

Purdue Polytechnic High Schools expanding to Pike Township

Free public school network has big plans for a 4th location



INDIANAPOLIS – Building off the success of its existing locations, Purdue Polytechnic High Schools, in partnership with Purdue University, announced plans to spread its innovative school model and STEM-focused education curriculum to a third Indianapolis location.

The charter school’s new site will be located in Pike Township on Indianapolis’ northwest side and is expected to open in time for the 2023-24 academic year. It will be the fourth site for PPHS in Indiana, joining the Schweitzer Center at Englewood on the east side of Indianapolis, the North campus in the Broad Ripple area, and PPHS South Bend.

The growing PPHS network offers STEM-based (science, technology, engineering and math) curriculum that is intended to provide core academic principles and skills needed in today’s economy through hands-on projects that seek to solve real-world problems. Students leave PPHS with college credits and in-demand industry credentials.

The public high school, with free admission, was founded by Purdue in 2016. The first PPHS location opened in 2017 on Indianapolis’ east side, and the network has since grown to serve more than 1,000 students in the three locations during the 2022-23 school year. For more information on why PPHS was started, watch [“Building a Pipeline to Purdue.”](#)

“Purdue is committed to increasing the pipeline and opportunities for underrepresented students who have the skills to take their education to the next level,” Purdue President Mitch Daniels said. “Waiting on Indiana’s existing public school systems was not getting the job done, so we opted for the direct action of starting our own school, and they’re making a significant difference — not enough, but a big improvement.”

Prior to the high schools, IPS was averaging 18 students per year from 2016-21 to Purdue West Lafayette. The first two graduating classes from PPHS have seen 40 (class of 2021) and 32 (class of 2022) students accept admission to Purdue, showing how PPHS is reinventing the high school experience for students.

On August 1st, PPHS submitted a letter of intent to the Indianapolis Mayor’s Office of Education Innovation to apply for a charter to open the school. The planned expansion comes on the heels of recent reports of a decline in the [college-going rate](#) of Indiana students and the state’s release of [ILEARN results](#).

“We know that even though the college-going rate in Indiana has declined since the start of the pandemic, our schools have successfully been sending students to college, beating the state average by double-digit percentage points,” said [Scott Bess](#), PPHS executive director. “When looking at the outcomes for Black, Hispanic and low-income students, our numbers are even better. We have decades of data showing us that the traditional way of teaching students just isn’t cutting it. Purdue and our board have been very supportive of opening new schools to expand our impact, and we have a real sense of urgency to do just that.”

This will be the first time a charter high school has intentionally set out to open a school in Marion County outside of the Indianapolis Public Schools district.

The Mind Trust, an Indianapolis-based education organization has been a partner of PPHS since its inception.

"The Mind Trust is excited for the growth of Purdue Polytechnic High Schools as the network expands its high-quality, innovative model to serve more students in Marion County," said Brandon Brown, CEO of The Mind Trust. "We are proud to have supported the PPHS network since its inception and are thrilled to continue that support as PPHS expands to serve more Indianapolis students. It is critical for students in all areas of our city to have access to a high school that equips them with the skills and knowledge needed for postsecondary success, and we believe this is an incredible opportunity for more students and families to benefit from this groundbreaking model."

PPHS leadership is working with a broker and community partners to identify a location for the new school in Pike Township.

“We have a great partnership with Indianapolis Public Schools at our two Indianapolis locations where our schools are part of the IPS Innovation Network Portfolio. We are very open to having a similar type of partnership with the Metropolitan School District of Pike Township” Bess said. “We always want to work with local school districts whenever possible because, at the end of the day, we have the exact same goal, and that is to help our students achieve their full potential.

“The charter application process will take some time for a thorough and rigorous review by the mayor’s office, but based on our history of successfully operating three other schools and the outcomes our students at those schools have achieved, we have confidence we will receive charter approval by Thanksgiving, at which point we will be full-steam ahead.”

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