools.

The ICSB's early months focused on first steps toward expanding the number of quality educational options for Indiana students. The ICSB also developed a deep understanding, early on, of the important role that authorizers play in ensuring quality: Holding schools accountable while recognizing and respecting their autonomy is central to the success of schools and the ICSB. This drove the ICSB to work soon after its creation to create a strong accountability plan in fall 2011—a comprehensive accountability system that the board adopted in January 2012. This system included a charter agreement, a performance framework, a “prior action checklist” for new charter schools, and a process for overseeing charter school performance during the five-year charter term. This system has allowed the ICSB from the beginning to subject each

authorized school to transparent and outcomes-oriented accountability with an annual performance assessment.

In its initial push to fulfill its 2011 mandates, the ICSB received generous support from the Walton Family Foundation, which supported start-up activities related to charter school application evaluations, and from a strategic planning grant through The Fund for Authorizing Excellence, administered by NACSA. After the ICSB met these early mandates, it continued striving toward excellence in authorizing. With the additional generous support of a 2012–13 implementation grant from The Fund for Authorizing Excellence, the ICSB has designed and implemented tools designed to foster innovative school models; revised and finalized the ICSB Accountability System processes and procedures; and created an alternative accountability plan for adult high schools serving a dropout student population. These grants recognize the ICSB’s commitment to quality authorizing in its vision, mission, and guiding principles, and its early implementation efforts.

Since its creation, the ICSB has approved 14 organizers to open charter schools throughout the state, including four who were awarded multiple charters. Three schools opened in 2012–13; five began serving students in 2013–14. Details about these schools and others that the ICSB has authorized can be found in “Authorized Schools Reports,” beginning on page 21. Additional information about the three schools that opened in 2012–13 can be found in “School Performance,” beginning on page 19.

Landscape Overview

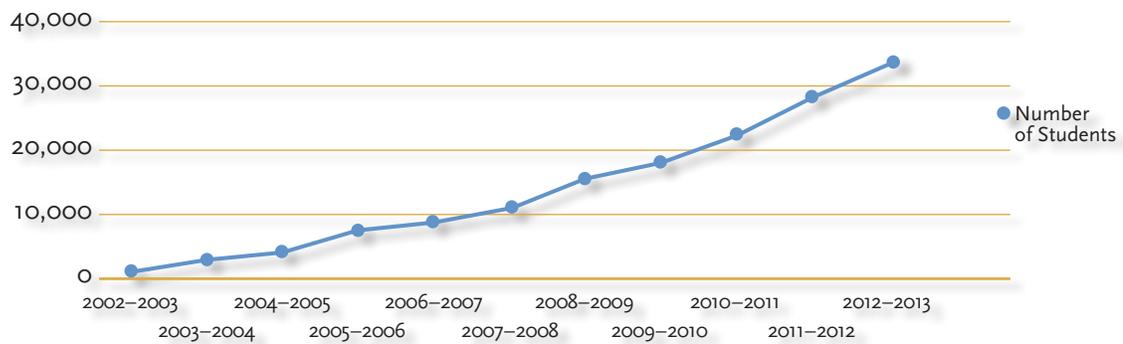
Charter schools are schools that are open to the public, may not charge tuition, and may not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, disability, or academic ability. In Indiana, charter schools receive basic tuition support from the state, but do not receive local property tax dollars for facilities or transportation. To offset this funding difference, charter schools must typically raise supplemental funds from federal and private sources during the initial start-up phase (e.g., to secure a facility) and to fund ongoing operations. The per-pupil amount for charter schools is calculated as it is for all public schools in Indiana, and is based upon the student census on the semiannual “count days” that take place each September and February.

In May 2001, Indiana became the 37th state to enact charter schools legislation. The original law allowed the following to authorize charter schools: governing bodies of school corporations, state educational institutions that provide a four-year baccalaureate degree, and the executive of a consolidated city (i.e., the mayor of Indianapolis). For 10 years, the state’s primary authorizers were Ball State University and the Indianapolis mayor. In addition, four school corporations have served as authorizers (Carmel Clay Schools, Daleville Community Schools, Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation, and Lafayette School Corporation). With the 2011 passage of House Enrolled Act 1002, the ICSB became an additional statewide authorizer. In addition,

nonprofit colleges or universities that provide a four-year degree program may now choose to serve as statewide authorizers. Indiana now has nine active authorizers: Ball State University, Calumet College of St. Joseph, Daleville Community Schools, Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation, Grace College, Indiana Charter School Board, Indianapolis Mayor’s Office, Lafayette School Corporation, and Trine University.

Indiana’s first charter schools were authorized in 2001–02 and began serving students in 2002, with 12 charter schools operating in 2002–03. That grew to 40 by 2007–08, and 62 in 2010–11. As of the 2013–14 school year, Indiana had 75 charter schools, including 37 in Indianapolis, six in Gary, and three in Fort Wayne. Other locations include: Anderson, Bloomington, Carmel, East Chicago, Evansville, Kokomo, Lafayette, Marion, Muncie, New Albany, Porter, Richmond, Schererville, and South Bend. During the 2012–13 school year, Indiana’s public schools served more than 1 million K–12 students, with charter schools serving 3 percent of them, or more than 30,000 students.

Indiana Charter School Enrollment, 2002–03 to 2012–13



Board Members

The ICSB has a bipartisan, seven-member board. The governor appoints two members, who may not be from the same political party. The state superintendent of public instruction appoints one member who has previous experience working with or on behalf of charter schools. The Senate president pro tempore and minority leader and the House of Representatives speaker and minority leader each appoint one member. These final four appointees may not be legislators.

Board members are appointed to serve four-year terms. They are ultimately responsible for the ICSB’s authorizing activities, including decisions to grant, renew, or revoke charters.

The board was fully appointed in September 2011, and chaired initially by Todd Huston. Other past and current board members include individuals with deep experience in charter school authorizing, education policy, education reform, K–12 district leadership, law, finance, and executive management.

MAUREEN WEBER, CHAIR

Ms. Weber oversees the development and implementation of solutions to create a consistent, best-in-class customer experience for patients at IU Health, Indiana’s most comprehensive healthcare system. She previously served as the chief operating officer for the Indiana Department of Education. Ms. Weber has held additional public offices as the deputy commissioner for the Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles and deputy commissioner for the Indiana Department of Workforce Development. Prior to her work in the public sector, she was an associate at Barnes & Thornburg, LLP. Ms. Weber formerly served on the Charter School Advisory Board to the Indianapolis Mayor’s Office of Charter Schools. Ms. Weber was appointed to the ICSB by Tony Bennett, the former superintendent of public instruction.



VIRGINIA CALVIN, ED.D.

