



**Developing Habits of the Heart, Mind and Voice**  
Desarrollando hábitos del Corazón, el Intelecto la Voz

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **The Project School files injunction to block mayor from abruptly closing school.**

Citing the precarious and unfair position in which it places 354 Indianapolis school children, The Project School announced today that it plans to seek an injunction to block, for a period of one year, Mayor Greg Ballard's abrupt attempt to formally shut down the school.

**"If this decision to revoke The Project School's charter stands, it will be a tremendous loss to our students, their families, and our local neighborhood," says Daniel Baron, The Project School's Board President. "In addition, we are confident that a fair review process would show that the Mayor's staff has misrepresented The Project School's financial status and misunderstood our academic progress."**

By taking the matter to the courts, The Project School is seeking the due process and fairness promised by the U.S. Constitution and Indiana Law. It is asking the Court for a one-year reprieve to allow the school to go through the evaluation and correction process it was promised less than two weeks ago. If unsuccessful, the school would then have a fair opportunity to find another charter sponsor for the 2013-14 school year.

The Project School contends that the process and timing of the Mayor's move to terminate the school's charter just before the beginning of the school year have been fundamentally unfair, one-sided, and ultimately harmful to the school's students:

- Recent comments by officials from the Mayor's Office suggest the Office never intended to entertain a formal response by The Project School. Officials continue to tell the public and parents that the Mayor's decision to close The Project School is "final," even though the school supposedly has until August 7, 2012, to file a formal response. On July 19, WIBC radio reported that Marc Lotter, spokesperson for Mayor Ballard's office, indicated the decision to shut down a controversial charter school is final. This happened two days after The Project School's Board of Directors received the news, via email, that the school's charter had been revoked, effective immediately. The school has been barred from opening on August 6 and the Mayor's representatives are actively recruiting all current students away from The Project School. As a result, the school has already lost numerous teachers and students, and, absent the Court's intervention, the Mayor's actions will have effectively canceled the 2012-2013 school year even before the response period has expired.



- Direct correspondence with the officials in the Mayor's Office corroborates the Office's hasty and unprecedented action. For example, The Project School attempted to reach out to Beth Bray, Director of Charter Schools for the City of Indianapolis, to present a plan of action for the 2012-13 school year. This plan had been put in place by school leadership led by Tarrey Banks, principal. Prior to receiving notice that the school's charter had been revoked, Beth Bray sent an email stating: "I appreciate your offer to share your strategic plan with us. At this point, however, it would be premature for us to take the document into consideration, until we are able to fully complete the Fourth-Year Charter Review (FYCR). We're holding for financial and academic (growth, A-F) data in order to complete our full, 4th-year assessment and compile the FYCR. As we do with every school after the conclusion of the 4th year process, we'll want to sit down with the board and school administration to discuss the findings..." She goes on to say, "We anticipate receiving the final pieces of data necessary for completing the FYCR in August, so will reach out at that time." Less than three business days before announcing the closing, Mayor's Office officials committed to completing a formal review in August of 2012 and afterward meet with school administrators to discuss results and any corrective measures to be put in place during the 2012-13 academic year. As a result of this misdirection, The Project School has been effectively denied any opportunity to find an alternate sponsor for its charter. This is effectively a permanent termination of the school – again, even before the response period has ended.
- The school's closing was triggered by incomplete information. The stated impetus for the Mayor's Office sudden change of heart as to The Project School's charter was its concern over recently discovered financial information regarding the school. However, The Project School has shown that the recent allegations about its finances are simply wrong:
  - The Mayor's office discovered information that led it to believe the school had a negative cash balance. In fact, The Project School is significantly "in the black." The Mayor's incorrect assessment was based in part on the fact the school "depreciated" a portion of the building it owns. Thus, the Mayor's office apparently considered the "depreciation" a hard dollar expense when it was actually just an accounting label and not a real "cash" cost to the school.
  - A recently completed financial audit conducted by the accounting firm of Alerding and Associates confirms that The Project School's finances are in order and The Project School has always been on solid financial footing.

The Project School agrees that the Mayor is obligated to turn a critical eye toward a school's performance metrics and demand accountability when a school falls short. At the same time, one shouldn't ignore the fact that The Project School was chartered as a non-traditional program whose mission is to reach some of the state's most troubled



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children...and that the school's approach is working. Despite messages to the contrary, the academic statistics for The Project School reveal that, in 2012, of those students in the fourth and eighth grade who participated in the ISTEP and had been in the program for three years or more, 100% passed the English Language Arts portion and Math portion of the test. This does not account for students who took the IMAST test or opted out of taking the test. Moreover, to keep kids in the program and achieve that success, parents need to choose to stay. So it is important that over 90% of parents surveyed about The Project School have stated they are either satisfied or very satisfied with the School's performance.

The Project School is acting today to protect its most vulnerable students from being uprooted from an environment that is finally reaching them when, in many instances, traditional options have failed. Rushing children away from the teachers, friends, and progress they have begun at The Project School just days before school starts will not serve them. It will only harm them.

**“The Charter School Movement in Indianapolis was conceived as a means of helping prevent students from slipping through the cracks,” says Baron. “This is a dramatic rush to judgment on the part of the Mayor’s Office that effectively pushes more than 300 innocent students into the cracks. It shows a shocking lack of regard for these kids and their needs.**

**“In the end, we are hopeful that we can achieve through the Courts what the Mayor has denied our students, teachers and staff – a fair shot at survival.”**