



If District Leaders, Principals, and Educators Aren't Auditing Lessons, How Do They Know They're Diverse or Inclusive Enough?

By Educator Barnes – October 22, 2020

Students in Indiana study Indiana history in fourth grade. One assignment Hoosier 4th graders typically complete is research about a prominent Hoosier. Unfortunately, the list of Hoosiers students are provided has not changed much over the decades, and most of the people on the list are white.

There are nearly 1.2 million students in Indiana. According to IDOE INview, the student demographic backgrounds are as follows: Asian 2.7%, Black 12.3%, Hawaiian or Pacific Islander 0.1%, Hispanic 12.8%, Multiracial 5.1%, Native American 0.2%, and White 66.8%. The list that is typically provided to students when they are studying famous Hoosiers is not reflective of the students in many classrooms across Indiana. How can it be clear what contributions and notable actions people of color have done in Indiana when they are barely included in the notable Hoosiers assignment? Even if an Indiana classroom is not as diverse, those students also need access to positive stories and images of Hoosiers of color.

My twin sons are in 4th grade this year. This week, they were given a list of famous Hoosiers and asked to submit the top three they wanted to learn more about. One of my sons chose: Orville Redenbacher (businessman), Jim Davis (cartoonist), and Orville Wright (inventor). My other son chose: Mark C. Honeywell (engineer), Johnny Appleseed (folk hero), and Virgil Ivan "Gus" Grissom (astronaut). Of the 65 people my sons had to choose from, one person was Native American, eight were Black, and the rest, 56 people, were white. Only ten people were female. The unintended message this list sends is that the important Hoosiers are white males. I don't believe this is the message my children's school wants to send or other schools in Indiana that does this assignment.

It is time for this list to change. Most of the people on my sons' list were the same people on the list when I attended school in 4th grade in Indiana. At the end of this piece, I have included a list of Hoosiers I believe schools across Indiana should add to their list. I also included at least one link about the person to make it easy for educators to actually incorporate the people on the list into their classrooms. The people below were either born in Indiana or made Indiana their home for some portion of time after being born somewhere else.

It did not take me long to find these names. If teachers divide and conquer, they can diversify their lessons quickly. Part of diversity, equity, and inclusion work is reviewing and auditing units and lesson plans. Some actions educators can take when starting an audit is identifying the number of males and females in the curriculum, the number of people from each racial background, and the number of people with different abilities that are included. Once this is done, a goal should be set to increase areas where the numbers are low. All that is required is intentionality. When educators aren't intentional, there are unintended consequences and messages sent to students. The famous Hoosier assignment is only one assignment of many that need a closer look. Yes, it will take time to audit and enhance the curriculum, but a

commitment to diversity and inclusion means a commitment to auditing curriculum and improving it.

Notable Hoosiers of Color

Note: This list is only a start; there are many more notable Hoosiers of color. If you have a recommendation of Hoosiers of color I should add, reach out to me, and I'll add to this list.

- Dr. Serena Auñón-Chancellor, astronaut, Hispanic
- Grisel Barajas, radio host, Hispanic
- Anthony Brooks Sr., educator, activist, and minister, Black
- Dr. George Washington Buckner, physician & minister to Liberia, Black
- André Carson, politician, Black
- Julia Carson, politician, Black
- Carolina Castoreno-Santana, advocate and executive director, Native American
- Terri Cope-Walton, journalist, Black
- Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds, musician, Black
- Mari Evans, writer, Black
- Aaron R. Fisher, soldier, Black
- Lillian Thomas Fox, activist, and journalist, Black
 - Indiana Journalism Hall of Fame: Lillian Thomas Fox
- John Wesley Hardwick, painter, and sculptor, Black
- The Jackson 5, entertainers, Black
- Janet Jackson, singer, dancer, actress, Black
- Little Turtle, chief, Native American
- Edna Martin, humanitarian, Black
 - *Additional resource: Sister of the Solid Rock: Edna Mae Barnes Martin and the East Side Christian Center*
- Adrian Matekja (pronounced Ma-TEE-ka), writer, professor, and former Indiana Poet Laureate, Black
 - *Additional resource: Adrian Matekja news and press*
- Wes Montgomery, musician, Black
- John Morton-Finney, civil rights activist, lawyer, and educator, Black
- Wilma Rudolph, Olympian athlete, Black
- Marshall "Major" Taylor, cyclist, Black
- Madam CJ Walker, inventor, Black
- Lawrence Author "Speed" Webb, musician

- Charlie Wiggins, race car driver, Black
 - *Additional resource: For Gold and Glory*