Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

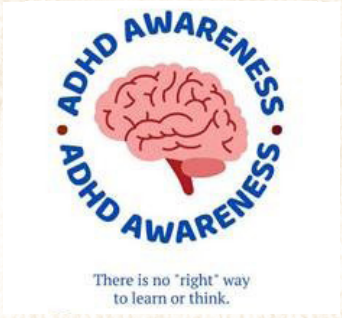
Advancing Equitable Opportunities

Eastern Suffolk BOCES

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October 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.



ADHD Awareness Month

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a brain-based medical disorder that primarily affects skills related to executive functions, but may also affect social, motor, and conversational skills. The cause is an imbalance in the brain's anatomy. In 2006, a resolution was passed by the U.S. Senate that declared September 7 as National Attention Deficit Disorder Day. From there, it grew into a full month. The aim is to raise awareness by providing information that is research-based, scientific, and reliable.

Learn more:

What is ADHD?



Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Awareness Month

This month highlights the diverse tools and strategies that enable non-speaking individuals or those with severe speech impairments to express themselves. Today's solutions span from unaided methods like gestures and sign language, to low-tech tools such as picture boards, to advanced high-tech speech-generating devices. This month supports individuals with conditions including autism, cerebral palsy, and ALS in exercising their right to communicate and connect with the world around them.

Learn more:

International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication



Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Breast Cancer Awareness Month is a global healthcare event organized to increase support for more than two million people, mostly women, diagnosed yearly. Within this month the primary focus, outside of educating and supporting others, is to encourage people to go for regular breast cancer screenings and to raise money for breast cancer research. Within this month, October 13 is **Metastatic Breast Cancer Awareness Day**, highlighting cancer that has spread beyond the breast to other parts of the body, and October 17-23 is **Men's Breast Cancer Awareness Week**.

Learn more:

What is Breast Cancer Awareness Month?



Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Millions of Americans are victims of domestic violence. One in four women and one in ten men have experienced contact sexual violence, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner and reported some form of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)-related impact. The statistical analysis of marginalized groups is even more alarming. Individuals need access to resources in order to find support. This month is a call to action to provide domestic violence education, and a reminder that simple actions can create a big change in victims' lives.

Learn more:

New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence



Down Syndrome Awareness Month

Down syndrome is the most frequent chromosomal condition diagnosed in the United States. It is a genetic condition where a person is born with an extra chromosome. Consequently, it can affect the brain and body development, however, that does not interfere with their ability to lead healthy lives with supportive care. This month is a time to raise awareness and celebrate the many abilities of our students, co-workers, and community members with Down syndrome.

Learn more:

National Down Syndrome Society



Dyslexia Awareness Month

Dyslexia is a common, neurobiological learning disability that primarily affects reading, spelling, and word recognition, not intelligence or capability. During this month from October 5-11 is **Dyslexia Awareness Week**, with **World Dyslexia Day** on October 8. Established to debunk common myths, promote evidence-based structured literacy instruction, and highlight the unique creative and problem-solving strengths often held by dyslexic individuals, this month encourages communities to create accessible, inclusive environments where every learner can thrive.

Learn more:

Made by Dyslexia

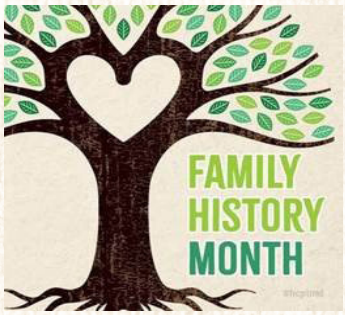


Emotional Wellness Month

Emotional Wellness Month encourages us to prioritize our mental well-being, manage stress effectively, and practice self-compassion. With nearly 83% of workers experiencing work-related stress and over a third of adults reporting daily worry, taking time to pause is more essential than ever. Use this month to reflect on your emotional health, establish supportive daily routines, build strong social connections, and foster meaningful balance in your personal and professional life.

Learn more:

Restorative Solutions



Family History Month

Established in 2001 by a U.S. Senate resolution, Family History Month is observed every October to encourage individuals to explore genealogy, trace their roots, and uncover the historical narratives that shape their heritage. Research into family history has surged with the arrival of digital archives and commercial DNA testing, leading millions worldwide to search census records, military logs, and migration patterns to map their ancestral lineages. By combining historical documentation with genetic testing, participants can gain meaningful insights into their family's health history, geographical origins, and cultural identity.

