



Why Do Two Charter Networks Want to Expand into Pike Township?

August 28, 2022 by Educator Barnes

Chalkbeat Indiana recently [reported](#) that Purdue Polytechnic and Believe Schools hope to expand into Pike Township. Both public charter school networks submitted letters of intent to the Indianapolis Mayor's Office of Education Innovation (OEI), which authorizes charter schools. Pike Township, located on the NW side of Indianapolis, currently has no charter high schools in its boundaries.

The reason behind both networks' letters of intent is to serve more students of color. Do Pike Township families want this, and would this be a better opportunity than sending their children to Pike Township? Pak-Harvey reported that "Results from the SAT, which juniors took for the first time in the 2021-22 school year as a graduation requirement, show that Purdue Polytechnic students across both of its Indianapolis campuses tested college-ready in reading and math at a rate above the IPS average." Wouldn't it make more sense to compare Purdue Polytechnic students' scores on the required SAT exam for high school juniors to the scores of Pike High School students? IPS student data is not relevant to this story. Believe Schools data was not reported due to the small number of students who took the test. IDOE does not publicly report when the number of students available to take the test is small to protect student privacy.

Let's compare Pike Township High School juniors' SAT data to PPHS and PPHS North students. This data can also be found on the IDOE's Data Center and Reports webpage at the bottom of the page.

SAT Evidence Based Reading & Writing (EBRW)	Number of Students Who Took the Exam	Number of Students Who Passed the Exam	Percentage of Students Who Passed the Exam
Pike	706	206	29.2%
PPHS	87	32	36.8%
PPHS North	54	30	55.6%
SAT Math	Number of Students Who Took the Exam	Number of Students Who Passed the Exam	Percentage of Students Who Passed the Exam
Pike	706	104	14.7%
PPHS	87	12	13.8%

PPHS North	54	14	25.9%
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A significantly higher number of PPHS students across both campuses performed better than Pike students on the SAT reading & writing section. However, Pike students performed slightly better than PPHS students on the SAT math section, but PPHS North students performed better than both schools. The math scores for all three schools were dismal, and nothing to celebrate.

When families make decisions about their children’s education, they need relevant data. Too often, IPS schools’ data is mentioned when the district should not be part of the story.

Pike Township parent Ariel Crawley said in reference to learning about the letters of intent, “After what happened last year, I’m not surprised.” Last school year, Pike Township families had an unpredictable school schedule. The district frequently had last-minute e-learning days scheduled due to transportation issues.

Additionally, Pike teachers expressed frustration over their salaries, and parents started a petition to get rid of superintendent Dr. Flora Reichanadter, who eventually resigned.

Is potentially opening these schools necessary, or is this an attempt to take advantage of parents’ vulnerability after the mishaps in Pike Township during the last school year? I am tired of people saying they are helping families of color when families of color don’t seem to be asking for these kinds of interventions. It makes more sense to find solutions to problems in Pike Township.

Believe Schools is receiving \$500,000 from the Mind Trust to build its capacity. The Mind Trust mission statement says, “The Mind Trust strives to provide every Indianapolis student access to an excellent education by amplifying the power of neighborhoods and communities to lead education change, supporting schools to grow and excel in a thriving education ecosystem, and disrupting systemic racism in education.” At times the word “Indianapolis” in the TMT’s mission statement seems to mean only Indianapolis Public School students, ignoring students in the other 10 Indianapolis districts, and “access” in the mission statement seems only to mean access to public charter schools. Wouldn’t it be easier for the existing schools to receive funds, especially since they serve a larger number of students?

Last, because there are 11 districts in Indianapolis, a need for a charter school in every district isn’t necessary when residents can drive for a short distance and drive through multiple school

district boundaries. Although there are currently no charter high schools within the boundaries of Pike Township, Herron-Riverside High School is a west side charter high school that is not too far from the district's boundaries. There are only so many teachers available. At some point, a conversation needs to be had about the fact there are way more schools than quality candidates available.

Indy K12 will continue to follow this story and hopes more information from these charter networks will be provided that shows that Pike families really want this option.