Dr. Virginia Calvin has served the community as an educator and community leader for more than 30 years. In 1993, she was named superintendent of the South Bend Community School Corporation—the first woman and the first African-American to hold that position. Dr. Calvin moved the corporation out of a deficit, initiated programs for at-risk students, and increased school campus security. In 2000, Dr. Calvin became chancellor of Ivy Tech Community College-North Central, which has campuses in South Bend, Elkhart, and Warsaw. As chancellor, she helped expand the college’s mission from a career/technical institution to a full-service community college. Her region was the first to offer an associate of arts degree, which benefited students who wanted to complete the first two years of a bachelor’s degree at Ivy Tech and then transfer to a four-year institution. She was appointed to the ICSB by Representative B. Patrick Bauer.



LAWRENCE DEMOSS

A graduate of Hamilton Heights High School and Indiana University, Mr. DeMoss has been teaching English at Edgewood High School for more than 25 years. He has been actively involved in school improvement and served on the Richland-Bean Blossom Community School Corporation’s Strategic Planning Team in the early 1990s. He is interested in improving students’ engagement in their own education, especially through involvement with the school community. Mr. DeMoss was named Monroe County Educator of the Year in 2004, and competed in the first *Jeopardy!* Teachers Tournament, where he made the finals. He was appointed to the ICSB by former Senator Vi Simpson.





JAMIE GARWOOD

Ms. Garwood previously managed the Fort Wayne Urban League's efforts to close income and education gaps, and she was responsible for staff training, fund development, community relations, and program development. She served before that as the director of education initiatives for United Way of Allen County, where she launched a community effort to close the third-grade reading gap and the "Real Men Read" project. Her primary duties included community education and advocacy as well as evaluating education and poverty data. She has taught sociology and early childhood education as an adjunct faculty member at several universities and colleges. Ms. Garwood was recently hired as a data coach for Timothy L. Johnson Academy, a charter school authorized by Trine University. She serves on several boards and committees, including the 21st Century Scholars State Advisory Board, and chairs the Allen County College Success Coalition. She was appointed to the ICSB by Senate President Pro Tempore David Long.



DAVID KOGAN

Mr. Kogan is the chief operating officer at Heartland Food Products Group. He previously served as the director of business development at Belden, Inc., where he managed mergers and acquisitions and strategic planning. He has also been responsible for the general management of several companies, including Home Products International, Oscar Winski, CMW Inc., and ASAP Automation. Due to his expertise in finance, operations, and business development, he has also overseen the successful turnaround of many of these companies. Recently, Mr. Kogan served as board member and chair of the finance committee for KIPP Indianapolis College Preparatory, a charter school authorized by the mayor of Indianapolis. He began his career as an Arvin Scholar at Arvin Industries, and holds an MBA from Harvard Business School. He was appointed to the ICSB by Governor Mitch Daniels.



M. KAREGA RAUSCH

Mr. Rausch is a research associate at the Equity Project at Indiana University in the Center for Evaluation & Education Policy. He previously oversaw Indianapolis operations at Stand for Children. He served as the education director on the senior staff of Indianapolis mayors Bart Peterson and Greg Ballard, responsible for executing each mayor's education initiatives, particularly the development, oversight, quality expansion, and enhancement of the mayor-sponsored charter schools initiative. Mr. Rausch, who serves on many national and local boards, has authored or co-authored more than 20 professional publications on special education and school discipline systems reform, and was a high school social studies teacher. He was appointed to the ICSB by House Speaker Brian Bosma.

WILLIAM (BILL) SHREWSBERRY

Mr. Shrewsberry is president and CEO of the engineering and environmental consulting firm Shrewsberry & Associates. He previously held several public positions, including deputy mayor of Indianapolis, executive director of the White River State Park, commissioner of the Indiana Department of Administration, and executive assistant to the governor. In the private sector, he had 27 years of management experience at Indiana Bell/Ameritech. His current service to the community includes Hanover College Board of Trustees, Methodist Health Foundation, and the board of The Mind Trust. He also previously served on the mayor's Charter School Advisory Council. Mr. Shrewsberry graduated from Indiana University and received his M.S. in business management from Indiana Wesleyan University. He was appointed to the ICSB by Governor Mitch Daniels.



Staff

EMILY RICHARDSON

Emily Richardson serves as the ICSB's interim executive director and director of legal affairs and policy. Ms. Richardson facilitates compliance of the ICSB with all relevant federal, state, and local laws and regulations. She also advises the ICSB on any new laws and regulations that pertain to charter authorizing and charter schools. Ms. Richardson plays a lead role during the charter school application cycle and in holding ICSB-authorized schools accountable for their performance. She is also the ICSB's liaison to the Indiana Authorizers Alliance. Ms. Richardson previously served as assistant director for the Office of School Improvement and Turnaround for the Indiana Department of Education. Earlier in her career, she was a second-grade teacher in Lambert, Mississippi, as a Teach for America corps member and alumna. Ms. Richardson holds a B.A., magna cum laude, from Hamilton College, a J.D. from Indiana University Bloomington, and is a Ph.D. candidate (May 2014) at Indiana University Bloomington in education policy studies.

SARAH SULLIVAN

Sarah Sullivan has served as the ICSB's manager since August 2011, responsible for implementing and improving the ICSB's application processes, and overseeing communications through the web and social media. Specific areas of responsibility include: overseeing the charter school application evaluation process, designing communications materials related to the ICSB application process, conducting information sessions and webinars for interested charter school applicants, supporting newly authorized schools during the pre-opening period, and maintaining the ICSB website. Ms. Sullivan serves as the point of contact for ICSB charter school applicants and third-party application evaluators who have questions about ICSB applications. Ms. Sullivan previously was an account manager at VSA Partners, a Chicago graphic design and strategic branding agency. She graduated with a degree in communication from DePauw University.

Past/Founding Board Members and Staff

TODD HUSTON

Todd Huston served as the ICSB's founding board chair, and is now the Indiana state representative for House District 37. Rep. Huston is an education consultant for Cisco Systems, where he assists K–12 schools, colleges, and universities in transforming their operations and educational experience through the cost-effective use of technology. He served as the chief of staff at the Indiana Department of Education under Superintendent of Public Instruction Dr. Tony Bennett. Governor Mitch Daniels twice called on Rep. Huston to serve the state, first with a four-year term as a member of the Indiana State Board of Education, and from 2006 to 2009 as a member of the Indiana Education Roundtable.

SCOTT JENKINS

Scott Jenkins, the director of external relations for Western Governors University, was a founding member of the board. He previously served as the senior education policy director for Governor Mitch Daniels, directing the governor's education agenda with the Indiana Department of Education, the Commission for Higher Education, the State Student Assistance Commission, and the Department of Workforce Development. He was instrumental in creating WGU Indiana under the leadership of Governor Daniels. Mr. Jenkins has worked for more than 15 years for both the state and federal government, culminating his public sector work as a deputy assistant secretary at the U.S. Department of Education. In his varied career in public service, he has worked for both the Florida and Michigan departments of education and legislatures. He was appointed to the ICSB by Governor Mitch Daniels.

