

Michigan Celebrates

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

with Teaching Black History: Lessons from Educators

WEEK 1

February 2024

sun	mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29		

The Michigan Department of Education is excited to showcase lessons from educators to support instruction focused on Black history with a calendar during each week in February in celebration of Black History Month. Teaching diverse perspectives aligned to the work of [Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop](#) providing students with mirrors and windows to increase engagement in learning throughout the year is a student right and educator responsibility. Additionally, instruction to honor specific groups of people during recognized heritage months brings emphasis to instructional areas that have not traditionally received adequate time nor attention.

This week’s calendar includes seven lessons from submissions by educators for use by educators. Each educator also shares a personal why for teaching Black history.

February

01

Candice Jackson

Mann Learning Community, Detroit Public Schools Community District,
2023-2024 Michigan Teacher of the Year

Grade(s): 3–5

Content Area(s):
Social Studies,
English Language
Arts, Art, Music

Standard(s):
ELA SL.3.3

Why do you teach Black History?

Students are more likely to engage in learning when they see their own cultures reflected in the curriculum. For that reason, I believe in incorporating culturally responsive teaching practices all year long especially during Black History Month.

Lesson Description/Summary: Consider exploring a different approach to your Black History Month biography projects. While traditional projects often focus on prominent Black Americans, you might want to consider a more localized perspective. Encourage students to research and highlight Black leaders, artists, musicians, and other influential figures from their own community. This can provide a unique and fresh perspective on Black history. Then allow flexibility in how your students present their presentations. Although this list is not exhaustive, here are some ideas: written report, timeline, infographic, monologue, digital presentation, artistic representation, or song. Allowing students to choose from these various presentation formats can cater to different learning styles and encourage creativity in expressing their understanding of a biography.

February

02

Keiyn Ajayi-Obe

Central Office, Port Huron

Grade(s): K–5

Content Area(s):
English Language
Arts

Standard(s):
ELA SL K-5.2,
ELA RI K-5.10;
SS P4.2

Why do you teach Black History?

Black history is American history. This fact is often obscured in the curriculum that students are presented with in classrooms. As a result, it is imperative that students have the opportunity to understand the unique and significant ways that African American people are woven into the fabric of America. It is impossible to look at any major point of American history and not see the impact of African Americans. While this should be something that does not get siloed to Black History Month...it is completely necessary to center the experience and perspectives of Black people during the month.

Lesson Description/Summary: Community members will be joining our elementary schools for a read-aloud of *It Starts With Me*. After the read-aloud and discussion with community members, students brainstorm ways to connect with the ideals of justice, equality, nonviolence, humanity, love, joy as outlined in each book.

Resource: [K-5 It Starts with Me Lesson Plan](#)

February

05

Jen Saylor, Ph.D., NBCT-R

Office of Educational Supports, Michigan Department of Education

Grade(s): 3–5

Content Area(s):
English Language
Arts

Standard(s):
ELA RF.3.3.a, ELA
W.3-5.4

Why do you teach Black History?

Lifting Black history is critical to understanding a full, accurate history, and provides mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors for students to see themselves and others in their learning.

Lesson Description/Summary: This lesson focuses on basic and advanced morphonology to support students in understanding larger words. Students will then use this understanding to develop original autobiographical writing.

Resource: [The Undefeated Lesson Outline](#)

February

06

Grace Johnson

Wealthy School, East Grand Rapids

Grade(s):
Preschool–2

Content Area(s):
Social Studies,
English Language
Arts

Standard(s):
ELA RI.K-2.1 & 2

Why do you teach Black History?

Black History needs to be told, remembered, and learned from. We need to keep up the work of equality.

Lesson Description/Summary: The book is read aloud. Students ask and answer questions about the text before, during, and after reading. Students summarize the key details after reading. Students choose a phrase from the book to write on a sign. The students go on a silent march holding their signs. Students are then guided through a craft of creating Dr. King out of construction paper. The papers from the silent march are hung alongside the artwork as an art display.

Resource: [Martin's Big Words](#)

February

07

Rachel Rae Vogel

Holt Junior High School, Holt Public Schools

Grade(s): 6–8

Content Area(s):
English Language
Arts

Standard(s):
ELA RI 6-8.1,2,3
& 6, ELA RL
6-8.1,2,3,4 & 5

Why do you teach Black History?

Students need to have a deeper understanding and appreciation for their own culture, as well as cultures that have been underrepresented throughout history. Celebrating Black history is a way for our students to have both a window and a mirror to see themselves and their peers represented positively in a variety of ways.

Lesson Description/Summary: We begin with discussions of community, its importance, and our classroom and school community. We introduce the idea of representation and who represents a community. We introduce the essential question of, “Why do writers write?” We use Langston Hughes’ life and writing to introduce students to writing to inform and to entertain. We start with a dive into the Harlem Renaissance and the explosion of arts and culture where Black artists were speaking, writing, and performing for themselves and their community. We read Langston Hughes’ Biography. Students also read supplemental biographies of Zora Neale Hurston and Louis Armstrong. Students are then introduced to plot through Hughes’ short story “Thank You, Ma’am,” followed by some of his poetry including “Mother to Son” and “Dreams.”

Resource: [Famous Author Packet](#)

February

08

Gholdy Muhammad, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Curriculum & Instruction, University of Illinois Chicago

Grade(s): 9–12

Content Area(s):
Secondary
Geometry

Standard(s):
Math HS G-MG.2

Why do you teach Black History?

From my lens as a teacher, scholar, school board member, researcher, and teacher educator, I have come to learn that there is much we can do to improve how literacy education is framed today...I sought to understand the lessons educators could learn from our history to then return to this excellence for the sake of our students, teachers, families, and communities (Muhammad, 2020, p. 11).

Lesson Description/Summary: In this mathematics lesson, students will engage with mathematical concepts such as scale to understand elements of architecture and design. Students will metaphorically have a basic understanding of fractions and proportions to access this lesson (Muhammad, n.d., p. 2).

Resource: Muhammad, G. (2020). *Cultivating genius: An equity framework for culturally and historically responsive literacy*. Scholastic.

Muhammad, G. (2023). *Unearthing joy: A guide to culturally and historically responsive teaching and learning*. Scholastic.

Muhammad, G. (n.d.). [The Blueprint of Our Lives Lesson Plan](#).

February

09

Brandon Bear

Mattawan Later Elementary, Mattawan Consolidated School

Grade(s): 3–5

Content Area(s):
Social Studies,
English Language
Arts, Art, Music

Standard(s):
ELA SL.3.3-5

Why do you teach Black History?

Because literature is so central to the ways in which children learn about the world, Black History Month is a great time to recommit our school to studying and teaching works by Black authors who can offer authentic depictions of what it means to be Black in the United States.

Lesson Description/Summary: Every February for Black History Month I invite Black leaders from our local community into our classroom to read to the children picture books about famous Black leaders in history. A local judge reads *THURGOOD* to my students every year, the WMU men's and women's basketball teams read *Swish!* the story of the Harlem Globetrotters, and a team member of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts reads *Tar Beach* the story of the famous African American artist Faith Ringgold. It is very powerful for our Black students to identify and connect with leaders in our community that may look like them or share their culture.

Resource: [Community Reads Book Selections](#)

Thank you to all of the Michigan educators who shared their why for teaching Black history and submitted their lessons. Look for the next set of lessons on **Thursday, February 8, 2024**. For diverse literature recommendations please visit MDE's [Equity in Literacy webpage](#).

