

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

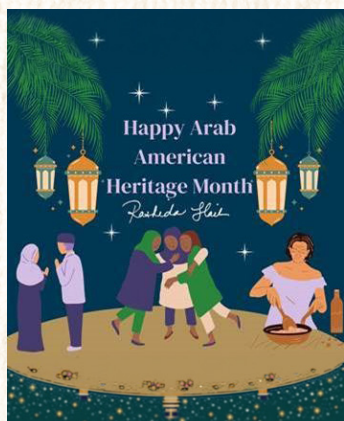
Advancing Equitable Opportunities



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April 2026 Cultural Heritage Highlights

Disclaimer: The Cultural Heritage Highlights is intended as a resource to encourage the recognition, exploration, and celebration of a wide range of cultural observances in schools and communities. Each monthly edition features selected observances that reflect both longstanding and emerging cultural traditions. While every effort is made to include diverse and meaningful content, the list is not exhaustive and should not be viewed as an intentional exclusion of any celebration. Educators and community members are encouraged to use this resource as a starting point for deeper learning, inclusive dialogue, and the continued honoring of all cultural identities throughout the year. Suggestions for upcoming highlights are welcomed and can be sent to ESBOCESdei@esboces.org.



Arab-American Heritage Month

Arab-Americans represent a vibrant and diverse community comprising both recent immigrants and the descendants of those who arrived generations ago. This community traces its heritage to the 22 nations of the Arab world, spanning North Africa and Western Asia. Reflecting the vast geography of their origins, Arab-Americans are a multi-racial and multi-ethnic group. They represent a wide spectrum of faiths, including significant Christian, Muslim, and Druze populations, and contribute to the American fabric across all levels of ability and professional sectors. This intersectional identity is a cornerstone of the community's unique cultural contribution to the United States.

Learn more:

[What is National Arab American Heritage Month?](#)

[PBS Videos: Documentaries on History of Arab American Communities](#)



Autism Acceptance Month

Autism Acceptance Month is an annual observance dedicated to fostering the inclusion and genuine acceptance of individuals diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Throughout April, workshops and community events provide professionals with the tools to better support those on the spectrum across various sectors, including education, healthcare, and housing. Since the United Nations General Assembly designated April 2 as **World Autism Awareness Day (WAAD)** in 2007, the international community has observed this day to affirm and promote the full realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms for autistic individuals. Significant progress has been achieved through the dedicated efforts of autistic advocates, whose tireless work continues to bring the essential lived experiences of the community to the forefront of global conversations.

Learn more:

[Autism Information and Support](#)

[What is World Autism Awareness Day?](#)



Month of the Military Child

April is designated as the Month of the Military Child, a dedicated time to honor the unique sacrifices made by military families worldwide. This observance places a special emphasis on the lived experiences of dependent children of service members serving both stateside and overseas. Sponsored by the Department of Defense Military Community and Family Policy, and supported by organizations such as the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA), this month recognizes the vital role these young people play in our global military community. It highlights the inherent bravery and resilience of military children, who continually demonstrate an extraordinary ability to adapt and meet adversity head-on within an ever-changing environment. We celebrate their strength and the character they build through their unique journeys.

Learn more:

[Ways to Celebrate!](#)



National Deaf History Month

National Deaf History Month is observed annually in April to celebrate the rich cultural heritage and profound contributions of the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing community. While not currently federally recognized, this month serves as a vital period to raise awareness regarding the systemic barriers the community faces and to champion the ongoing pursuit of accessibility and equity. The observance honors the immense impact Deaf individuals have made on American history and provides an opportunity to engage with the advocacy efforts of organizations dedicated to fostering true inclusion. By highlighting these initiatives, we celebrate the resilience of the community and recommit to creating environments where every individual, regardless of hearing status, can thrive.

Learn more:

[National Association of the Deaf](#)



National Poetry Month

Established by the Academy of American Poets in April 1996, National Poetry Month serves as an occasion to recognize the integral role of poets in our culture and to affirm the enduring relevance of the medium. Over the past three decades, it has evolved into the world's largest literary celebration. Each April, tens of millions of readers, including K–12 educators, students, librarians, and publishers, unite to highlight poetry's essential place in our shared human experience. This month-long observance not only fosters a deeper appreciation for the written word, it also supports literary curators and booksellers in bringing diverse poetic voices to the forefront of public life.

Learn more:

[National Poetry Month](#)



Parkinson's Disease Awareness Month

April is recognized as Parkinson's Disease Awareness Month, a designation chosen to honor the birth month of James Parkinson, who first identified the clinical symptoms of the condition over 200 years ago. Parkinson's Disease (PD) is a progressive neurodegenerative disorder of the central nervous system that primarily affects the body's motor system. Since its initial discovery, medical research has made significant strides in understanding the origins of motor symptoms. Furthermore, there is now a much deeper clinical appreciation for the broad spectrum of non-motor symptoms that were previously unrecognized. Observed on April 11, **World Parkinson's Day** serves as a global focal point to increase public understanding, support those living with the diagnosis, and advocate for continued research into treatments and a cure.