CLAIRE FIDDIAN-GREEN

Claire Fiddian-Green served as the ICSB's founding executive director. She was responsible for the overall planning, coordination, and supervision of the ICSB's operations, including its process for authorizing new charter schools, monitoring authorized schools, and holding these schools accountable for performance. She previously served as president of The Mind Trust and grants officer for the Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation. Before that, Ms. Fiddian-Green was a senior analyst in Eli Lilly and Company's corporate finance investment banking group, where she focused on licensing and mergers and acquisitions. In 2013, she was chosen for NACSA's highly selective and rigorous Leaders Program. In 2009, she was one of 25 emerging young leaders selected to participate in the Stanley K. Lacy Executive Leadership Series, a highly competitive yearlong program, which aims to expand the ranks of community leadership by providing class members with the knowledge and incentive to confront the needs of central Indiana. Ms. Fiddian-Green holds a B.A. from Brown University in political science (with honors) and Russian studies, and an M.B.A. from Columbia University with a concentration in finance.

Vision and Mission

The ICSB has established the following vision, mission and guiding principles to direct its activities:

Vision

The ICSB's vision is that students throughout Indiana have access to high-performing public schools.

Mission

The ICSB's mission is to authorize and hold accountable a portfolio of high-performing charter schools in which students achieve high levels of growth and graduate prepared for college and careers.

Guiding Principles

- **Students First.** When performing its duties, the ICSB always assesses whether its actions will further the best interests of students.
- **High Expectations.** The ICSB expects the charter schools it authorizes to set high academic achievement expectations, develop strong plans for family and community engagement, and adhere to high ethical standards for students, staff and board members. Similarly, the ICSB establishes high performance expectations, engagement plans and ethical standards for itself.
- **Excellence in Leadership.** Operating a high-performing charter school requires excellent leadership from school boards and staff. The ICSB authorizes schools that can demonstrate strong leadership at both the school governance and administrative levels.
- **Commitment to Innovation.** The ICSB is particularly interested in operators that show strong potential to accelerate student success through dramatically different school models, instructional strategies, uses of technology, staffing models, governance arrangements, family and community engagement strategies, and other approaches.
- **Rigorous and Transparent Accountability.** The ICSB holds schools accountable for performance through rigorous and transparent accountability mechanisms that uphold schools' autonomy, foster excellence, and protect student and public interests. In turn, the ICSB is held to a high performance bar by the State Board of Education.

In June 2012, the ICSB adopted a five-year strategic plan, affirming its commitment to this vision, mission, and guiding principles, and expanding on them to set its long-range course. To read the plan, please visit the ICSB's website: <http://www.in.gov/icsb>.

HIGHLIGHTED ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS, 2012–2013

Commitment to Quality Authorizing

NACSA recommends the creation of statewide independent chartering boards such as the ICSB, in part because they provide “the expertise, scale, and capacity important to quality authorizing.”¹ NACSA also points out that other types of authorizers—including districts, universities, nonprofit organizations, and state education agencies—serve a variety of functions,

and may have conflicts of interest that prevent them from adequately performing their authorizing roles.

The ICSB adheres closely to the foundational authorizing practices embodied in NACSA’s *Index of Essential Practices*, but also aims higher. Guidance for authorizers aspiring to excellence—those that set high performance expectations for the schools they authorize—can be found in NACSA’s *Principles & Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing*. The three principles and five standards influenced the ICSB in crafting its long-range strategy and are evident in the organization’s vision, mission, and guiding principles, and throughout the ICSB’s strategic plan.

NACSA’s Principles & Standards

Principles

1. Maintain high standards for schools
2. Uphold school autonomy
3. Protect student and public interests

Standards

1. Agency commitment and capacity
2. Application process and decision making
3. Performance contracting
4. Ongoing oversight and evaluation
5. Revocation and renewal decision making

Source: http://www.qualitycharters.org/assets/files/images/stories/publications/Principles.Standards.2012_pub.pdf

1. National Association of Charter School Authorizers. (n.d.) *Creating independent chartering boards*. Chicago, IL: Author. Retrieved from http://www.qualitycharters.org/assets/images/Policy_Brief_Independent_Chartering_Boards_FNL.pdf

A set of conditions recognized as leading to charter school success has also guided the ICSB in developing its authorizing procedures, including:

- School leaders are able to establish clear, focused missions;
- School leaders have the authority to build teams of capable, committed educators and decide how to use time and other resources;
- Parents and families have true choice among high-quality alternatives that meet their children’s needs;
- Schools are held to rigorous academic, financial, and operational accountability standards.²

In seeking to foster the creation of these conditions in its schools and the communities within which they operate, the ICSB strives to achieve an appropriate mix of school-level freedom and strong accountability.

The grants the ICSB received in 2011 and 2012 both recognized the ICSB’s commitment to quality authorizing and supported its continued development of policies, processes, and tools that have enhanced this commitment. The ICSB has contributed to discussions about quality authorizing among Indiana authorizers and in national venues, seeking both to learn from others’ experiences and to share its own lessons learned.

Fostering Innovation

Board members’ strong interest in innovation surfaced during the ICSB’s strategic planning process, during which discussions often turned to strategies to encourage promising innovations in the ICSB’s authorized schools. This strong focus led to a “Commitment to Innovation” as one of the ICSB’s five Guiding Principles (page 11).

The 2012–13 implementation grant from The Fund for Authorizing Excellence enabled the ICSB to bring its strategic plan to life by designing a thoughtful approach to fostering innovation. To accomplish the goals of the strategic plan, the ICSB needed to become a leading authorizer of truly innovative models. The ICSB worked with leading national education policy and management consulting firm Public Impact to design an innovation-focused section of its request for proposals (RFP). The RFP allowed the ICSB to use the application process to encourage the development of innovative school models that reach all students, including those in rural communities, and provide increased access to excellent teaching and rigorous and challenging academic programs. Ultimately, the RFP process was designed to help ensure that a portion of Indiana’s new charter schools function as laboratories that incubate new school models designed to dramatically improve academic outcomes. Other parts of the state and nation can then replicate successful models.

2. The Mind Trust. (2011). *Creating opportunity schools: A bold plan to transform Indianapolis Public Schools*. Indianapolis, IN: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.themindtrust.org/files/file/opportunity-schools-executive-summary-mediaresourcesmediakits.pdf>

The innovation-focused section of the RFP expressed the ICSB’s “particular interest” in “applicants that propose school models with strong potential to accelerate student success through dramatically different school designs, instructional strategies, uses of technology, staffing models, governance arrangements, family and community engagement strategies, and other approaches.” This section of the RFP was not required, and applicants were not at a disadvantage if they bypassed it. However, it gave applicants additional space and a structure in which to explain innovative aspects of their models.

The innovation section asked applicants to summarize the innovations embodied in their school designs and/or implementation plans, and to describe the proposed innovation(s) in one or more applicable categories: teaching, technology, time, and other innovations. For each category, the application provided key elements the proposed innovation was expected to address (e.g., financial sustainability). The application also provided examples of what innovation might look like in each category.

In spring 2013, the ICSB curated and publicized a set of innovation-focused resources to help guide applicants in proposing innovative models. The innovation section was also a central theme during ICSB webinars and live sessions for potential applicants.

