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## 3 ideas hope to yield bounty for education

Education -- as in having a well-prepared work force -- is atop the agenda of nearly every businessperson.

Gov. **Mitch Daniels** will make it a centerpiece of the General Assembly. Eli Lilly and Co. chief **John Lechleiter** preaches the need. Ditto **Roland Dorson** at the Greater Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce.

They will work to improve standards, graduation rates and college attainment. Underlying that important work, though, is a more radical and business-like approach being pioneered by The Mind Trust.

Today the local group will invest \$730,000 into three ideas that will make the city a leading laboratory for education reform -- ideas that one day could blossom across the country.

"These are people with an entrepreneurial mindset," said former Indianapolis Mayor **Bart Peterson**, chairman of The Mind Trust board and co-founder with **David Harris**.

"We have enough reason to believe these ideas will be successful that we're willing to make a significant investment."

## The next big things

The Mind Trust's three new fellows were culled from 342 applicants. It used a process that combined academic rigor with a venture capitalist's flair.

"We are serious about dramatically changing the learning opportunities for students in underserved and disadvantaged populations," said Harris, president of the organization. "Not incrementally, but in dramatic ways."

» **Celine Coggins** remembers that her parents, both teachers, urged her not to enter the profession. It wasn't a place for ambitious people, they told her.

"Teaching can be the same job on the first day of your first year as on the 180th day of the 40th year," Coggins said.

She became a middle-school teacher anyway, but soon realized what her parents meant. Many of the good young teachers around here were leaving after a few years. Some left for suburban districts and some for other professions.

She created Teach Plus in Boston as a way to keep top teachers engaged in the profession and will start a second program in Indianapolis next fall. Teach Plus recruited 16 Boston-area teachers and made policy advocates out of them.

The idea is to raise awareness among younger teachers and administrators so they can find ways to

improve retention.

"We know from Teach for America and other programs that there are huge pools of people who want to be in teaching," Coggins said.

Teach Plus aims to find a way to make them stay.

» There are many programs for wealthy young students to travel overseas. **Abigail Falik's** Global Citizen Year will be for everyone else.

Falik won first prize in Harvard Business School's 2008 Social Enterprise business pitch competition for the program that will be a bridge year between high school and college.

Global Citizen Year will train students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds as fellows and send them on six-month apprenticeships across the world.

They will interact virtually with primary school students during their time overseas, then lead activities at their home high schools about their experiences.

» **Earl Martin Phalen** knows from research that students living in low-income communities tend to fall behind during summer vacations and can't catch up to students from higher-income families.

Phalen, who co-founded the out-of-school program Building Educated Leaders for Life 17 years ago, will use the fellowship to create a national research-based summer program for 1 million elementary and middle school students.

The idea is to create a company that can quickly grow and provide the program through branch operations or franchises. It will be an important test of the franchising strategy to bring education initiatives to scale, Harris said.

## Inside the picks

Coggins was wondering how she would expand Teach Plus this summer when a friend told her about The Mind Trust's fellowship program.

"The Mind Trust had come into his network of cool programs, and he knew what I was trying to do," Coggins said. "So he made the connection."

Her application was one of 342, but she made the initial cut to seven semifinalists.

Fall sunlight shone through three big windows at the old Clemens Vonnegut School where Coggins interviewed with staff three days before Halloween. She talked fast, her hands waving to emphasize a point she clearly wanted to make.

"We're trying to reach people who say, 'I love teaching. I'm just getting good at it. I want to stay in it, but I need to know what to do because I'm looking for ways to stay involved,'" Coggins said.

She knows what it's like to walk away from the classroom. She loved teaching; she didn't love the circumstances. Teach Plus was a way to keep people like her in the classroom.

The two-year fellowship will pay her \$90,000 a year, provide full benefits and money to implement the

program in Indianapolis, the same as the other two.

A lot of programs are meant to improve one school, a district or a student's lot. "Around the country we see the same sore spots," said Mind Trust board member **Ariela Rozman**. "It's a matter of scale, of how we can do this all across the country. That's what we're up against."

And that's what The Mind Trust's fellowship aims to solve.

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