Learn more:

[Parkinson's Foundation: Featured Resources & Support](#)



Passover (April 1-9)

Passover, or Pesach, begins at sundown on April 1 and concludes the evening of April 9. Known as the “Festival of Freedom,” this significant Jewish holiday commemorates the Israelites’ Exodus from Egypt and their transition from slavery to liberation. The central observance of Passover is the Seder, a ritual feast held on the first two nights (observed on only the first night in Israel). The Seder involves a structured retelling of the Exodus through traditional stories and songs. It also features the consumption of symbolic foods, such as matzah (unleavened bread) and maror (bitter herbs), which serve as tangible reminders of the hardships endured and the eventual triumph of freedom.

Learn more:

[History of Passover and Its Traditions](#)

[PBS Video: Passover | All About the Holidays](#)



Ridván (April 21-May 2)

Established in the mid-19th century, Ridvan is considered the “Most Great Festival” in the Bahá’í faith, a twelve-day celebration that commemorates a transformative moment in spiritual history. The festival honors the time Bahá’u’lláh, the founder of the faith, spent in the Garden of Ridvan in Baghdad, where he first publicly declared his station as a Manifestation of God. Within this period, the first, ninth, and twelfth days hold special significance, marking his arrival in the garden, the subsequent arrival of his family, and his final departure to continue his journey. The festival is often celebrated with communal feasts and gatherings that emphasize the core principles of unity and peace. Beyond its spiritual importance, Ridvan also is the annual period when local and national Bahá’í communities hold democratic elections for their governing councils, known as Spiritual Assemblies. This unique electoral process is conducted through silent prayer and secret ballot without nominations or campaigning, embodying the faith’s commitment to a collaborative and unified global community.

Learn more:

[The Festival of Ridván](#)



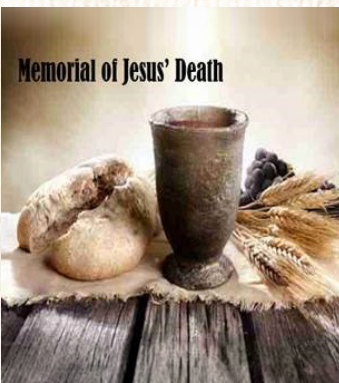
National Library Week (April 19-25)

National Library Week is an annual celebration highlighting the essential role that libraries, librarians, and library workers play in transforming lives and strengthening our communities. The 2026 theme, “Find Your Joy,” serves as a universal invitation for individuals of all backgrounds to explore the vast resources of libraries and discover what sparks their personal passion. This theme amplifies the core message popularized by librarian Mychal Threets in his viral digital outreach, emphasizing the countless ways libraries foster happiness and community. Furthermore, the theme aligns with the release of Threets’ debut picture book, *I’m So Happy You’re Here: A Celebration of Library Joy*. This week serves as a reminder that modern libraries are more than just repositories for books; they are dynamic community hubs that provide equitable access to information, technology, and lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Learn more:

[Support America’s Libraries](#)

[National Library Week 2026](#)



April 2 – The Memorial of Jesus’ Death

Jehovah’s Witnesses worldwide will observe the annual Memorial of Jesus’ death. This observance is considered the most significant event of the year for the community, following the biblical injunction to commemorate his sacrifice. Often referred to as “The Lord’s Supper” or “The Lord’s Evening Meal,” the celebration is modeled after the observance instituted by Jesus on the night of the Jewish Passover in 33 C.E. In accordance with this historical precedent, the Memorial is held once a year on the date corresponding to the fourteenth day of the Jewish lunar month of Nisan. It serves as a time of solemn reflection on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and his impact on the faith community.

Learn more:

[The Memorial of Jesus’ Death](#)



April 5 – Easter Sunday

Easter is the most significant and longstanding observance in the Western Christian calendar, commemorating the resurrection of Jesus Christ following his crucifixion. This celebration represents the cornerstone of the faith, symbolizing hope and renewal. Easter Sunday is observed immediately following the conclusion of Holy Week, which includes the solemn observances of Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday.

Learn more:

[Why is Easter Called Easter?](#)



April 8 – International Day of Pink

Observed annually on the second Wednesday of April, the International Day of Pink is a movement dedicated to challenging bullying, homophobia, transphobia, and all forms of discrimination. Communities worldwide are encouraged to wear pink in a visible display of solidarity, representing a collective commitment to inclusivity and mutual respect. This day serves as a powerful call to action, fostering awareness and providing vital support to create safer, more accepting environments for everyone, particularly within our schools.

