

**TEACHER CONFESSIONS:
I LOVE AND I HATE
RED FOR ED**

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By Educator Barnes – November 17, 2019

Unless you live under a rock, you know school districts across Indiana are closing for the Red for Ed Action Day on Tuesday, November 19, 2019, which is the same date as the start of the legislative session. That's what I hate. Schools are closing including my sons' school. Children should not be a bartering chip to get demands met.

So, what are those demands? Red for Ed is rallying for three specific goals. The first goal is to increase teacher pay. Indiana is dead last when it comes to teacher pay growth. Since my twin sons were born in 2011, I have had an additional job. It would be nice to not have to hustle to survive. The second request is to hold schools harmless for the ILEARN scores. Indiana switched to a new test, and as expected, the scores plummeted. I believe educators need an opportunity to set students up for success. Does the state really have the resources to penalize all of the school districts who didn't hit the mark, if schools are not held harmless? I don't believe so which means any improvement plan wouldn't have the support needed from the IDOE; the department would be stretched too thin. The last demand is eliminating the new requirement for teachers to complete 15 hours of local workforce-related professional development. Good gracious. I still do not understand how that even passed. I do not understand how that specific professional development is going to improve student outcomes.

Here's what I hate, the Red for Ed method and the message it promotes. This is my 14th year as an educator. For 11 of those years, I have worked in a traditional public school setting, and I paid union dues even when I worked in IPS when the union president was embezzling union funds. This school year, I decided to work for a public charter school. It is even a shame that I have to write the word public in front of the word charter every time I write it in an article, but I have to because entities such as the Red for Ed movement somehow can't figure out how to fight for pay increases without slamming charter schools. They'll tout the word privatization. Their members will tell me I'm a sell-out for leaving to work for a charter school. That's fine, but the truth is some of these same educators couldn't last a day in a charter school and are happy when those 'troublesome' black and brown kids leave their school for one.

Let's get real about who is leaving traditional public schools and transferring to public charter schools; it is black and brown children. Instead of coming out and saying they want to take away funding that gives black and brown students the opportunity their traditional public schools failed to give them, Red for Ed hides behind the word privatization.

What I'm waiting to hear is how educators are going to close the gap between Black and white students, Latino and white students, and Indigenous and white students. Yes, I agree that schools should be held harmless for ILEARN data, but they should not be held harmless for failing to yet again to improve outcomes for children of color. It does not matter what test it is, there is always a gap between white students and students of color. Teachers shouldn't be downtown demanding more money without being able to deliver results, or they will end up like some of the teachers who participated in the Chicago teacher's strike who wanted to

distance themselves from Red for Ed and give back their red shirts and hats because they felt like the strike made teachers look bad.

What I love is the unity of educators fighting for a cause. What I love is the possibility of educators being able to work only one job.

However, I don't believe this is the way to do it. On Tuesday, November 17, 2019, I will be at my school, that has chosen to stay open. My children will be with me at work since their school is closed. Governor Holcomb will not be in town, so he won't be able to attend the rally. Will our politicians listen? I'm hoping for the best, but this school administrator will be ensuring that teaching and learning are happening at my school. Will using the children, educators are supposed to teach, as a bartering chip by inconveniencing their parents be worth it? I guess time will tell.