

## World Teachers' Day 2017

By Shawnta S. Barnes – October 5, 2017



World Teachers' Day is held annually on October 5, the anniversary of the signing of UNSECO/ILO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization/International Labour Organization) 1966 recommendation concerning the status of teachers. This recommendation addresses teachers' rights worldwide. This year's theme is "Teaching in Freedom, Empowering Teachers."

This day not only celebrates teachers and their accomplishments, but it also is a vehicle to address challenges in the profession such as the global teacher shortage. UNESCO Institute of Statistics reports, “The world needs 69 million teachers if we are to achieve universal primary and secondary education by 2030.”

I believe this year’s theme is spot on and is key to addressing the teacher shortage, but we also need to focus on retaining teachers currently in the profession. We cannot focus on recruiting more teachers if we don’t address why current teachers are fleeing the profession. Yes, money matters and teachers need a livable wage, but money is not the only reason teachers are leaving, lack of freedom and lack of empowerment are.

Although teachers are referred to as professionals, many times they are treated like dummies who have no knowledge to bring to the table. “Mrs. Smith, teach from this book on this day, ask these questions, and administer this test and have the results in the gradebook by five p.m.” Our creativity is killed by curriculum planned even before we meet our unique students and since our district paid thousand of dollars for a consultant to tell us what to teach, we better not question it.

My question to educational leaders is, “How are you empowering your educators and giving them freedom to implement what they have been trained to do?” Many of my friends will say, “There is no way I could be a teacher.” I know I’m not the only teacher who has heard this. Since many people make that proclamation, this means they are not willing to take the place of the educators who are leaving. We have to do better to support our current educators while we are recruiting new educators to the profession.

One way you can support educators is to encourage them. If there is an educator who has made a difference in your life, reach out to him or her and write a letter. That piece of encouragement just might keep that teacher in the classroom a little longer while our educational leaders loosen the reins and give teachers more freedom, more respect and more power.