



If Dr. Ferebee Stays or Leaves, Some People Will Be Mad Either Way

By Shawnta S. Barnes – December 2, 2018

Back in April, it was revealed that Dr. Lewis Ferebee, Superintendent of Indianapolis Public Schools, was a finalist to lead the second largest school district in the United States in California. I remember reading comment after comment online about how Dr. Ferebee was running away. Other people suggested he damaged IPS and was leaving the mess for others to

fix. I shook my head. If Dr. Ferebee was so bad for IPS, and he is looking for a job, why are you mad?

According to *The Washington Post*, Ferebee is a finalist for a job in D.C. “Two finalists to lead the District’s public schools emerged Saturday after a six-month search for a chancellor, according to people with knowledge of the process: Amanda Alexander, the interim D.C. chancellor, and Indianapolis Public Schools Superintendent Lewis D. Ferebee.” Once again, some people in Indianapolis are mad. Regardless of how people in Indy feel about Dr. Ferebee, it is clear that some people outside of Indy think he is worth hiring. You don’t become a finalist for two high profile jobs if that isn’t the case.

I have spoken to Dr. Ferebee on a few occasions. I believe the work he implemented in IPS is what he believes will best benefit students. I also know that the shelf life of a superintendent is not as long as other jobs in education. A report released this year stated the average tenure of a school superintendent is six years. Even if people were more supportive of his work, he still could have been on a job hunt.

I don’t think everything he did in IPS hurt the district. When I eventually came to IPS during the 2015-16 school year, it was not the first time I was offered a job in IPS. It was the first time HR responded to my phone calls and processed my paperwork in a timely manner. The organization and productivity of HR improved during his time in the district. I also personally benefited from the teacher leader programs he implemented.

Before I came to IPS, I was told I was a talented educator, but each time I put my name in the hat to take on a role, a white colleague was picked instead. A lot of that centered around administrators believing a person who had good data and good classroom management, like me, needed to stay in the classroom. Dr. Ferebee made clear that teachers needed the opportunity to help other teachers. Even though I eventually left IPS, I am still benefiting from being a teacher leader. People still reach out to me to present, and I believe this would not be the case had people not been exposed to me in IPS.

When I left IPS, some colleagues said I wasn’t loyal and did not care about kids in the district. I’m hearing the same about Dr. Ferebee. I hope he gets the job in D.C. Maybe people in D.C. will be more receptive to his work and his vision. When Dr. Wanda Legrand, Ferebee’s former Deputy Superintendent for Academics, accepted a job in D.C., I wondered if he would want to go there. Now, we know, but time will tell if he will get the opportunity to do so.

