

Supporting Family Child Care Providers and Center Directors Celebrating and Incorporating Black History Month

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Exposing children to the history of the United States of America and its wealth of diversity can be incredibly impactful on their development. Teaching students that *Black* history is *American* history improves children's ability to embrace and respect the differences of others. We encourage educators to use Black History Month as a special time to shine a spotlight on the many contributions that Black Americans have made, not only in this country but also throughout the world. The celebration of Black History Month is a tremendous opportunity to gather resources to share with families, children, and staff within your early childhood program that can be used throughout the year.

Books

The wonderful thing about books is their ability to take the reader anywhere they want to go. If you want to learn about Black poets like Langston Hughes, just reach out to his autobiography or read some of his poems. Finding books for children centered on Black history does not have to fit into a perfectly crafted box. Ask yourself, "*How do I want the children in my classroom to feel after reading the book?*" or "*What meaningful message I want to convey?*" We listed some books that might be great options for your classroom.

- *Little Legends: Exceptional Men in Black History* by Vashti Harrison
- *Little Leaders: Bold Women in Black History* by Vashti Harrison
- *Have You Thanked an Inventor Today?* by Patrice McLauren
- *I, Too, Am America* by Langston Hughes and Bryan Collier
- *Hair Love* by Matthew A. Cherry and Vashti Harrison
- *Dream Big Little One* by Vashti Harrison

Curriculum

Children want to see characters that look like them; representation matters, as we all know. A major concern in education includes the under-representation of prominent Black figures in history. The development of identity is a complex process that begins early in life and is influenced by various factors, including individual characteristics, family background, or social and historical contexts. The messages children receive from the environment significantly affect their self-understanding and are often reflected in early experiences. Using multicultural materials and activities in the classroom promotes healthy identity development. Build the foundation of pride and knowledge by introducing young children to famous and less known Black inventors, scientists, or authors and design activities around their stories. A useful collection of resources includes:

- [Rethinking Schools](#)
- [Center for Racial Justice in Education](#)

- [PBS for Kids](#)
- [Edutopia](#)

Families

Families can make huge contributions to our collective understanding; ask them how they want to get involved. Family members can share age-appropriate historical items that are relevant to Black history. Maybe, they can lead an art lesson based on Black artistry. Invite them to your classroom to read books about African Americans that have influenced history. You might also set a small collection of books that families can borrow to read to their children at home. Another great way to involve your program's families is to provide them with a list of local African American museums or institutions to visit. Some museums offer virtual tours. The possibilities are endless! Below are some great resources for teachers and families that may be useful.

- [Here We Read Blog](#)
- [Blog with Black History Books for Kids](#)
- [Bessie Coleman's story](#) with teaching guide
- [Janet Collin's story](#) with crossword puzzle
- [Garrett's gifts \(Garrett A. Morgan\)](#) with teaching guide and word search
- [Henry "box" Brown](#) with teaching guide and word search
- History Lessons for school-agers
 - <https://www.sweetblackberry.org/history-lessons.html>
 - <https://www.sweetblackberry.org/at-home-activities.html>
- [Kamala and May's Big Idea Reading Guide](#)

At the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership, we strongly believe in the value of celebrating the history of African Americans. African American history should be incorporated across the curriculum throughout the year, not just in February. Through reading books, classroom activities, and engaging families, you celebrate and respect the stories and voices of Black people. Early childhood program leaders and educators have an ethical responsibility to place diversity, equity, and inclusion principles and goals at the center of their organization. The change includes shifting initiatives and attention to promoting an anti-racism curriculum that brings equal academic opportunities in early childhood programs.

“Anti-bias endeavors are part of a proud and long educational tradition — one that continues to seek and to make the dream of justice and equality a reality. It happens day by day, and calls on our best teaching, relationships, and leadership skills.”

— Derman-Sparks, LeeKeenan, & Nimmo (2015, p. 164)