

World Teachers' Day 2018 – Every child deserves an education from a qualified teacher

By Shawnta S. Barnes – October 5, 2018



Each year on October 5, the anniversary of the signing of UNSECO/ILO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization/International Labour Organization) 1966 recommendation concerning the status of teachers, World Teachers' Day is held. This year's theme is "The right to education means the right to a qualified teacher."

When I attended the National Association for Black Journalists Convention in Detroit back in August, I had the opportunity to hear Public Counsel lawyer Mark Rosenbaum speak. He represented the Detroit students who filed a lawsuit because they were denied a quality education. Unfortunately, the case was dismissed. To paint the tragic picture, he shared how their schools were using textbooks from the 90s and how students had to share those dated textbooks. The temperature in some buildings was extremely cold or as high as 100 degrees. The schools were plagued with rats and mold. Most importantly, classes either had no teacher, substitute teachers, multiple teachers throughout the year, or poor quality teachers. Although all of this is heartbreaking, the most alarming was the lack of good teachers. When you don't have quality teachers, your data will be dismal.

Rosebaum stated:

Detroit has the lowest literacy rate of any district in the country. 47% of the entire population in Detroit is functionally illiterate. The schools where I represent these kids, the proficiency rates are zero or close to zero which means there's not a single kid that is reading anywhere close to where he or she should.

I once asked a principal why a teacher was hired. This teacher was frequently absent and when the teacher was present she copied worksheets for students to complete or showed movies. The principal said, "She's better than no teacher." I disagree. A teacher like that is not good enough for any child. What made me even more disappointed is this principal is a parent. Why are horrible teachers okay for someone else's children, but not your own?

Educators, as you reflect on the theme of World Teachers' Day, can you confidently say you are a quality teacher? If the answer is no or maybe, I strongly encourage you to do some soul-searching. If you are struggling in an area, seek help; there is no shame in this. Even in year 13, I know I still have areas where I can improve. If you feel like you can't deliver quality instruction and you don't want to seek help to improve, I suggest you walk away. That would be better than being part of a systemic problem where students who most need a quality education to change the current trajectory of their lives, to get out of poverty or to even be the first college graduate, is thwarted because of you.

Rosebaum also said, "If you want to think of a method to deny children and whole communities an opportunity to learn and an opportunity to be part of the political process education is the way." Without a quality teacher, there can't be quality education or a better quality of life. All

students deserve to have a chance at a better life and receiving a quality education is a key component.