Learn more:

[Create Safer Spaces](#)



April 12 – Coptic Orthodox Easter

Coptic Orthodox Easter is distinguished by unique traditions and ritualistic practices that reflect the ancient cultural heritage of the Coptic community. The celebration is preceded by the "Great Lent," a 55-day period of fasting and intense spiritual preparation. A central pillar of this observance is "Great Friday" (Good Friday), a day of deep solemnity and prayer. The services on this day last for several hours, involving the chanting of ancient melodies and the symbolic burial of Christ. This leads into Easter Liturgy, observed through vibrant communal feasts and the exchange of traditional greetings. The celebrations extend into "Bright Monday," a day of continued rejoicing where the somberness of Lent is fully replaced by festive gatherings. In the Coptic tradition, this Monday often coincides with Sham el-Nessim, an ancient spring festival during which families head to parks and riverbanks to enjoy traditional foods like salted fish (feseekh), scallions, and colored eggs. These customs foster a profound sense of unity and faith, highlighting the diverse tapestry of the global Christian tradition while offering a rich experience for believers.

Learn more:

[What is Coptic Orthodox Easter?](#)



April 14 – Vaisakhi

Vaisakhi (or Baisakhi) is a significant festival celebrated globally by both Sikhs and Hindus, marking a time of historical, religious, and agricultural importance. For the Sikh community, Vaisakhi is a paramount holy day that commemorates the formation of the Khalsa in 1699, and marks the beginning of the New Year according to the Nanakshahi calendar. Throughout the Indian subcontinent and the diaspora, the festival is celebrated with vibrant cultural expressions, including traditional folk dances like Bhangra and Giddha, singing, and festive parades known as Nagar Kirtans. Different regions observe the day through diverse local customs, ranging from wrestling bouts to religious processions, reflecting a shared spirit of joy, renewal, and community service (Seva). This celebration highlights the rich culture and the enduring values of equality and justice.

Learn more:

[The History of Vaisakhi](#)



April 14 – Yom HaShoah

Yom HaShoah, the internationally recognized Holocaust Remembrance Day, is a solemn observance dedicated to honoring the six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust and the heroism of survivors and resistance fighters. In Israel, the day is marked as a national holiday and a profound day of remembrance. In 2026, Yom HaShoah will be observed from sundown on April 13 through sundown on April 14. During this time, the nation of Israel comes to a two-minute standstill to observe a moment of silence, signaling a collective commitment to the promise of “Never Again” and the preservation of historical memory.

Learn more:

[Yom HaShoah in Israel](#)
[Remembrance Day Calendar](#)



April 22 – Earth Day

This year marks the 56th anniversary of Earth Day, a global movement dedicated to environmental protection and sustainability. The international community is encouraged to rally behind the 2026 theme “Our Power, Our Planet.” This theme serves as a call to action to accelerate our collective global commitment to renewable energy. By prioritizing solar, wind, hydroelectric, geothermal, and tidal energy sources, we can generate clean electricity for all and secure a more resilient future. Earth Day 2026 emphasizes that transitioning to sustainable power is not just a technological necessity, but a shared responsibility to protect the health of our planet for generations to come.

Learn more:

[Help Save the Planet!](#)



April 24 – Arbor Day

Arbor Day is an annual observance dedicated to the celebration of nature and the importance of reforestation. This holiday encourages both individuals and community organizations to participate in the act of planting trees to enhance our local ecosystems. While Arbor Day is globally recognized, the date of observance varies by region to ensure alignment with local climates and optimal planting seasons. In the United States, Arbor Day is traditionally observed on the last Friday of April, serving as a reminder of our shared responsibility to invest in the environmental health of our communities for future generations.

Learn more:

[PBS Video: What is Arbor Day?](#)



April 24 – Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day

Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day commemorates the lives of the 1.5 million victims lost during the genocide beginning in 1915. This day honors the enduring heritage and resilience of Armenian communities worldwide. It serves as a solemn call for reflection, historical understanding, and the formal recognition of past injustices. By acknowledging these truths, we reaffirm our collective commitment to human rights and the prevention of future atrocities, fostering a school community rooted in empathy and justice.

Learn more:

[Statement from Executive Director on Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day](#)



April 28 – World Day for Safety and Health at Work

Established by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2003, the World Day for Safety and Health at Work is observed annually to emphasize the prevention of occupational accidents and diseases. The theme for 2026 is “Good psychosocial working environments: A pathway to thriving workers and strong organization.” This day serves as a critical advocacy tool to raise the political profile of workplace safety.

Learn more:

[World Day for Safety and Health at Work](#)

