



## Who We Are

The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation has actively sponsored (i.e. authorized) charter schools in Ohio since 2005. Currently, we are responsible for monitoring and oversight of ten schools that collectively serve 2,900 public school students statewide. Our portfolio includes some of Ohio's highest performing and highly regarded schools, including United Schools Network (the Columbus Collegiate Academy family of schools); KIPP Columbus; one of the Breakthrough schools in Cleveland; and DECA Prep in Dayton. We expect over the next several years to widen our charter portfolio to serve 5,400 students in a diverse group of schools across all grade levels (e.g., college preparation, career credential, pre-kindergarten through high school, early college and blended models) by the end of 2018.

Fordham has developed expertise in all the core areas of Ohio charter sponsorship, including law, finance, compliance, facilities, new school start-up, closure, managing the application process for new schools, contract management, school monitoring and renewal decisions. The National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) – widely considered the gold standard of charter authorizing – utilizes Fordham staff on various projects. Fordham's sponsorship staff also regularly present at NACSA's national conference.

In addition to its sponsorship knowledge and experience, Fordham capitalizes on staff, resources and policy expertise housed in our Columbus, Dayton and Washington, D.C. offices. We can draw on national expertise, ample research, and many useful contacts. We benefit, too, from the intellectual capital and professional credentials of our board, which includes David Driscoll (former Commissioner of Education in Massachusetts); Chester E. Finn., Jr (former Assistant Secretary at the U.S. Department of Education); Rod Paige (former U.S Secretary of Education); Dr. David H. Ponitz (President Emeritus, Sinclair Community College, Dayton, Ohio); Tom Holton, Esq. (Partner, Porter Wright); Caprice Young (until recently Vice President for Education, Laura and John Arnold Foundation); Michael W. Kelly (President and CEO, Central Park Credit Bank); and Bruno Manno, widely known authority on charter schooling and currently a senior staff member at the Walton Family Foundation.

## What We Offer/Sponsorship Core Competencies

- 1. Schools retain autonomy.** We know sponsorship, and educators know education. Our job is to support school success through thorough monitoring and assistance to schools. We intentionally leave curriculum, instruction and such to the school leaders, staff and governing boards with whom we work.
- 2. Avoid conflicts of interest.** Unlike many Ohio authorizers, we decline to “sell services” to the schools we sponsor, believing that that practice creates an inherent conflict of interest and reduces the ability of the authorizer to judge school performance on its merits. Our sponsorship work is largely supported by 2% school fees—but subsidized when needed from Fordham's general revenues.
- 3. Rigorous application.** Our new-school approval rates are low, as our application is designed specifically to identify applicants with well-developed education, financial, governance, accountability and operational plans. Fordham's sponsorship application is adapted from one used by NACSA and consists of a comprehensive narrative and supporting documentation, an interview with each developer, and background research.

4. **Comprehensive monitoring, both on-line and on-site.** In 2005 Fordham was the first Ohio sponsor to implement an online compliance management system. Any compliance requirements that can be monitored remotely are, freeing school leaders from needless paperwork and allowing us to focus—during site visits—on the quality of educational delivery, management, fiscal soundness and results.
5. **Excellent service to school leaders, board members, employees and the public.** We help support our sponsored-schools through excellent service on any issue that arises. We also strive for the same when speaking with parents and community members on school-related issues.
6. **Honest reporting.** Fordham has a considerable track record of analyzing and making public all relevant information about the schools we sponsor, particularly regarding their academic performance. (We also do this for other charter and district schools in Ohio, particularly in the state’s major cities.)
7. **Attention to policy.** In addition to hands-on sponsorship, we pay close attention to the policy environment in which charter schools operate in Ohio and nationally, and strive through multiple means to strengthen it in ways that boost school effectiveness and quality.

## **Thomas B. Fordham Foundation Sponsorship Organizational Chart**

### **Board of Trustees**

Convenes three times annually to discuss and take action on sponsorship-related issues.  
Has contract for sponsorship with Ohio Department of Education.

### **Ohio Policy and Sponsorship Committee**

Convenes at least quarterly to discuss and take action on sponsorship-related issues.  
Makes recommendations regarding sponsorship to Fordham board.

### **Kathryn Mullen Upton, Esq., Vice President for Sponsorship and Dayton Initiatives**

Responsibilities include: overseeing Fordham’s sponsorship operation; new schools/growth; contracts; renewals/non-renewals ; closures; strategic thinking; networking schools with Ohio and national resources; working with Fordham’s Ohio committee and Trustees; research & legislative issues; conferences; consulting on sponsorship; and, Dayton-specific initiatives.

### **Miles Caunin, JD, Sponsorship Finance Manager**

Finances, all schools  
Facilities  
Funding  
School relations  
Board relations  
Public relations  
Research & technical assistance (financial, audit and facilities issues)  
Working with the Ohio Department of Education and other state and federal agencies

### **Theda Sampson, CNP, Sponsorship Compliance Manager**

Compliance, all schools  
New school start-up  
Site visits  
School relations  
Board relations  
Public relations  
Research & technical assistance (education and compliance issues)  
Working with the Ohio Department of Education and other state and federal agencies

## **Mission and Offices**

**The Thomas B. Fordham Institute is the nation's leader in advancing educational excellence for every child through quality research, analysis, and commentary, as well as on-the-ground action and advocacy in Ohio. We advance** high standards for schools, students and educators; quality education options for families; a more productive, equitable and efficient education system; and, a culture of innovation, entrepreneurship, and excellence. **We promote** education reform by producing rigorous policy research and incisive analysis; building coalitions with policy makers, donors, organizations and others who share our vision; and, advocating bold solutions and comprehensive responses to education challenges, even when opposed by powerful interests and timid establishments.

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