Development and Refinement of the ICSB Accountability Plan

In developing and refining its accountability system, the ICSB wants to strike an appropriate balance between an authorizer’s obligation to protect student and public interests and to uphold school autonomy.

The core components of the ICSB accountability system are the charter agreement and the accountability plan, which is incorporated into the charter agreement. The accountability plan consists of a set of standard goals and outcome measures for academic success, financial health, and organizational compliance. These outcome measures enable the ICSB to consistently assess the performance of each school. Under the accountability plan, a school’s progress is assessed through written reports, data submission, and school site visits. These let the ICSB assess school performance over the term of the charter and form the basis for charter renewal decisions. To ensure full transparency, ICSB performance assessments are reported annually to the school’s leader and board of directors. The ICSB wants the annual assessments to encourage constructive dialogue about continuous improvement among the school’s leadership team.

ICSB reporting requirements are designed to ensure prudent authorizer oversight without overburdening school leaders. State law requires charter schools and the ICSB to submit a variety of data to the Indiana Department of Education throughout the year. In addition, the ICSB requires the submission of an annual report containing school data and supplemental information that helps to provide a comprehensive picture of overall school performance. The ICSB also

requires quarterly financial reporting, an annual budget, and an annual audit as described in the charter agreement. Full reporting requirement details can be found on the ICSB [website](#).

In fall 2012, near the end of its first full year of operations, as part of its implementation grant from The Fund for Authorizing Excellence, the ICSB refined its accountability system. These refinements aligned with the five-year strategic plan, and reflected shifts in Indiana's K–12 accountability environment, particularly the Indiana Department of Education's A–F Accountability model. With assistance from national charter accountability experts, the ICSB aligned its accountability plan with NACSA guidance and the best of the systems used by leading authorizers nationwide.

The ICSB also worked with national experts, supported by grant funding, to finalize high-quality financial reporting and compliance procedures, and continued to conduct due diligence and research on high-quality implementation procedures, including visits with high-performing statewide authorizers. In December 2012, the ICSB helped convene a meeting of the Indiana Authorizer Alliance to discuss academic and financial indicators, including a comparison of measures and targets among several Indiana authorizers.³

Creation of the ICSB Alternative Academic Accountability System

In addition to creating, refining, and implementing the accountability system, the ICSB worked with national consultants, collaborated with several local groups, and benchmarked with other authorizers to formulate an alternative academic accountability system for adult high schools, often referred to as dropout recovery high schools. These schools serve students who have failed to succeed in traditional high schools, have few course credits, and face low odds for academic success—less than a third of students who enter adult basic education courses in Indiana earn a high school diploma. In addition, these students often have “aged out” of their original graduation cohort, making the calculation of a schoolwide cohort graduation rate difficult or impossible. Recognizing this issue, the Indiana legislature codified the need for an “Alternative Accountability System” for dropout recovery schools; legislation passed in 2013 requires the Indiana State Board of Education to adopt such a system.

The ICSB's alternative system establishes academic measures of success that allow the ICSB to hold schools to high expectations for academic performance while acknowledging the special challenges that they face. Dropout recovery schools are evaluated based on passage rates on state assessments, graduation rates, and college and career readiness. The system uses an innovative alternative graduation cohort system that allows the ICSB to track the graduation of overage and “out-of-cohort” students who enroll in dropout recovery charter schools.

3. Field, T., Holly, C., Hassel, B. C., & Ableidinger, J. (2014). *Replicating quality: Policy recommendations to support the replication and growth of high-performing charter schools and networks*. Chicago, IL: National Association of Charter School Authorizers. Retrieved from: http://www.pageturnpro.com/Publications/201401/3251/55964/pdf/130351558413997381_ReplicationQuality_Web.pdf

For example, a 22-year-old student would have been placed in the 2009 cohort when she was a freshman in high school. If she had dropped out as a 17-year-old and returned to school as a 22-year-old in 2013–14, she would likely still be classified as a junior given her credits earned. Under the traditional cohort system, she would not be eligible for an on-time graduation, even if she graduated in one year, and she would not be included in the graduation rate. The alternative graduation cohort adopted by the ICSB allows dropout recovery high schools to place students older than 19 in an alternative cohort. This student, who had credits that qualified her to be a junior, would be placed in the 2015 alternative graduation cohort, giving the school an appropriate length of time to graduate the student. For more information, please visit the ICSB [website](#).

Budget and Fees

The ICSB’s authorizing practice is supported through three major funding sources: fees from schools it authorizes, grants, and legislative appropriation. State law allows the ICSB to require up to 3 percent of a school’s “Basic Tuition Support.”⁴ However, the ICSB has prioritized streamlined and scalable operations to minimize the fees it charges now and in the future. In doing so, it adheres to NACSA guidance that says “quality authorizing can be conducted by a lean staff with expertise in school performance accountability and data analysis, school finance, nonprofit governance and management, and legal compliance.”⁵

The ICSB is an independent state agency that was, per statute, incubated in the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) during start-up operations until fee collection began in January 2013. The IDOE provided numerous supports, including personnel, technology, and supplies, among others. To preserve state resources as well as to support a full and thorough start-up process, the ICSB applied for and received several grants to help fund operations. In total, during the first 18 months of operation (from July 2011 to December 2013), the ICSB received approximately \$350,000 in support, including direct state government funds, grant funds, and other IDOE resources.

As a policy decision, the ICSB exempts schools from fees in their first semester of operation (July 1 to December 31) to allow them to use that money for start-up costs. Accordingly, the ICSB delayed collecting fees from the three schools in operation for the 2012–13 school year until January 2013. Between January 1 and June 30, the ICSB collected a total of \$64,182 at a rate of 2.5 percent of Basic Tuition Support. This percentage is below the 3 percent average for states with charter school laws providing for authorizing fees.⁶ Additionally, for FY2013, the Indiana legis-

4. “Basic Tuition Support” is a subcomponent of per-pupil funding. It is the amount determined to be necessary for basic educational programs.

5. Cass, R. (2009). *Charter school authorizer funding* (Policy Guide). Chicago, IL: National Association of Charter School Authorizers. Retrieved from http://www.qualitycharters.org/assets/files/images/stories/Authorizer_Funding.pdf

6. Cass, R. (2009). *Charter school authorizer funding* (Policy Guide). Chicago, IL: National Association of Charter School Authorizers. Retrieved from http://www.qualitycharters.org/assets/files/images/stories/Authorizer_Funding.pdf

lature provided a \$300,000 appropriation for the ICSB to cover additional operating costs. For a detailed explanation of the expenditure of these funds during the second half of FY2013, please see the accompanying chart. Because the ICSB was incubated within the Indiana Department of Education until the second half of FY2013, the IDOE absorbed many of the start-up costs.

As the ICSB strives for transparency, the current budget, including a legislative appropriation and the 2 percent fee that is being collected in 2013–14, can be found on the ICSB [website](#).

