

Want to Find a Good School? Pay Attention to Where Teachers Send Their Kids.

By Shawnta S. Barnes - June 28, 2018



I am a parent and I am a teacher. I have also lived in Indianapolis since I was two. I have attended school in two Indianapolis school districts and worked in a few districts. I am always surprised when a parent ignores my advice about a school, sends their children there, and then later tells me I was right about the school.

Here are a few reasons why you should talk to teachers and observe where their kids go to school:

Start with your children's current school.

Do teachers send their children to your children's school? When I pick my sons up from aftercare at their school, many times I see teachers walking out of the building with students, but these children are not only students of the school, they are also the children of teachers at the school. In Indianapolis, some school districts allow children to attend a school if they don't live within the boundaries and some don't. The exception to the rule are teachers. Teachers are allowed to bring their children to the school where they work. If teachers in your children's school wouldn't enroll their children in the school, you need to find out why.

Teachers network with educators across the city and the state.

There are 11 different school districts in Indianapolis, as well as, private schools, public charter schools, and homeschool networks, but education circles are small. Many educators have worked in more than one school district or have close teacher friends who work in other school districts. When it comes to good schools, teachers know which ones are great and which ones are not. For example, a mom looking for a school said to me, "But isn't that school an A rated school?" and I told her, "It may be an A school but it is not doing A work for black and brown kids." This is the type of insider information teachers know.

Teachers can tell you what the data really means.

No school wants to look bad, so some schools become masters in the art of deception. They share data that paints a pretty picture, but the truth is ugly. A school might have on its website that it has doubled its test scores. Doesn't that sound great? In reality, the school went from 6% of students passing the standardized test to 12% of students passing the standardized test. Yes, they doubled their scores, but what if your child was part of the 88% of students that didn't meet proficiency on the test? I guarantee you, you would care nothing about the doubling of the scores then.

They know where the bad teachers are.

Newsflash: Bad teachers don't always get fired. Many times they resign with a clean slate and terrorize a new set of students and colleagues in another school. A few years ago, I was contacted from several people from another school where I had worked. They wanted to let me know that a teacher who told minorities (including me) they were affirmative actions hires, who constantly kicked black and brown kids out of her class, and thought that immigrant children would grow up and have babies so they could stay in America had landed a job at a highly coveted magnet school in the school district where I was working at the time. I know this person got pushed out of their previous school after people quit and complained about her behavior, but she wasn't fired. This meant she could slide into another school setting. Just because a teacher has an effective or highly effective rating doesn't mean he or she will be effective with your children.

If you are on a search for a new school, make sure your checklist includes speaking to a few educators.