

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Public Schools

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Dear SPF Families:

At its [January 21st](#) meeting , the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education passed a resolution recognizing the month of February as Black History Month in our schools. Black History Month is both a celebration of the achievements of African American individuals and a time to recognize the central role that African American people have played in U.S. history. Black history is American history, and the shared and everyday experiences of African-Americans are an important part of our history, both nationally and locally.

In Scotch Plains-Fanwood we hold to the belief that every student deserves to learn from a curriculum that offers “windows” to see cultures that are different from their own as well as “mirrors” that reflect their own culture and contribute to the unique identity each of them possesses. Sadly, for many of us who attended public schools, this was not always the case as the curriculum may have too often focused solely on European culture and history at the expense of other world cultures.

We are proud of our on-going work to make sure all of our students have access to windows and mirrors throughout the curriculum - and not just this month but throughout the school year. Our work in just the last three years has yielded the addition of 30 diverse titles to our English Language Arts curriculum as well as additions to our library collections.

Throughout our schools, our staff and students will be celebrating Black History Month in various ways. This may include writing activities, storytelling, art making, and learning through literature, and music. As we kick-off this important time, we look forward to engaging all students in continuing to learn about Black History as they develop knowledge and skills that will lead them to become citizens able to:

- Define race, and develop and understanding of how race is part of a person’s identity and experience
- Explain why we celebrate Black History Month
- Identify specific Black individuals whose achievements and accomplishments have helped improve the world in which we live
- Identify the obstacles faced by those individuals and the ways they overcame these to solve problems or make their communities better
- Recognize the impact that racist policies, procedures and practices have had and continue to have upon all of us.

In addition to school and classroom activities we are looking forward to two special celebrations. The first is an assembly program for our high school students produced by the members of our own

SPFHS Black Student Union. The second is the National African American Read-In, which we are engaging in through a partnership with Social Justice Matters. This program will allow us to celebrate the works and authors found in our curriculum throughout the year. We hope that bringing these works together in this way will encourage students to continue to read and choose additional texts written by Black authors.

The theme for the 2021 Celebration of Black History Month is “The Black Family: Representation, Identity, and Diversity.” We hope your family will join us in recognizing this important month by engaging your children in discussions about their learning.

Sincerely,

Joan Mast, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Robert McGarry, Ed.D.
Asst. Superintendent of Schools