Learn more:

Celebrate Family History Month



Filipino American History Month

Each October, Filipino American History Month honors the rich heritage and achievements of the second largest Asian American group in the United States. The observance marks October 18, 1587, when the first recorded Filipinos stepped ashore in North America at Morro Bay, California, arriving on the Spanish ship, *Nuestra Señora de Esperanza*. Observing this month provides an opportunity to reflect on centuries of Filipino American history, resilience, and cultural influence.

Learn more:

Asian Art Museum



German American Heritage Month

Celebrated annually in October, German American Heritage Month honors the deep cultural legacy and contributions of German Americans to our nation's history, science, industry, and the arts. This month highlights centuries of German American heritage while coinciding with widely celebrated cultural festivals such as Oktoberfest. These festive celebrations bring communities together through traditional music, food, and dance.

Learn more:

German American Heritage Month

PBS Video: Oktoberfest

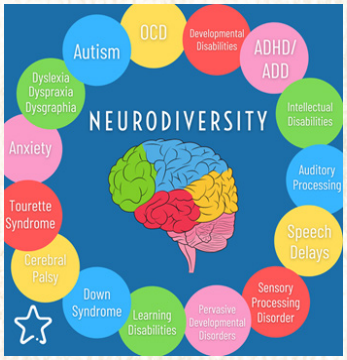


Italian American Heritage Month

In 1989, the U.S. Congress and George H. W. Bush designated October as Italian American Heritage Month. During this time, we celebrate Italian American culture and spread the word about the traditions that come with it. Italian Americans have made many contributions to the U.S., especially in art, humanities, and sciences. In 1880, Italians began migrating to the U.S. to flee rural poverty in Southern Italy and Sicily, and today, Americans of Italian descent are the nation's fifth largest ethnic group.

Learn more:

Italian American Heritage Month



Learning Disabilities Awareness Month

This month, we recognize the strengths and talents of individuals with learning disabilities. Learning disabilities such as dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia impact how individuals process information, but they do not define a person's intelligence or potential. October 18-24 is **Invisible Disabilities Week**, which highlights that many learning disabilities require individuals to navigate invisible challenges alongside visible ones at school, at home, and in the workplace. With the right accommodations, individuals with learning disabilities thrive.

Learn more:

Learning Disabilities Association of America

Understood



LGBT History Month

Not to be confused with Pride Month in June, LGBT History Month focuses on the history of the LGBT community. This month, we celebrate marriage equality, honor preferred pronouns, and reflect on how far we have come with LGBTQIA+ rights. On October 11, we observe **National Coming Out Day**. On October 21, we not only respect the use of preferred pronouns, we celebrate it with **International Pronouns Day**. October 15 is **Spirit Day**, which aims to increase awareness of the bullying that the LGBT community faces. This month is an opportunity for us to celebrate contributions of the LGBT community.

Learn more:

LGBT History Month



National Bullying Prevention Month

National Bullying Prevention Month raises awareness to combat harassment across schools, workplaces, and digital platforms. The impact is widespread: roughly 20% of students in grades 6-12 experience school bullying, contributing to increased absenteeism, lower grades, and anxiety. In the workplace, adult bullying affects millions through exclusion and belittling, eroding confidence and organizational morale. Online, cyberbullying is particularly pervasive, with 46% to 59% of teens reporting experiences such as rumor-spreading or offensive messaging on social media. Addressing these challenges requires united effort, proactive digital literacy, and fostering environments built on empathy and respect.

Learn more:

National Bullying Prevention Center

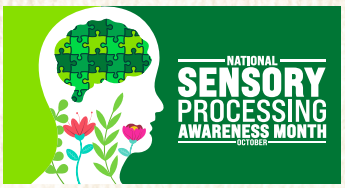


National Disability Employment Awareness Month

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), a time to celebrate the value and talent workers with disabilities contribute to America's workplaces and economy. Originating in 1945 as a week-long event, this grew into a month-long recognition in 1988. NDEAM's purpose is to confirm our commitment to ensuring disabled workers have access to good jobs, every month of every year.

