

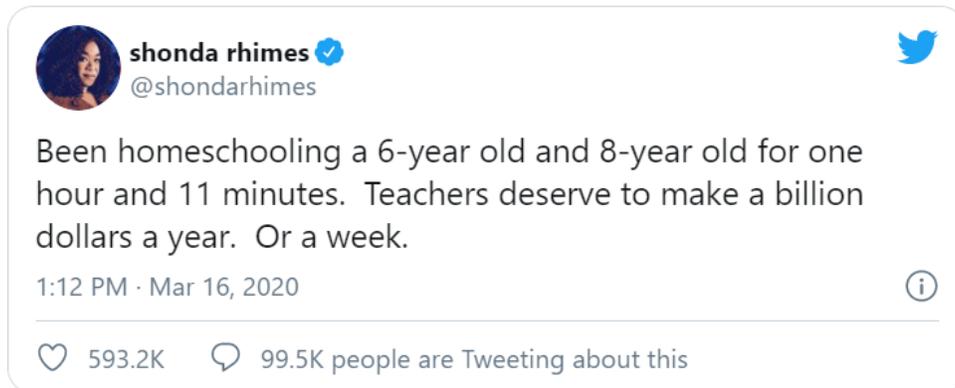


## Where Did the Compassion for Educators Go During This Pandemic?

By Educator Barnes – August 13, 2020

When school building closed earlier this year due to the coronavirus pandemic, educators worked overtime to figure out how to provide the best instruction for students remotely. Educators were praised for their efforts. Shonda Rhimes, a television producer and writer tweeted back in March, “Been homeschooling a 6-year old and 8-year old for one hour and 11 minutes. Teachers deserve to make a billion dollars a year. Or a week.”

In Indiana, all teachers were recognized as teacher of the year. Teachers were praised, but now the tide is changing.



Although it is not clear when the pandemic will come to an end, it has been decided that we must keep educating children and find a way to improve learning from when schools first closed. The stakes are higher for both teachers and students. As the demands of teachers have increased, the compassion and empathy for teachers have decreased.

Salt Lake City board of education member Michael Nemelka referred to teachers as lazy. He believed teachers should not work from home because they might just sit around and watch television. Comments like this are lowering teacher morale. It's making teachers reconsider staying in education. Teachers are choosing to resign or even retire early because of safety concerns due to COVID-19 or because of the lack of support from school and district leaders and colleagues.

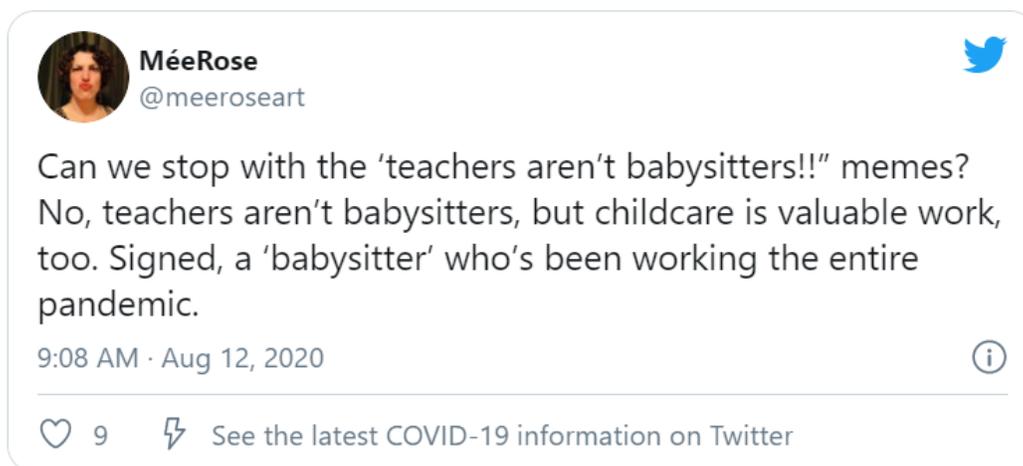
Personally, I have found it extremely hard to balance life as both a parent and an educator. Yesterday was my first time back on campus since my school's building closed last school year. Since my sons' school district is 100% remote, I requested an accommodation that would allow me to work from home 50% of the day. This allows my husband and I to share equal responsibility in supporting our sons with their remote learning.

This time, remoting learning is not the same as before. Students are earning letter grades based on the quality of their work. Last spring, some schools did not issue grades. If my children are struggling with their work while I'm at home remotely, I have to choose between them and my job. If this happens during a meeting, I have to step away. I'm in a constant catch-up game. The educators I know who are in similar situations have shared that colleagues are jealous of their accommodations or get frustrated when they can't do a task right away.

If unpleasant interactions with colleagues aren't enough, then there is the administration who wants every task completed yesterday while tasks are being constantly piled on top of teachers. Many times, these demands are made with limited or no support and requested with short notice.

In addition to that pressure, some parents are demanding schools fully reopen in-person so they can resume working. It doesn't help matters when people are making the statements that teachers aren't babysitters or schools are not daycares. This unnecessarily pits teachers and child care employees against each other and suggests that one role in the system is more important.

When I think about the fact that my mom has worked in both daycares and before and after school programs, I know how important these roles are. She has currently been learning how to use Canvas, a learning management system that some schools are using, so she can help the students who are doing remote learning at her current job. Making this a battle takes away from the real fear that teachers have with returning to school buildings because of safety concerns.



The last thing teachers need right now is to be seen as lazy or be seen as being superior to other workers who work with children. This negativity makes it much harder for teachers to do their jobs and do them well. We need teachers to do their jobs well; our children's futures depends upon it.

If you are a district or school leader, ask teachers how you can better support them. If you are a parent, be patient and understanding. If you are a teacher, I see you. Hang in there. We need more compassion during this pandemic, especially for our teachers.