

IPS Innovation Restart

By Shawnta S. Barnes – December 16, 2017



On November 14, 2017 my piece, [“Recommendation: Convert IPS Schools Wendell Phillips and Washington Irving into Innovation Schools”](#) led to reader questions. From those questions, it was clear people didn’t understand the innovation process in IPS although there is information provided on the district’s website. Throughout the remainder of the school year, I will write an innovation series.

Recently, I had the opportunity to sit down with IPS Innovation Officer Aleesia Johnson. The more we spoke about my series, the more I realized there was so much to navigate. Where should I draw my focus? As an English teacher, I always tell my students you have to narrow your topic when writing. I must do the same for this series.

In 2014, legislation was passed to allow Indiana school districts to create innovation schools. Innovation schools are part of the district, but operate independently within it. According to IPS' [website](#) there are four innovation paths:

- launch as a new innovation school
- launch as an innovation charter school
- restart an existing chronically underperforming school as an innovation school
- convert an existing school to an innovation school

The most aggressive innovation pathway is restarting a chronically underperforming school as an innovation school. Innovation restart will be the focus of my series. Although there are some people who hate the district's portfolio model, where schools are not cookie cutter and administration is empowered to make choices that are best for their school community, schools that are restart innovation seem to draw the most complaints from the community. For example, when a school chooses innovation, people may not like it, but they mostly relent because the administration, teachers, and parents want it.

I plan to follow the innovation restart process of Washington Irving School #14, the school I attended in kindergarten and Wendell Phillips School #63, a school where I previously worked as a literacy coach in hopes of bringing a better understanding of this process to the greater community.

Read the next piece in our Innovation Series – [IPS Innovation Restart: Heart to Heart](#).