

# Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Should Not Be an Inclement Weather Makeup Day

Educator Barnes – 1/14/19

I was born and raised in Indiana, and I still reside in Indiana today. One fact about Indiana is at some point the weather will get bad enough to delay or even cancel school. When I was a kid, if school was canceled, days were added to the end of the school year. Now, as an educator, I have seen options to address missed days of school evolve. Much of this change occurred after the 2013-2014 school year.

The blizzard of 2014 happened right after winter break. Due to the bad weather, students had at least one additional week off from school. Some schools had to close for longer. Some school districts had one of two inclement weather days built into the school calendar, but no school had enough built in to accommodate all the extra days off. My school district decided to have students go to school an extra hour longer every Tuesday and Thursday for several weeks to make up the time. I was teaching middle school then and the extended day meant we also had to pass out snacks. That was another responsibility I did not want at the time. After that school year, schools decided to find better ways to deal with inclement weather. One option was using holidays such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day-this is wrong.

The argument for using the Dr. King holiday to makeup school by some school districts is schools can provide opportunities to learn about the leader. Sorry, but this black mom and educator disagrees. We can't even close the achievement gap between black and white students, but schools can provide better opportunities by not observing King holiday? Forget that. Many schools have educators who do not even know how to implement a culturally responsive curriculum. Then, when educators try, many times they fail. Explain to me why my son came home and told me Dr. King was colorblind and didn't see skin color. It was because **he saw** skin color and **how people of color were being treated differently** that he fought so hard for civil rights. My son even sang a song that stated King was colorblind. Yes, I had a conversation with the teacher.

Many organizations provide rich opportunities for children when school is closed to honor King and his work. Students may gain free entry and have the opportunity to step foot in an establishment, such as a museum, that their family cannot afford to pay to enter. Many black communities have long-standing traditions and programs that do a better job than most schools can in regards to teaching about civil rights and Dr. King.

So far in Indianapolis, we have had one inclement weather day. The school district where I work has two inclement weather days built into the calendar, but the school district where my sons attend school does not. My sons now have school on a day to reflect about Dr. King. Since I don't have to work, I'm keeping my children out of school. It's my protest. I will talk to them about Dr. King and take them to community events. We

don't just pause for black history on Dr. King's day; that's 365 for us, but this day allows us to focus more on him specifically.

Before we change policies in school districts, we need to consider how families will be impacted or feel. Some children participate in Dr. King programs in the community. If we are going to be truly culturally responsive in schools, that starts with school policies we implement or change. Having school in session on Dr. King day should not be an option.