School Portfolio Overview

The ICSB has awarded charters to 14 organizers to open charter schools in the state. Of these, the ICSB awarded multiple charters to four organizers—Carpe Diem Indiana, Rocketship Education, Phalen Leadership Academies, and Excel Centers, LLC—for the reasons detailed in the “History” section on page 3. Three schools opened in fall 2012, and five more opened in fall 2013. Three more ICSB-authorized schools intend to open in fall 2014, and Rocketship Education is slated to open its first Indianapolis school in fall 2016.

The ICSB believes strongly in innovation in education. Many of the organizers it has authorized to operate schools have innovative blended learning models, including Carpe Diem, Rocketship Education, Nexus Academy, Indianapolis Academy of Excellence, and Phalen Leadership Academies. Additionally, the ICSB has authorized two innovative dropout recovery schools: the Excel Center, which operates four ICSB-authorized schools, and Premier High School of Indianapolis, which will open in 2014. The Early Career Academy, also opening in 2014, will provide students with an opportunity to simultaneously earn a high school diploma and an associate’s degree.

The table on the following page offers a brief glimpse of the ICSB-authorized schools open or planning to open in 2014 or 2015. More detail about each school can be found in “Authorized Schools Reports,” page 21.

ICSB Expenditures for Second Half of Fiscal Year 2013

Expenditures

Salary & Fringe Benefits	\$164,515.09
External Contracts	\$20,408.80
Office Supplies	\$571.00
School Material and Supplies	\$300.00
Administrative (Travel, Dues, IT Equip.)	\$6,846.61
HR Fees	\$368.00
	<hr/>
	\$193,009.50

School Name and Description	Grades Served at Capacity	Location	Opened / Opening In:
Carpe Diem-Meridian <i>High-performing school and member of widely-regarded charter network that uses personalized learning model combining digital learning and teacher-led workshops</i>	6–12	Indianapolis	2012
Early Career Academy <i>At school on ITT Tech campus, juniors and seniors can earn associate's degrees through a mix of classroom instruction, labs, and practical experience</i>	11–12	Indianapolis	2014
Excel Center–Anderson <i>Excel Centers help older youth and adults earn high school diplomas, and pay tuition costs for students to earn industry-recognized certificates or begin undergraduate degrees at institutions of higher education</i>	9–12	Anderson	2012
Excel Center–Kokomo <i>Excel Centers help older youth and adults earn high school diplomas, and pay tuition costs for students to earn industry-recognized certificates or begin undergraduate degrees at institutions of higher education</i>	9–12	Kokomo	2013
Excel Center–Lafayette <i>Excel Centers help older youth and adults earn high school diplomas, and pay tuition costs for students to earn industry-recognized certificates or begin undergraduate degrees at institutions of higher education</i>	9–12	Lafayette	2013
Excel Center–Richmond <i>Excel Centers help older youth and adults earn high school diplomas, and pay tuition costs for students to earn industry-recognized certificates or begin undergraduate degrees at institutions of higher education</i>	9–12	Richmond	2013
George and Veronica Phalen Leadership Academy <i>School combines innovative uses of time and technology, including an extended day, in a blended learning model</i>	K–8	Indianapolis	2013
Indianapolis Academy of Excellence <i>Students take on entrepreneurial projects throughout their time in the school's blended learning model, including creation of businesses</i>	K–8	Indianapolis	2014

School Name and Description	Grades Served at Capacity	Location	Opened / Opening In:
Nexus Academy of Indianapolis <i>Blended learning model creates flexible student learning spaces, uses student data intensively, and regularly regroups students for intervention, enrichment, and classroom work</i>	9–12	Indianapolis	2013
Premier High School of Indianapolis <i>Promising dropout recovery and prevention program opening in Indianapolis in 2014</i>	9–12	Indianapolis	2014
Rocketship Indianapolis Public School <i>Expansion site of nationally recognized blended learning model serving primarily low-income students in neighborhoods where access to excellent schools is limited</i>	K–5	Indianapolis	2016
Thurgood Marshall Leadership Academy <i>College preparatory school uses Core Knowledge curriculum and emphasizes social justice through liberal arts education and project-based learning</i>	K–8	Fort Wayne	2012

School Performance

Three of the ICSB’s authorized schools have been in operation since 2012. For these three schools, 2012–13 student outcome data are available.

Carpe Diem-Meridian achieved a 77 percent pass rate on the English Language Arts ISTEP+ and 82 percent on the Math ISTEP+, significantly exceeding the 2012 averages of the local district, Indianapolis Public Schools, in sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. Nevertheless, the school did not receive a state accountability grade because the school had too few students take the ISTEP+ tests. Carpe Diem-Meridian students achieved an average of three instructional years of growth in English Language Arts, four years in math, and three years in science, according to Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) results. It also boasted a high end-of-course assessment pass rate.

The Excel Center at Anderson caters to adult learners seeking to earn a high school diploma, and is evaluated according to the alternative accountability model, under which its 2012–13 grade was a B. The school reported that it graduated 30 out of 75 students in its 2013 cohort (40 percent). Excel Center-Anderson also announced that 96 percent of the 2013 cohort passed the English 10 end-of-course exam, and 93 percent passed Algebra 1. The school attributed its reported graduation rate to the way the alternative accountability model is applied in the first year of operation. Because students may be placed in an alternative cohort only if they are 20

years old or older, some students ages 17 to 19 may not be able to graduate with their cohort, but also may not be placed in an alternative cohort. For example, an 18-year-old who was in the 2013 graduation cohort but had only enough credits to be classified as a sophomore would not be eligible for alternative cohort placement or on-time graduation. The alternative accountability model accommodates this issue by providing a bonus point for schools that graduate a certain amount of students within a year of their cohort expiration (five-year graduation rate), but because Excel Center-Anderson was in its first year of operation, it could not take advantage of the potential bonus.

Thurgood Marshall Leadership Academy, in Fort Wayne, attained a 46 percent ISTEP+ pass rate in English Language Arts and a 32 percent pass rate in math. Seventy-three percent of third-graders passed the IREAD assessment. Due to this low performance, the organizer has been required to develop a “corrective action plan,” as is permissible in its charter, and has been placed on a monitoring plan.

To date, the ICSB has not closed any of its authorized schools. However, following a rigorous pre-opening process and start-up challenges, particularly in school facilities, three organizers approved by the ICSB did not open schools, choosing instead to rescind their charters with ICSB approval: Christian Musical Skill Center d/b/a The Performing Arts Center; Next Step School Corporation; and Indiana Charter Education Foundation. In each instance, the organizer’s board of directors, which received a charter from the ICSB, reached the conclusion in close consultation with ICSB staff that it was not making sufficient progress toward meeting the milestones set forth in the ICSB’s prior action checklist, which is included in the charter agreement. According to Exhibit D of the charter agreement, if the organizer does not meet all pre-opening criteria, the ICSB has the authority to terminate the charter agreement or require the school to delay its opening. In each of these instances, the organizer and the ICSB mutually determined that a successful opening was unlikely. Therefore, a decision was made in the best interest of students and taxpayers to rescind the charter agreements.

