



The Benefits of Living Near Your School

By Educator Barnes – July 19, 2019

If you ever see my resume or read my LinkedIn profile, you might notice a commonality between all the schools where I have been employed. I live on the northwest side of Indianapolis, and all the schools listed on my resume have either been on the northwest or west side of Indy with the exception of my first year in the classroom when I worked in a westside Indy suburb. My drive time (including when I worked in the suburb for a year) has ranged from

seven minutes to twenty minutes. My husband will tell you I don't like driving and never volunteer to drive when we are going somewhere together, but a short drive time is only one factor of why I want to live close to my school.

I already know some teachers are shaking their heads emphatically no. They might even be considering closing this link, but hear me out. I believe there are more pros than cons for educators.

The Saturday before school started during my first year in the classroom, I married my husband. We were living on the far west side in a tiny apartment, and I was working in a westside suburb. I was recruited to this suburb from Purdue because they were looking for teachers of color. At the same time, new subdivisions were being built. Many, and I do mean many, parents expressed their disappointment that I didn't live there. They suggested my husband and I buy a house in the community. They told me how great the community was and how they wanted me to join it.

When you teach at a school, you become part of that community whether you live there or not. Parents feel you are more invested when you live there. My husband and I wanted to live in Indy. At the end of the school year, we bought a house, where we currently reside today, on the northwest side of Indy. I switched to a new school the next year that was seven minutes from our new home. Those parents' comments stuck with me. They were proud of their community and wanted me fully part of it. It seemed they didn't feel I was fully committed to their children since I didn't live there.

Being fully part of a community is a great benefit to a teacher. My first year in the classroom I was driving from an urban area into the suburbs. Most commonly, families are used to teachers driving from the suburbs into their urban communities. These educators are looked at as outsiders who don't really understand what is happening in the neighborhood. It can also make it hard for parents to trust you.

Yes, when you are seven minutes from school, you will see your students and their families. This doesn't have to become a negative situation. For students, it makes you more real. If you are a non-educator reading this you might be scratching your head. Apparently, some children think we don't leave the schools or our homes. I've never had a negative experience in seeing families in public. Most students are more excited to see Mr. Barnes than me. I will say my husband had to adjust to it. "I don't know these children, but somehow it seems like they know me. What are

you saying about me at school?" I honestly don't say much but getting to interact with families in public is a good way to build relationships.

When there are community events that are not school-related, you have a common connection. You have a springboard for future conversation. Now that I have 13 years under my belt as an educator, many of my students are gainfully employed. Some work in my community. I love seeing my students grow up and begin their own families.

Most people will respect your boundaries or note discomfort and readjust. Once I became a parent, I quickly found out that one of my sons was not too happy with my current or former students hugging me in public. One time he said, "Don't hug her. She is my mommy." The parents told my student to wave goodbye to me so I could finish my shopping.

Your presence in the community shows parents you're invested because you live there. When stuff happens, you are touched also. Parents don't have to explain a certain situation because they know you understand and get it.

If you don't live near your school, I'm not suggesting you sell your home or break your lease. If you do look for another job, consider the schools in your neighborhood. I believe you will find it can be a rewarding experience.