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# It Will Take More Than Money to Diversify the Teaching Profession

By Shawnta S. Barnes - October 15, 2017



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In an effort to address Indiana's teacher shortage and hopefully diversify the profession, the Indiana Commission for Higher Education's Next Generation Hoosier Educators Scholarship was signed into law on March 22, 2016. This scholarship offers \$7,500 a year for four years to high-achieving high school seniors who either had to be in the top 20% of their class or have a top 20% ACT or SAT score. After graduating with an education degree and obtaining a teaching license, the scholarship recipient must teach in an eligible public or nonpublic Indiana school for five years or pay back the scholarship.

The first group of 200 recipients, who began classes this fall, were mostly white females. According to this report, "only 11 of the 200 recipients were underrepresented minorities and 31 were men." Unfortunately, I'm not surprised. You have to do more than throw money at minority high school students to get them to choose teaching as a career. The reality is many professions are trying increase the number of minority employees and many of

those professions do a better job of convincing high school students to go into their field instead of teaching.

When I was in high school I signed up for cadet teaching, but this was of my own volition. When I went to my teachers for reference letters, it seemed they had forced smiles and one told me to keep my options open. No one at school encouraged me to become an educator, but I was encouraged to consider technology, various science fields, and the medical field. Promotion of other career paths continues in schools today. It's a shame the teaching profession is not promoted in the most obvious place, the school.

The lack of promotion of the teaching profession is not the only reason there is a lack of diversity. This past weekend I was reading everything I could about the first national conference of the Fellowship: Black Male Educators for Social Justice when I came across the article "Why having more black male teachers matter." A quote in the article resonated with me, "so few (black males) are moved to enter the profession — many had discouraging or even traumatizing experiences in school, for starters." Although some minorities enter the teaching profession so students can have a teacher who looks like them, others don't want to return to a place that wasn't pleasant for them during their childhood.

The application for the 2018-19 Next Generation Hoosier Educators Scholarship has been available since September 1, 2017 and closes on November 30, 2017. To ensure diverse applicants apply, high school students have to see teaching as a viable and valued profession and school as a place they want to return to day after day as a career. If Indiana wants to decrease the teacher shortage, the profession has to be elevated and promoted to students in the place they attend every day, the school.

I love being an educator. I love seeing my minority counterparts lead countless discussions in their classrooms as they work to shape the minds of our children. The Hoosier scholarship program is open to everyone. If we want to change the makeup of our profession, then minorities must be encouraged to take advantage of opportunities like the Hoosier Educators Scholarship, even if they're not encouraged to do so in the places where students are being educated.

If you have the opportunity to speak to high school students, encourage them to consider teaching and to take a moment and complete the application. It could change their lives.