

George M. Davis, Jr. Elementary School

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NEW ROCHELLE, NEW YORK 10804



February 10, 2015

Davis Families:

Beginning in January and continuing throughout the month of February, Davis teachers have adapted curriculum and focused instruction on a variety of topics and units of study related to the literary legacy of Dr. Maya Angelou, the impact of our nation's proud history and struggles for Civil Rights, the art of the Harlem Renaissance, and more. Most interesting is our focus and study of the unique connection Davis Elementary and New Rochelle has to the history of American Civil Rights in the post-Brown vs. the Board of Education era, when the decision to close Lincoln School (1961-63) forever changed our school community.

On Saturday, February 28th, Davis students' artwork will be on display at NRHS as part of The Annual Black History Spoken Word & Art Exhibit organized by the Westchester Alliance of Black School Educators (WABSE) and the New Rochelle Fund for Educational Excellence. Our students' artwork reflects work Mr. Bueti has led with students to replicate and celebrate the style and themes of the Harlem Renaissance. Events at NRHS begin at 4:00 p.m. on the 28th and admission is free—the exhibit will run at NRHS through March 6th.

On Monday, February 23rd, our school welcomes New Rochelle residents that lived through the years that led to the closing of Lincoln School. Fourth and fifth grade students will meet and participate in a panel discussion with local citizens who will share their memories, reflections, and thoughts regarding Lincoln School and the Civil Rights era in general.

To prepare for these events, teachers have engaged students in a variety of projects, readings, community mapping activities, and the development of detailed timelines that place New Rochelle history alongside events that played out throughout our country's journey toward civil rights. Each grade-level has chosen to involve students in in-depth work related to learning more about our community, the history of Lincoln School, the proud legacy of the American Civil Rights movement, and the creative legacy of Dr. Maya Angelou, which is the organizing theme for the WABSE celebration on the 28th.

What's more, our work will extend and bridge students' experiences provided through the Magnet Overlay. Projects organized by Ms. Kelly through the Overlay paint wide brush strokes to include many cultures, histories, and themes dealing with American culture and the arts. Each year, Ms. Kelly organizes a rich bundle of assemblies, trips, and residencies that both celebrate and engage students in the study of African American history and much more. In fact, this year, there is a great deal already planned, much of which involves workshops and residencies that make kids' experiences even more meaningful and profound. Here are the highlights:

- October: Student view "The Black Violin" Arts in Education at The Performing Arts Center, Purchase College.
- 1/30 and 2/5: fifth grade classes complete a full-day residency on "Freedom Bound" culminating with a visit to SUNY Purchase to view the play itself, which deals with narratives about the Underground Railroad.
- 2/11: West African Dance performance by the group "Triple Threat", directed/run by Ms. Kyra Johnson of New Rochelle!
- 2/23: Lincoln School (circa 1961) comes to Davis (2015)! Fourth and 5th grade students will meet and discuss the unique history of Lincoln School and how this local moment in our nation's civil rights history forever impacted Davis Elementary. New Rochelle residents who lived through the events that led to the closing of Lincoln will join us for a panel discussion.
- 2/26: Davis Unity Day Assemblies—celebrating our diversity, differences, and commitment to cooperation, team work, and school spirit!
- 4/9: *Triple Threat* assembly: "New Beginnings"
- And throughout the month of May: fifth grade classes will study the Bill of Rights, our Justice system, and the life and legacy of John Jay, culminating in another rich field trip.

This year, we've begun to build curriculum which we plan on strengthening and adapting year after year. Over time, our ultimate hope is that Davis students leave for ALMS and beyond with a specific understanding of the history of our school, our city, and how the vision and sacrifice of Civil Rights activists, lawyers, and *common citizens* has shaped our local and national lives.

Respectfully,

Michael Galland