



Applying Kwanzaa Principles to Education: Nia

By Educator Barnes – December 30, 2021

Kwanzaa is celebrated from December 26 to January 1. According to the book “The Seven Days of Kwanzaa” by Angela Shelf Medearis, “In 1966, Dr. Karenga created Kwanzaa, a cultural holiday based upon the ancient customs of Africa ... Dr. Karenga hoped that the things that were studied and practiced during Kwanzaa would guide African-Americans all year long.” Each day of Kwanzaa covers one of the seven Kwanzaa principles. On each day of Kwanzaa, Indy K12 will explore how these principles can be applied to education.

The fifth principle of Kwanzaa is nia which means purpose. Every single year, educators should evaluate their purpose. Nia, as it is meant in the Kwanzaa tradition, is not a self-centered purpose. It is meant as a vehicle to use our God-given gifts to improve the lives of others to reach their purpose in life.

As a teen, as a college student, and as a wife, I took the spiritual gifts assessment. It is an inventory one can take at church to learn their spiritual gifts. I took this three times in hopes of receiving different results. Each time, I got the same results in the same order:

administration, teaching, and service. Knowing what my gifts are and using them to bring value and success to others are two different concepts.

We all know that we can do just enough to not get fired. Should we? No, especially if we are teachers. We must determine what we want to accomplish in the education space. This year, I took all I had learned from being a school administrator, literacy coach, librarian, English as a new language teacher, an English teacher, and started an education consulting company. My purpose is to help teachers build their confidence in their abilities and to help them improve in areas of growth. When schools have great teachers, students thrive.

I am tired of seeing students fall through the cracks. I can't close every crack, but I can do my best to fulfill my purpose of teaching others and using my administration skills to long-range plan and see the big picture.

What is your purpose as an educator? If you read this and are an educator, this answer should have come quickly. If it did not, please take the time and find out. We need you to know your purpose, walk in your purpose, and work cooperatively with other educators who are walking in their purpose.