

## District and Schools Celebrate Black History Month

From teaching students how to make Kente cloth to leading professional development on equity and inclusion, and from putting on spoken word performances to exploring Supreme Court cases, schools across AUSD are finding new ways to celebrate Black History this month.

At elementary schools for instance, students are:

- learning about the outstanding contributions of Americans of African descent
- exploring African art and culture
- reading books by and/or about African Americans, including the Caldecott Honor Book *Tar Beach* (Faith Ringgold, 1991) and *Martin's Big Words* (Doreen Rappaport, 2001)
- making collages based on the speeches of the Martin Luther King, Jr.

Ruby Bridges Elementary School will also be hosting its 11<sup>th</sup> annual Cultural Voices Assembly, where classes will celebrate the school's rich diversity with songs, poems, or dramatic readings, and Paden Elementary's weekly Facebook storybook times will focus on the civil rights movement.

Middle school activities this month include:

- developing action plans to focus on African American students and families
- learning about African American contributions to both the American cowboy culture and the California Gold Rush
- exploring African American music, including the form and formula for the 12-bar blues

And activities at the high schools include:

- analyzing books by black authors (such as Lorraine Hansberry and Trevor Noah); \
- creating choreography from black poets (e.g., Yusef Komunyakaa and Langston Hughes);

- researching important figures from the Harlem Renaissance
- learning about major Supreme Court cases (such as *Plessy v. Ferguson* and *Brown v Board of Education of Topeka*)
- mapping local communities to understand modern segregation patterns

In addition, Alameda High School's Black Student Union is hosting a Black Excellence event that will feature spoken word, singing, and performances by the AHS Jazz Band. And students in the radio class at Encinal High School have produced segments celebrating the contributions of African Americans that are being aired daily on [KJTV](#).

On February 26, AUSD — in partnership with the City of Alameda and the Black Achievers Alliance — will hold a Black History Month Celebration. The program will include remarks by Board President Mialisa Bonta, Ammar Saheli — a Bay Area theologian, consultant, and educator — and Kiki Monifa, a local writer/editor and the founder of [BlackHistoryEveryday.com](#). We'll also be recognizing several local African Americans for their contributions, plus we'll have dinner and children's activities! The event will take place from 6:30 to 8:30 pm at Ruby Bridges Elementary School. It will be free and open to the public, but we ask that you RSVP [here](#) to help us plan.

Of course, acknowledging the history and contributions of African Americans – and focusing on inclusion – shouldn't just occur one month per year. "Understanding and supporting our black students needs to be integral to our teaching and learning," says Sara Stone, AUSD's Chief Academic Officer. "Throughout this year we have offered professional development focused on issues of equity and culturally responsive teaching, and our upcoming strategic plan will include targeted interventions for our African American families. If we are to dramatically shift the outcomes for our students, we must be willing to both analyze our systems and policies in new ways and create educational experiences that provide access and opportunity."