



The Plight of Educators, Who Are also Parents, as Schools Plan to Reopen During the Coronavirus Pandemic

By Educator Barnes – July 22, 2020

When school buildings closed in Indiana back in March, schools shifted from in-person education to remote education. The burden for educators who are also parents was doubled. Educators had to figure out how to serve the students at their school while simultaneously ensuring their children were learning and not falling behind in their academics.

I've talked to some educators that have children in K-12. They all shared similar reflections about supporting their children and their students at the same time when school buildings closed. They felt they either failed in one area and succeeded in the other, failed in both areas, or did about average in both. No matter how you look at the situation, excellence was not achieved. Most educators want the best for their children, and most parents want the best for their children. As schools are sharing their reopening plans, educators who are parents are being forced into a situation where they cannot succeed at the level they want because of decisions that are being made.

My stress and anxiety levels are through the roof. I was much more balanced when all school buildings were closed. At least everyone was doing the same plan. Now, in Indianapolis, where there are 11 school districts, and multiple charter networks and charter schools, everyone's plan is different. This is problematic. What happens if you work for one school and your children go to another school and the schools have different plans? This is my current situation.

My children attend school in Washington Township. The district has chosen to reopen remotely. I fully support the decision. However, I am worried about the burden this puts on my children's teachers. The only thing I wished the district would have done differently is delayed the start of the school year. This would have allowed teachers to fully enjoy their summer breaks instead of cutting it short to begin planning for the teaching remotely and teaching remotely differently than they did at the end of last school year.

My school has decided to reopen and offer both in-person instruction and remote instruction. What do I do? Do I quit my job and stay home with my children? Do I enroll my children at my school so we would have the same schedule? Do I try to work out an accommodation? Quitting my job is not something I want to do at the moment. When the time comes for me to move to another job, I don't want it to be because of situations caused by COVID-19. My husband and I decided against moving my sons to my school because if we wanted them enrolled there, we would have already done it. My sons have friends and connections at their school. They miss those friends. We don't want to take away the opportunity for them to have some sense of normal and consistency. I ultimately decided to request an accommodation. Luckily, it was granted.

When the school year begins, I will work half-days every day until my children's school reopens. On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, I will work at school in the morning, and on Tuesday and Thursday, I will work at school in the afternoon. My husband's schedule will be

the opposite. This will allow us to do our jobs, and help our children learn remotely. Even though we have a plan, we still needed one more adjustment. We reached out to our sons' principal and requested they be put in the same class. Based on the guidance sent from Washington Township, each teacher would send his or her schedule for the students and parents to follow. Since our sons are identical twins in the same grade, we decided we didn't want to deal with two teachers and two different 4th grade schedules or assignments. This didn't work that well for us when school buildings closed, and they were in 3rd grade. Thankfully, the principal approved our request, but we are still worried about how remote learning will go.

When it is my turn or my husband's turn to manage our children's remote learning, we still have to work. Remote learning is going to be more time consuming than before. The remote learning day will be longer than it was when the school closed last year according to the [guidance from IDOE](#). Not only will remote learning be more time consuming, but remote work as an educator will also be more time-consuming. I can't remember the last time I actually had a full night of sleep. I'm constantly doing tasks for work. Then I get to redo them when the guidance changes.

If all of that is not enough, schools across the country are now magically becoming woke with claims that they are actually going to do diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work. If you are a Black person like I am or even a person of color, this work is not a joke to you. To deal with balancing being an educator, and a parent during this pandemic on top of wondering if the DEI work is actually real and not performative is mentally exhausting.

I can't forget the people I love who are concerned about me. My parents and friends are worried. As much as they are proud of me being an educator, they want me to be safe. They have expressed concerns about my physical and emotional safety and the workload I have been under. The last two times I visited my parents, I didn't even interact with them much. Instead, I slept. I slept better at their house than at my own house. I believe that my home has now become synonymous with my job, so there is not much escape from work which turns into a lack of rest.

This burden is real! I wish all Indianapolis schools had the same plan, so educators who are also parents don't have to make tough choices. I also believe school leaders need to show empathy to their staff members who are parents. How staff members are treated and how their accommodation requests are handled during the pandemic will determine if they stay with their schools when the pandemic ends.