Learn more:

NDEAM



National Sensory Processing Awareness Month

Sensory processing differences affect how the brain receives, organizes, and responds to information from senses like touch, sound, sight, and movement. Many sensory processing challenges are invisible, meaning individuals quietly navigate daily environments, such as busy offices, classrooms, or crowded public spaces, that can feel overwhelming or overstimulating. With thoughtful accommodations, sensory-friendly environments, and supportive tools, individuals with sensory processing differences can feel comfortable, regulated, and empowered to succeed.

Learn more:

STAR Institute

Child Mind Institute



National Work and Family Month

Work-life balance can be a challenge for workers and families. In October, businesses around the United States are pushed to encourage their employees to create harmony within their work and family lives. Work can be demanding of a person, making it difficult to prioritize their family lives over what needs to be done for their paycheck. This month is the time to focus on how to better support your organization so that the balance is easier.

Learn more:

Work-Life Balance Tips



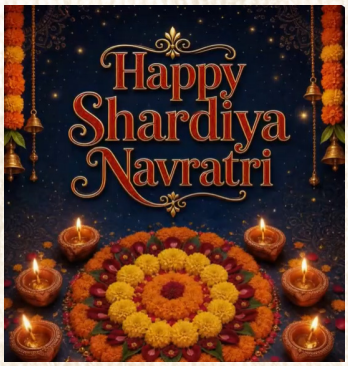
Polish American Heritage Month

In 1986, the U.S. Congress and President Ronald Reagan proclaimed October as Polish American Heritage Month as an expression of gratitude and affirmation to the solidarity between Poland and the United States. This month encourages all Americans to join the celebration of their fellow Polish citizens. Part of the celebration is to commemorate the deaths of two military leaders who fought in the American Revolution, General Kazimierz Pulaski and Tadeusz Kosciuszko.

Learn more:

Proclamation 5548

Polish Town USA



Shardiya Navaratri (October 11-20)

Shardiya Navaratri is a vibrant, nine-night Hindu festival celebrating the divine feminine, symbolized by the goddess Durga and her various forms. Occurring during the lunar month of Ashwin, this seasonal transition marks the victory of good over evil, light over darkness, and strength through devotion. Throughout the nine days, individuals engage in daily reflection, fasting, and spiritual practices, balancing their outward festivities with quiet dedication amid their everyday work, study, and family routines.

Learn more:

Holidays Around the World
AMMA



Dyspraxia Awareness Week (October 12-18)

Dyspraxia Awareness Week brings visibility to a lifelong neurological condition that impacts how the brain plans and coordinates physical movement. While dyspraxia does not affect a person's intelligence, it significantly shapes daily experiences for students and adults alike. In the classroom, students often struggle with fine motor skills like handwriting and note-taking, as well as gross motor activities during sports. For adults, the condition presents itself in the workplace and home through challenges with multi-step organization, typing, and managing busy schedules. Recognizing these unique hurdles helps foster supportive environments that empower dyspraxic individuals to succeed.

Learn more:

Dyspraxia Magazine



October 2 – International Day of Non-Violence

Established in 2007 by the United Nations General Assembly, it is no coincidence that International Day of Non-Violence is also Mahatma Gandhi's birthday. As a pioneer of non-violence philosophy and strategy, Gandhi paved the way for us to say no to violence. Today, we encourage you to spread the message of non-violence through education, public awareness, and the values of Gandhi himself.

Learn more:

International Day of Non-Violence



October 4 – Simchat Torah

Simchat Torah is a Jewish holiday that occurs at the end of Sukkot and celebrates the completion and immediate recommencement of the annual cycle of Torah readings. The day is filled with festive singing, dancing, and processionals as communities gather to celebrate the stories that ground their shared history. It is both a celebration of heritage and an opportunity for personal reflection, bringing people together across generations to start the cycle of learning anew amidst their daily lives.

