



2018: Indy K12 Top 12

Posted on December 29, 2018 by Shawnta S. Barnes

Another year in education is almost in the books, but we would like to look back at our most viewed and shared content during 2018. We decided to go with a top 12 list instead of a top 10 because two of our most viewed articles this year were written in 2017. We appreciate your readership and hope you are enjoying this holiday season.

12. Why I Write: Andrew Pillow by Andrew Pillow

I can't teach at every school, but I can reach thousands maybe even millions of people and influence policy through writing. I write to encourage best practices. I write to bring awareness to issues. I write to pressure people into making our educational landscape better.

11. Calling Students by Their Preferred Name Is Not Violating Your Freedom of Religion by Andrew Pillow

The First Amendment gives you the right to practice your religion in the United States without persecution. It does NOT give you the right to discriminate against others especially for doing something they are legally allowed to do. So if being transgender truly offends Mr. Kluge's religious sensibilities, then he has every right to not be transgender. That's where his rights on the subject end. He can't decide that he doesn't want to use a transgender's person chosen name because he doesn't personally believe in switching between masculine or feminine names.

10. Sandy Hook: The Promise 6 Years Later by David McGuire

I made a promise that I plan on keeping. Sandy Hook was a reminder of why I became an educator. It was about the promise I made as an educator to ensure my students have a future, a future that is full of promising results academically. But most importantly, I am here to prepare them for their future. The children who lost their lives six years ago won't have a future to live; however, their legacy lives through other children.

9. What Do You Do When a Parent Thinks Their Child Is Perfect? by Andrew Pillow

Parents of perfect children seem to have the worst luck with teachers. (Sarcasm)

When you are talking to the parent of a student and you notice they go on rants about how awful the last teacher was... you might be dealing with a "perfect student" parent. Of course, it's entirely possible that the last teacher the student had was actually bad. But in my experience, parents that think their child has never had a good teacher, typically believe their children do no wrong.

If you are dealing with a parent that volunteers numerous complaints about previous teachers, prepare yourself and take precaution.

8. The Civil War Was About Slavery and Teachers Need to Stop Teaching Students Otherwise by Andrew Pillow

Nobody at the time ever really debated the cause of the Civil War. As a matter of fact, this "Lost Cause" or "War of Northern Aggression" way of looking at the war came years later. And that's, unfortunately, the lens through which many teachers are teaching their students. They tell their students that the Civil War was about "states rights" or that slavery was "only one of the reasons" for the war. Both of these ideas are of course gross misrepresentations of the truth. The civil war was indeed fought over "states rights"... the right to have slaves.

7. Stop Beating Around the Bush; the President is Racist (VIDEO) by David McGuire

I do not understand how this country, this wonderful country, elected such an evil man. I think we need to stop beating around the bush, and just call it what it is. The president, y'all's president, is a racist. He's an absolute racist. He doesn't apologize for it, and he's not sorry about it.

6. Departing IPS Teacher Leader Answers Your Questions by Shawnta S. Barnes

If it was not clear from my first piece, I want it to be abundantly clear before I continue, I do not hold any ill will for Indianapolis Public Schools and I genuinely want the district to continue to improve for the sake of my relatives and the other children in our city that attend a school in IPS. I told one person who commented on my piece online this, "I think more people need to be transparent about their journey in education. I hope my transparency is helpful to others. We can't improve the education profession through silence." It is in this vein that I have decided to publicly answer questions I was asked.

5. Aspiring Indiana Teachers Cannot Pass Licensure Exams (2017) by Shawnta S. Barnes

Hearing the low passing rate may deter aspiring educators from completing their education courses. Aspiring teachers have invested at least four years of their life to pursue a degree in education and the dream of becoming a teacher could be dashed because of failure to pass the licensure exams. If these teachers have borrowed money to earn their degree, some may choose to switch their major because not obtaining a license ultimately means you will not be able to secure a teaching job to pay back loans.

4. Being Culturally Responsive Starts with Pronouncing Names Correctly (VIDEO) by Shawnta S. Barnes

One of the things that educators have to do at the beginning of the school year is to learn students' names. Now, unfortunately, once again on social media, I've seen educators make fun or complain about the fact that they have to learn these names. Well, we know who 'these names' are. They are typically students of color or students from different cultural backgrounds. Instead of thinking about being culturally responsive (and I know that's catchphrase right now) and being respectful and making an effort to learn these names, people are going to social media and complaining about it or they are making comments at work.

3. The Food Pyramid Is Wrong and We Need to Stop Teaching It in School by Andrew Pillow

Would it surprise you to learn that the food pyramid was inaccurate? Because it is.

Here's the truth: The food pyramid is a USDA marketing tool that completely ignores the advice given to them by their own nutritional experts in order to encourage people to eat more refined grains and meat... all of which, are coincidentally subsidized by the USDA.

This isn't some conspiracy theory or anything either. It is a well-documented fact. The USDA had nutritional experts craft a food pyramid. The original version that they came back with featured fruits and vegetables as the biggest and most important food groups. That version was overturned and edited into the final product that we are all familiar with today.

2. Why This Teacher Leader is Leaving IPS by Shawnta S. Barnes

When I told people I was leaving an A-rated township school to serve as a literacy coach in an F-rated IPS school, people said I was crazy and that it was a bad career move. The other reason people said I was crazy was because I had to take a \$5,000 pay cut. I'm a risk taker. I knew there was no guarantee that I would be able to obtain a teacher leader position, but I believed I had the ability.

1. Teachers Quit Principals, Not Schools (2017) by Shawnta S. Barnes

I once worked for a principal who avoided having difficult conversations and avoided dealing with conflict. At a staff meeting, this principal said, "Nobody has a gun to your head. If you don't want to be here, leave." When minority staff complained about other

staff members stating we were affirmative action hires, the principal told us we should move on and not worry about it. Although I earned a highly effective evaluation rating and loved the students, I eventually resigned from the school. Working in an environment where the culture is toxic was not good for my mental health. When a teacher's mental health is compromised, the teacher cannot be the best he or she can be for his or her students.