



Lakewood Board of Education

200 Ramsey Avenue, Lakewood, NJ 08701

Main Office: (732) 364-2400 Fax: (732) 905-3687

Laura A. Winters, Superintendent of Schools

12 February 2019

In this month that celebrates Black History, we can all take a moment to recognize the many great gifts that African Americans have brought to our nation. Take a moment to consider these important names from American history – Frederick Douglass; Sojourner Truth; Harriet Tubman; Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; Malcolm X; Nikki Giovanni; W.E.B. Dubois; Rosa Parks. These leaders and trailblazers forged a path towards Civil Rights for our entire nation – and we are still feeling their effects. These individuals, and so many others, helped us build toward a greater nation where people are judged by the content of their character, not the color of their skin.

It is not, however, just in the area of Civil Rights where African Americans have made their mark on America and the American people. What would our music be like without Louis Armstrong; Aretha Franklin; Michael Jackson; Whitney Houston; Tupac Shakur; Beyonce? Without African American contributions to music we'd be without jazz, blues, rap, hip-hop, R&B, even rock and roll. Our literary world is richer because of the works of Maya Angelou, James Baldwin, and Ralph Ellison. American politics have seen wonderful representation in the work of Condoleezza Rice and Former President Barack Obama. The list could – and does – go on and on. African Americans have made enormous impacts in every single area of American life.

It is with this recognition and reverence that Lakewood Public Schools strives to enrich our students' curriculum and activities with historically relevant lessons about these important figures. Presentations, essays, and art projects in our district during this month all celebrate and represent those who paved the path for *all* of our equal rights.

Please take this time to do as our students strive to do: Engage people with views that may be different than your own. Feel free to share your perspective, but also listen. Listen with kindness in your heart, never anger.

In 1957, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said to an audience in Montgomery, Alabama, "Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'" If we take the time this month – and every month – to teach our young people these words and the deep meaning behind them, we can foster a sense of leadership and a desire for positive change that will most assuredly benefit us all.

Respectfully and with love,

Kevin Walters

Supervisor of English Language Arts 3-12, Social Studies, & Fine Arts