



Teacher Mentors Matter

By Educator Barnes – December 16, 2019

Regardless of your profession, mentorship can be powerful. We need long term teacher mentoring in education. This is one way to improve the quality of educators in the profession.

If a teacher follows the traditional track as an educator, the teacher concludes the college experience with student teaching. It's like an internship. It is supposed to prepare the teacher for a future classroom. Although student teaching is helpful, it is not the most realistic experience. The classroom teacher already set up the room and trained the students prior to the student teacher's entry. The student teacher does not have to learn the ins or outs of the school nor deal with education politics (the unwritten rules). Once a teacher gets his or her first classroom, reality hits.

Typically, teachers are assigned a mentor during the first two years of their career. I believe everyone should have a mentor, even veterans. I have chosen educators that I respect to be my mentor, to be a person I can share my struggles and receive advice. This is my 14th year as an educator. I know I'm a much better educator than I was before, but I can still grow. There are new roadblocks I haven't crossed before.

For example, I dealt with working for a principal I liked and whom I respected, but I could not deal with the principal's inability to not be triggered by what I wrote about or my opinions on education. I never had this problem before with any other principal. For example, I interviewed the superintendent wrote an article. Another publication I write for decided to retweet the article, but added this note, "Teacher jumps over principal and goes straight to the superintendent." That resulted in a screenshot of the tweet being sent to my cell phone after hours inquiring what that was about as if I was the person behind writing the tweet. After advice from a mentor, I blocked the principal on all social media, stopped responding to any text messages, and kept it moving. Mentors help you navigate conflict.

Mentors also help push you towards new opportunities. Above I am pictured with Mildred Guyse. She is an awesome educator who is my cousin, but I also consider her a mentor. In this picture, we were at Teach-A-Rama 2018 for Marian University.

I was at her house one day, and she asked if I had anything on my calendar for December 1, 2018. I said no, and she got on her computer and started typing on a program. She told me I was going to be presenting at Teach-A-Rama and my topic would be strategies for a positive parent/teacher relationship. My feeble attempts to convince her that I wasn't up for the task was met with, "You'll be fine." It ended up being a good opportunity. In the audience were other strong black female educators whom I highly respect and consider mentors. I told those women they didn't need to see my session, and they could go elsewhere. They also told me I would be fine, and I was. I'm not going to lie; I was nervous especially with all that black excellence in the audience. That opportunity led to another presentation which led to two

more opportunities and more education connections. Mentors can see the benefit of an opportunity even when you can't.

Because I am experiencing mentorship benefits, I mentor other educators. Some are teachers I used to coach, and others are teachers that are referred to me by other teachers. All teachers need a trusted person who will help them succeed. If you don't have a teacher mentor, find one. If you are a seasoned educator, offer to help other teachers. My favorite part of mentoring other teachers is watching them grow; it is just as rewarding as seeing a student grow.