



IU School of Education at IUPUI honors three alumni as 'Transformational Educators'

INDIANAPOLIS (Nov. 24, 2014) -- The Indiana University School of Education at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis honored three alumni who have made a mark on their field during the third annual "Celebration of Transformational Educators" ceremony Thursday night: former Snacks Crossing Elementary Principal Mariama Shaheed Carson, Phalen Leadership Academy teacher April Williams and Ben Davis High School Student Services Director Sherman Woodard.



*Phalen Leadership Academies Teacher
April Williams*

The event is to honor the achievements of early career alumni for their transformational work in public schools. A committee selects honorees from a pool of nominees. Each honoree receives a \$1,000 award to advance his or her work.

Thursday's program at the Madame Walker Theater featured a formal presentation to the award recipients. Scholar of African American, religion and cultural studies Michael Eric Dyson provided the keynote address.

Carson, MS'07 in educational leadership, is the first Indiana educator to receive an Education Entrepreneur Fellowship from the Mind Trust and a recipient of the 2004 Milken Family Foundation award, popularly known as the "Oscar of Teaching." She is using the \$250,000 fellowship to launch a K-8 Spanish immersion charter school serving high-poverty communities in Indianapolis.

Carson was in the first cohort of the IU School of Education at IUPUI's Urban Principalship Program. She has won numerous honors and awards for her work, including a 2013 United Way Student Success Grant of \$242,000 to implement innovative practices for students and teachers at Snacks Crossing Elementary, where she served as principal. Purdue University awarded her a Science Education Fellowship in 2006, and she was named a "People to People" delegate to South Africa by that prestigious ambassador program in the same year.

"I believe that transformational education begins with seeing possibilities and opportunities where there may not have been, and then doing the best you can to blaze the trail and lead," Carson said in her acceptance.

Williams, MS'08 in elementary education, is a third-grade teacher at Phalen Leadership Academy after teaching fourth and fifth grades at North Wayne Elementary in Fort Wayne. She is known for her particular emphasis on reading, which has resulted in remarkable literacy success among her students. Her students have outpaced those in peer classes, with 85 percent of her students passing the ISTEP exam.

She is a member of the Young Leaders in Urban Education, African American and minority teachers who share best practices, develop curriculum and mentor pre-service minority teachers. Last year, the Lillian



Davis Foundation Summer Program chose Williams as lead teacher for its summer learning and enrichment program. Williams earned the Benjamin Banneker Outstanding Teacher of Math Award in 2010.

"What a tremendous honor," said Earl Phalen, founder of the Phalen Leadership Academy, whom Williams thanked personally in her acceptance remarks. "I have been blessed to work with over 10,000 educators throughout the United States, and April truly is one of the best of the best!"

Woodard, MS'00, has focused his work on helping the achievement of African American young men. In 2007, he started the "Giant Kings" program intended to facilitate the identity, academic, social and career development of these students. The program is credited with helping to develop a great number of African American male leaders and creating a positive impact throughout the school system.

Participants in the Giant Kings, of whom 73 percent qualified for free or reduced-price lunch, have graduated at a rate between 94 and 100 percent every year. Every participant in the program has been accepted to a college or university upon graduation. Woodard is currently in the urban education Ph.D. program at the IU School of Education at IUPUI.

Chalmer Thompson, associate dean for research and academic affairs at the IU School of Education at IUPUI, praised Woodard for engaging the Giant Kings with information on their African ancestry.

"His strategy is not to kowtow to messages that paint black males as criminally inclined or cognitively inferior or inherently lazy, messages we receive again and again in our society," Thompson said. "What he does is feed their consciousness; enlighten them with knowledge that is too often hidden away, deemed irrelevant or questionable; and together with other black male counselors at the school helps the Kings understand that they are important, worthy and, indeed, regal."

Video of the entire Celebrating Transformational Leaders in Education ceremony will be posted on [the IU School of Education Vimeo Channel](#).

The [Indiana University School of Education at IUPUI](#) is an institution defined by its place, while at the same time defining the role of urban education in the 21st century. Located in the heart of a major metropolitan area, the school prepares exemplary educators and leaders for urban settings.

<http://news.iupui.edu/releases/2014/11/transformational-educators-iupui.shtml#>