Looking Ahead

The ICSB strives for continuous improvement and will not rest on its activities and accomplishments to date. Looking ahead, in 2014 and beyond, the ICSB will continue focusing on innovation and accountability, enhancing its activity in these areas by building on the policies, practices, and resources developed from the ICSB’s 2011 inception through 2013. The ICSB will increase its efforts to engage with communities throughout Indiana, and will expand its efforts to attract the strongest in-state and out-of-state applicants to provide high-quality education options for Indiana students.



AUTHORIZED SCHOOLS REPORTS

Carpe Diem-Meridian

School leader: Dr. Mark Forner

Address: 2240 N. Meridian Street, Indianapolis, IN 46208

Website: www.carpediemmeridian.com

Carpe Diem-Meridian, opened in the 2012–13 school year and located in Indianapolis, serves grades 6–12. The school is part of a network of seven Carpe Diem schools that are either open or scheduled to open across the country in the next few years. The ICSB has authorized Carpe Diem to open six charter schools in Indiana alone.

Rick Ogston founded the Carpe Diem network in Arizona in 2006. The flagship school in Yuma, Arizona, which serves grades 7–12, has outperformed all county schools on state assessments from 2010–13, and has led Arizona in student growth from 2011–13. In Indiana, Carpe Diem Indiana is the organizer, and Carpe Diem Learning Systems serves as the educational service provider (ESP).

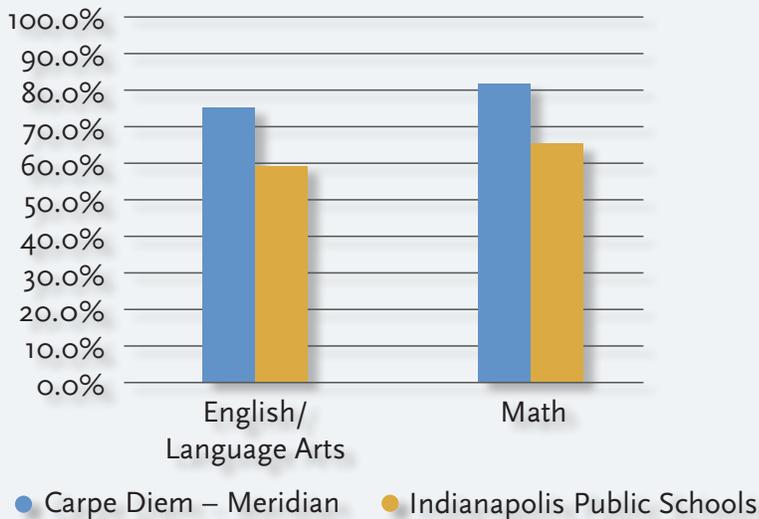
In its first year of operations in Indianapolis, Carpe Diem-Meridian achieved an average of three instructional years of growth in English language arts, four years in math, and three years in science, according to Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) results.

On the Indiana state test (ISTEP+), 76.5 percent passed the English/language arts portion, while 82.4 percent of students passed the math section, outperforming the local school district, Indianapolis Public Schools, by approximately 15 points in each subject.

The school did not receive a grade by the state in 2012–13 because too few students were enrolled to report data publicly. For high-schoolers taking Indiana course assessments, Carpe Diem-Meridian also had high pass rates, but due to the small number of students participating in the exam, the exact results cannot be reported here.

The school, which has a capacity of 300 students, enrolled 87 students in its first year. In 2013–14, Carpe Diem-Meridian has a roster of 170 students, with 63 percent qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch and 25 percent having special education needs.

Pass Rate on ISTEP+ Exams, 2013



Seventy percent of the student population is African American. In the 2012–13 school year, Carpe Diem-Meridian had an attendance rate of 91.2 percent. Two students were expelled during the year. The school departs from traditional schools by granting students the privilege of using their own phones or other personal devices to communicate with one another while at school.

Carpe Diem uses a “personalized learning” model that blends individualized work online with social, collaborative learning in teacher-led workshops. The model does not aim to replace teachers with technology, founder Rick Ogston notes, but instead to rethink the best uses of teachers’ time and talents, assisted by technology. Carpe Diem-Meridian combines



digital learning with teacher-led “workshops,” in which in-person teachers hone in on higher-order thinking skills, high-priority or challenging topics, small-group discussions, and projects. Carpe Diem-Meridian uses the online Edgenuity curriculum, which aligns to common core and state standards. This curriculum allows each student to work at his or her own pace.

Additional detail on Carpe Diem-Meridian and its innovative personalized learning model can be found in the 2014 case study, *Carpe Diem-Meridian: Achieving academic progress through digital and in-person instruction*.⁷

Early Career Academy

School leader: Dr. George McDermott

Address: 9511 Angola Court, Indianapolis, IN 46268

Website: www.earlycareeracademy.com

Early Career Academy is scheduled to open in fall 2014 and will offer students in 11th and 12th grades the opportunity to simultaneously earn a high school diploma and an associate’s degree from ITT Technical Institute in electrical engineering technology, network systems administration, or other degree programs that may be offered. The school will be located on ITT Tech’s campus in Indianapolis. Early Career Academy is the organizer, and ITT is an ESP.

The school plans to enroll 80 students in its first year, out of a capacity of 150. The curriculum is designed to educate students with specific practical skills, blending traditional academic content with applied learning concepts. Students will graduate with a “Core 40” or “Core 40 with technical honors” diploma and an associate’s degree, receiving credit toward both for most of the courses they take.

The school will mix traditional classroom instruction, lab practice, and practical experience. The school will also leverage technology to enhance these learning components. A special part of the curriculum will be student professional experiences outside the classroom that allow students to apply their knowledge to real problems or projects in the community.

7. Han, J. G., & Barrett, S. K. (2014). *Carpe Diem-Meridian: Achieving academic progress through digital and in-person instruction*. Indianapolis, IN: Indiana Charter School Board, and Chapel Hill, NC: Public Impact. Retrieved from <http://www.in.gov/icsb/2448.htm>



Excel Center–Anderson

School leader: Joe White

Address: 630 Nichol Avenue, Anderson, IN 46016

Website: www.theexcelcenter.org

The Excel Center in Anderson, which opened in fall 2012, caters to adult learners seeking a high school diploma. The Excel Centers are a network of 11 charter schools in Indiana that have opened or will open by 2017, serving grades 9–12. Goodwill Education Initiatives, Inc., a nonprofit organization formed by and associated with Goodwill Industries of Central Indiana, Inc., operates the school network.

In 2012–13, its first year, the Excel Center at Anderson enrolled 326 students and had an attendance rate of 80 percent. More than half of the enrolled students are of an ethnic minority; 80.1 percent of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch; 3.1 percent of students are English language learners; and 8.3 percent of the student population has special needs.

In 2012–13, the Excel Center at Anderson received an alternative accountability grade of B from the Indiana Charter School Board. The school reported that 96 percent of the 2013 cohort passed the English 10 end-of-course exam, while 93 percent passed Algebra 1. The 2013 school-projected alternative accountability cohort graduation rate, however, was 40 percent.

