



So You Let Black Boys Wear Dreadlocks, but When are You Going to Stop Kicking Them Out of Class?

By Shawnta S. Barnes – January 8, 2019

I appreciate the transparency of my fellow *Indy K12* writer David McGuire. He is the principal of Tindley Summit, and he recently shared that he used to believe their previous hair policy was right. Up until this school year, at Tindley schools, boys had to keep their hair a certain length which eliminated hairstyles such as braids, dreadlocks, and twists. In his [article](#), he stated:

I remember the first time as a school leader I had to explain the policy to a prospective parent who had a son with braids. I told her that we had a certain expectation for how we wanted our young men to grow up and that you do not see too many black male CEOs, black politicians, black doctors, or black lawyers with braids in their hair. They look a certain way, and we did not want opportunities not to be presented to our young men because of their hair. I believed this policy prepared our male scholars for life.

Schools in the Tindley network serve mostly black students. I wonder how many students were never enrolled because their families decided cutting their children's hair wasn't worth the cost of admittance to the school. While I am happy this antiquated policy is gone, I'm still concerned about their suspension rates.

Kelly Marshall, Tindley's CEO, was on the panel during *The 74* and Roland Martin event School Choice is the Black Choice. I highlighted her dialogue with Roland Martin about discipline in Tindley schools in an [article](#) I wrote about the event.

Then, Martin moved on to discipline. "Are those students staying in your schools who have discipline issues? Are you working with them, or are they being expelled?" Marshall responded, "In transparency, Tindley has a very high suspension rate, very high. "What does that mean?" Martin retorted. Marshall replied, "Meaning we are suspending, I would say, twice that of the traditional public schools." Earlier in the evening, Marshall told the audience that the various Tindley campuses had 90% plus black students. As a black parent, why would I want to pull my black sons out of their current school to have them potentially suspended twice as much than at their current school? That's why our sons will never attend a Tindley school.

No school that serves black children should police their hair and tell them they cannot wear their hair in styles that are commonly worn by black people. It is a form of self-hatred and promoting European values over students' own culture. Does it matter if Tindley now lets black boys wear dreadlocks or twists if they are getting kicked out of class twice as much as when they were in their traditional public school? Yes, Tindley took a step in the right direction by eliminating this policy, but they need to do more to keep black children in the classroom.