Learn more:

Hebcal

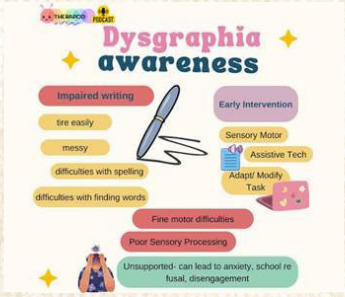


October 5 – World Teachers' Day

In 1994, the United Nations Educational, Science and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) established October 5 as World Teachers' Day. It is a day to celebrate teachers and the central role they play in guiding children, youths, and adults through the life-long learning process. Additionally, it is a day to reflect and support teachers' needs to fully execute their talent and vocation.

Learn more:

UNESCO



October 5 – International Dysgraphia Awareness Day

International Dysgraphia Awareness Day highlights dysgraphia, a neurodevelopmental condition that creates a disconnect between a person's intellect and their ability to transcribe thoughts onto paper. Unlike dyspraxia, which affects general physical coordination, balance, and broad motor skills, dysgraphia specifically targets the fine motor and neurological processes required for handwriting, spelling, and spatial organization on a page.

Learn more:
Cortica



October 10 – World Mental Health Day

World Mental Health Day is a global initiative with the overall goal of strengthening mental health all over the world. This is achieved through providing information on the mental health status in all countries, identifying mental health care needs, and developing cost-effective interventions to meet those specific needs.

Learn more:
World Health Organization



October 12 – Columbus Day

Columbus Day recognizes the historic voyage and arrival of Italian explorer, Christopher Columbus, who landed in the Americas on October 12, 1492. In 1892, President Benjamin Harrison proclaimed the 400th anniversary of Columbus' arrival as a one-time national celebration in response to widespread anti-Italian sentiments at the time. By 1937, it became a federal holiday. Now every year on the second Monday of October, the United States observes Columbus Day to celebrate this historic event.

Learn more:
Columbus Day



October 12 – Indigenous Peoples' Day

Indigenous Peoples' Day honors the history, cultures, and enduring contributions of Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians. In 1977, Indigenous delegates at the United Nations International Conference on Discrimination Against Indigenous Populations in the Americas proposed replacing Columbus Day to shift the historical focus toward native heritage and resilience. Instead, it is now recognized alongside it. Indigenous Peoples' Day encourages a space to reflect on Indigenous sovereignty, celebrate native traditions, and acknowledge the true, rich history of the Americas.

Learn more:
What is Indigenous Peoples' Day?



October 16-20 – Durga Puja

Durga Puja is a Hindu festival that commemorates the divine goddess Durga's victory over the demon Mahishasura. Spanning ten days, with the primary rituals occurring over the final five days, the festival showcases handcrafted themed structures (*pandals*), intricate idols, traditional food, music, and dance. Beyond its religious significance, it is a major cultural and social event honoring community, creativity, and empowerment.

Learn more:
Hindu American Foundation



October 22 – International Stuttering Awareness Day (ISAD)

Founded in 1998, International Stuttering Awareness Day (ISAD) is an annual global observance dedicated to raising public awareness about stammering, a speech disorder characterized by repetitions, prolongations, or blocks that affects approximately 1% of the global adult population (around 80 million people worldwide) and up to 5% of young children. The day provides understanding, community connection, and support for individuals who stammer. Organized by international advocacy groups like the International Stuttering Association (ISA), ISAD hosts annual online conferences and community campaigns to destigmatize stammering, dispel common myths, promote self-acceptance, and share vital educational resources for individuals, families, and speech-language professionals.

Learn more:

American Institute for Stuttering



October 28 – Karwa Chauth

Karwa Chauth is a significant Hindu festival celebrated primarily by married women, who observe a day-long fast without food or water, praying for the long life and well-being of their spouses. The festival highlights themes of love, devotion, and family bonds, with women dressing in fine bridal attire, applying traditional henna (*mehendi*), and gathering for evening storytelling rituals (*katha*). The fast is broken at night after making offerings (*arghya*) to the moon and viewing it through a traditional sieve.

Learn more:

FNP



October 31 – Halloween

History identifies Halloween as an evolution of Samhain, an ancient Celtic pagan festival dating back over 2,000 years, celebrated primarily in modern-day Ireland, the UK, and northern France to mark the end of the harvest season and the boundary between the physical and spirit worlds. Today, it has grown into a major holiday with around 70% of Americans participating through trick-or-treating, carving jack-o'-lanterns, hosting festive gatherings, and watching scary movies.

Learn more:

Halloween Timeline