The Excel Center provides free drop-in child care centers, free transportation assistance, and the ability to balance school and work schedules. The school operates year-round and includes hours on nights and weekends to accommodate students, who learn at their own pace. Students often work in teams that meet weekly for support. Learning plans combine traditional classroom instruction, online learning, small-group learning, and one-on-one tutoring support.

Additionally, the Excel Center will pay tuition costs for students to take the first steps toward earning certificates or undergraduate degrees at Ivy Tech Community College. The school also has a college and career readiness center to ensure that students have the staff and technology available to help prepare them for higher education or employment in the workforce.



Excel Center – Kokomo

School leader: Nick Parks

Address: 101 W. Superior Street,
Kokomo, IN 46901

Website: www.theexcelcenter.org

The Excel Center in Kokomo, which opened in fall 2013 and has 330 students, caters to adult learners seeking a high school diploma. At this writing, the school was too new to have detailed enrollment or attendance data available, as well as test results or graduation rates.

The school is designed to “meet students where they are” in their education by providing flexible structure and supportive relationships.

The Excel Center provides free drop-in child care centers, free transportation assistance, and the ability to balance school and work schedules. The school operates year-round and includes hours on nights and weekends to accommodate students, who learn at their own pace. Students often work in teams that meet weekly for support. Learning plans combine traditional classroom instruction, online learning, small-group learning, and one-on-one tutoring support.

Additionally, the Excel Center will pay tuition costs for students to take the first steps toward earning certificates or undergraduate degrees at Ivy Tech Community College. The school also has a college and career readiness center to ensure that students have the staff and technology available to help prepare them for higher education or employment in the workforce.

Excel Center–Lafayette

School leader: Nioka Clark

Address: 615 N. 18th Street, Lafayette, IN 47904

Website: www.theexcelcenter.org

The Excel Center in Lafayette, which opened in fall 2013 and has 330 students, caters to adult learners seeking a high school diploma. For additional detail on the Excel Center at Lafayette, see the description of Excel Center-Kokomo, above. Because the school just opened in the 2013–14 school year, no detailed enrollment or attendance data is available. Additionally, no test results or graduation rates are published yet.





Excel Center–Richmond

School leader: Erika Haskins

Address: 1215 S. J Street, Richmond, IN 47374

Website: www.theexcelcenter.org

The Excel Center in Richmond, which opened in fall 2013 and has 320 students, caters to adult learners seeking a high school diploma. For additional detail on the Excel Center at Richmond, see the description of Excel Center-Kokomo, above. Because the school just opened in the 2013–14 school year, no detailed enrollment or attendance data is available. Additionally, no test results or graduation rates are published yet.



George and Veronica Phalen Leadership Academy

School leader: Jeremy Baugh

Address: 2323 North Illinois Street, Indianapolis, IN 46208

Website: www.phalenacademies.org

The George and Veronica Leadership Academy (PLA) opened in fall 2013 to kindergarten through second-grade students, and is operated by the Phalen Leadership Academies–Indiana, Inc., which is also the organizer. Located in Indianapolis, the academy’s founder, Earl Phalen, received a \$1 million start-up award from The Mind Trust Charter School Incubator to start five K–8 blended learning schools in Indianapolis. The blended learning model includes extended eight-hour days and an extended 225-day school year, compared with 6.5 hours and 180 days in traditional schools.

PLA will grow one grade per year to ultimately serve 900 students. In fall 2013, 156 students were enrolled in the school. Of these students, 93 percent qualified for free and reduced-price lunch, 98 percent were African-American, and 2 percent were white.



Because the school is in its first year, it has no student growth or performance data available for the students. However, of the incoming students in 2013–14, 42 percent of students were reading at grade level, while just 9 percent were on grade level in math. PLA has set goals to have more than 80 percent of students passing both English/language arts and mathematics on the ISTEP+ exam by 2016, ramping up to a goal of a 90 percent pass rate in 2019.

The blended learning model allows students to spend a short time in whole-group instruction before rotating among small-group instruction, independent work, and individualized online learning intended to teach the basics and reinforce skills. The extended days also allow for instruction in art, music, physical education, and Spanish, as well as cultural enrichment time.

Additional detail on the George and Veronica Phalen Leadership Academy and its innovative blended learning model can be found in the 2014 case study, *Phalen Leadership Academy: Rapid adjustments: Lessons from a start-up blended-learning charter school*.⁸

8. Barrett, S. K. (2014). *Phalen Leadership Academy: Rapid adjustments: Lessons from a blended-learning start-up charter school*. Indianapolis, IN: Indiana Charter School Board, and Chapel Hill, NC: Public Impact. Retrieved from <http://www.in.gov/icsb/2448.htm>

Indianapolis Academy of Excellence

School leader: Joe Burleson

Website: www.teamcfa.org/schools/indianapolis-academy-of-excellence

The Indianapolis Academy of Excellence is scheduled to open in fall 2014 and will serve 540 K–8 students at capacity. The school, affiliated with TeamCFA, a network that operates 12 schools in 3 states, will offer a blended learning program with the mission of developing students into “virtuous American citizens who will become the next generation of entrepreneurs.”

The school will take a holistic view of education and believes in promoting the moral, intellectual, emotional, social, and physical enabling of its students to develop a strong character with strong community-based values. In its first year, 2014–15, the Indianapolis Academy of Excellence plans to enroll 260 K–3 students. The school primarily aims to serve King Park, Fall Creek Place, and Martindale. Though students are not enrolled yet, the academy anticipates serving about an 82 percent African-American and 90 percent free or reduced-price lunch population.

The blended learning curriculum will incorporate direct instruction, literacy and math workshops, digital instruction, and collaborative research projects. Students will participate in entrepreneurial projects throughout their years at the school. The yearly culminating project for students will be the development of businesses. The students will be required to submit business plans, apply for the appropriate permits, and develop a marketing campaign. All students will have an opportunity to shop around at other businesses and spend the school money they have earned throughout the year.



Nexus Academy of Indianapolis

School leader: Jamie Brady

Address: 6101 N. Keystone Avenue, Suite 302, Indianapolis, IN 46220

Website: <http://www.nexusacademyschool.com/blended-learning/indiana/indianapolis.aspx>

Nexus Academy of Indianapolis, whose charter was granted to the nonprofit Better Blended Learning of Indiana, Inc., and operated by Connections Academy, opened its doors to approximately 30 students in grades 9–12 in fall 2013, growing to an enrollment of 82 students by February 2014, with a capacity of 300 students. Nexus is a national network of blended learning high schools operated by Connections Academy.

Nexus keeps its school and classes small, and provides each student with a flexible learning space, tablet computer, technology-facilitated curriculum, and a combination of face-to-face and online teachers. Teachers use data on student performance to group students for intervention, enrichment, and work groups within the classroom, rearranging groups every one to two weeks. Additionally, each student has a personalized learning plan that reflects the student's needs.

Students are grouped into teams of about 40 and assigned a special area of the school facility to call their own. The teams, which stay intact throughout the high school years, hold daily meetings, collaborate, and work on their online courses.

Premier High School of Indianapolis

School leader: Derrick Graves

Website: www.premierhighschools.com

Premier High School of Indianapolis, operated by Responsive Education Solutions, which is also its organizer and the charter recipient, will open in fall 2014 for 120 students in grades 9–12. The school is targeted at dropout recovery and prevention designed to engage or reengage students. Its mission is “to provide hope for students through an innovative, encouraging, character-based, individualized learning environment where they are academically successful and develop into lifelong learners.”

ResponsiveEd has established and currently operates 59 charter schools throughout Texas, and its schools consistently exceed state averages by about 10 percentage points on the state assessment. Since 1999, the organization has operated within a framework that researches, develops, and implements practices specifically for the population identified as demonstrating the greatest need (high school dropouts and those at greatest risk of dropping out). The system blends instructional strategies with individualized education plans that focus on the individual needs of each student.

Seven major principles compose the core values of the charter network: comprehensive diagnosis and measurement; personalized academic plan; rigorous and relevant learning opportunities; differentiated and self-directed instruction; collaborative learning environment; caring and compassionate staff; and small campuses.

Rocketship Indianapolis Public School

Website: www.rsed.org/index.cfm

Rocketship Indianapolis Public School is slated to open in fall 2016, opening its doors to students in kindergarten through fifth grade. The charter network, Rocketship Education, was founded in 2007 and serves three states. It looks for community support, a charter-friendly political environment, a strong founding team, and local financial support in the regions it serves. In Indianapolis, Rocketship Indianapolis Public School received \$1 million from The Mind Trust's Charter School Incubator. Rocketship Education will be both the school's organizer and operator.

In its first year, Rocketship Indianapolis Public School intends to serve 400 students. The organization considers underserved, at-risk student to be its target student population and at the core of the design of its educational program.

The school will focus its model around the three core beliefs of the charter organization: excellent teachers and leaders create transformational schools; every child has a unique set of needs; and engaged parents are essential in eliminating the achievement gap. The school incorporates a blended learning model to combine traditional instruction, technology, and tutoring, so students can learn at their own pace. For teachers, the organization places a strong emphasis on personal and professional satisfaction, professional development, and leadership programs. Finally, the school plans to involve multiple community groups to enrich the program, bringing the neighborhood and city into the school; 75 percent attendance from students' families is expected at all community meetings.

Rocketship Education charter schools in California were the sole Race to the Top finalist from the entire state. Nationwide, 29 districts and two charter organizations qualified as finalists.⁹ The organization continues to be in the top 5 percent of school districts serving low-income students.¹⁰ In its current schools, 90 percent of students qualify for free and reduced-price lunch and 75 percent are English language learners.

9. Fensterwald, J. (2013, November 25). Rocketship charter schools singled out in California as Race to the Top finalist. *EdSource*. Retrieved from: <http://edsources.org/today/2013/rocketship-charter-schools-singled-out-in-california-as-race-to-the-top-finalist/50200#.UqevrvRDu8x>

10. Rocketship Education (n.d.). *Results*. Retrieved February 20, 2014, from: <http://www.rsed.org/results.cfm>



Thurgood Marshall Leadership Academy

School leader: Tameka Wilson

Address: 2313 Hanna Street, Fort Wayne, IN 46803

Website: www.fwurbanleague.org/fwul/downloads/TMLA_INFO.pdf

Thurgood Marshall Leadership Academy (TMLA), a charter school of the Fort Wayne Urban League that is managed by American Quality Schools, opened in Fort Wayne during the 2012–13 school year, enrolling 124 students in grades K–8.

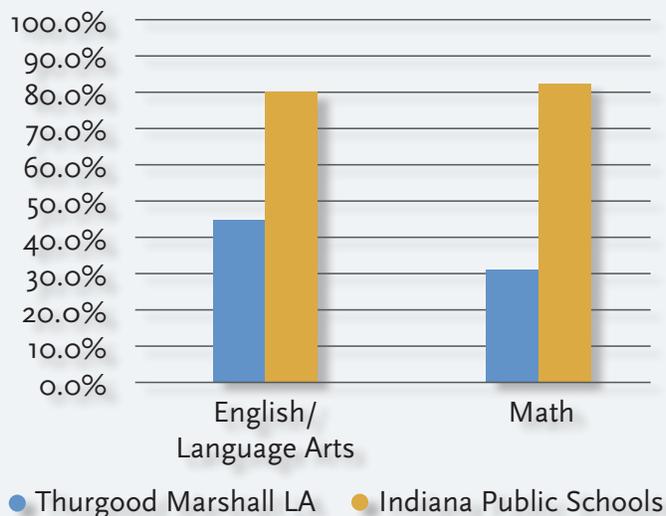
Of the student population at the academy in 2012–13, 97.6 percent qualified for free and reduced-price lunch and 100 percent were ethnic minorities, 87.9 percent of whom were African-

American. Special education students made up 11.3 percent of the student body. In 2012–13, the academy had a 92.4 percent attendance rate. Two percent of the student body was expelled during the year, confined to sixth and seventh grade.

On the ISTEP+ in the school’s first year, only 31.6 percent of students passed in math, while only 45.7 percent passed in English/language arts. These passing rates are 51.1 and 33.8 percentage points below the statewide average, respectively. On the IREAD assessment, 72.7 percent of third-graders passed.

Due to its low performance, the organizer has been required by the ICSB to develop a corrective action plan, per its charter agreement, and has been placed on a monitoring plan. The ICSB staff regularly monitors the perfor-

Pass Rate on ISTEP+ Exams, 2013





mance of ICSB-authorized schools, and ICSB members routinely discuss performance successes and challenges during ICSB board meetings.

The school uses the “Core Knowledge” curriculum, which is designed to equip students with knowledge, skills, and social judgment to navigate the global economy. TMLA’s curriculum emphasizes social justice through a liberal arts education and project-based learning. Students are required to participate in weekly sessions called “Civitas,” which is devoted to planning service work and understanding community and global needs. Students are expected to engage in the community through civic engagement, community service, and applying their skills to social change.

Glossary of Terms

Authorizer: An entity that is permitted by law to grant charters to organizers to operate charter schools. The following entities may serve as authorizers in Indiana: (1) a governing body, (2) a state educational institution that offers a four-year baccalaureate degree, (3) the executive (as defined in IC § 36-1-2-5) of a consolidated city, (4) the Indiana Charter School Board, or (5) a nonprofit college or university that provides a four-year educational program for which it awards a baccalaureate or more advanced degree.

Charter: A contract awarded by an authorizer to a nonprofit corporation (“organizer”) allowing for the operation of a charter school.

Charter school: A public school that operates under a contract, or charter, entered into between the school’s organizer and a charter school authorizer. Like traditional public schools, charter schools must have open enrollment policies, may not charge tuition, and cannot discriminate based on disability, race, color, gender, national origin, religion, or ancestry.

Organizer: A nonprofit corporation that enters into a contract with an authorizer to operate a charter school.