

Press Clippings 11/17/2017

---Daily Herald --- 11/17/17

Elgin's black history event will focus on literacy, social justice

BY MADHU KRISHNAMURTHY



Black teachers were honored at Elgin's 2017 Black History Family Festival. The 2018 festival focusing on social justice and literacy is Feb. 3 at the Gail Borden Public Library. **Brian Hill | Staff Photographer**

Making literacy fun is the goal of Elgin's 13th annual [Black History Family Festival](#) Feb. 3.

The event is 1 to 4 p.m. at Gail Borden Public Library, 270 N. Grove Ave.

The festival was founded years ago by Dr. Phyllis Folarin, a retired principal of Harriet Gifford Elementary School in Elgin. It is organized by the library in partnership with **Elgin Area School District U-46**, the city of Elgin, and Elgin Community College.

This year's theme is "freedom and justice for all" with the goal of spurring excitement about how the community can get involved.

Library staff members will work on crafts to engage younger children, and dancers will teach older children how to perform social justice art using symbolic dance moves.

"We are really trying to bring back that family element to make sure that there's something for every age," said Brittany Jones, festival board member and Student Life Coordinator at ECC. "What we are trying to do is make this like a true blue festival. The whole idea is to show the community, especially students that literacy can be an enjoyable thing."

Among the highlights is a presentation by producer Ernie Broadnax of "[Project 2-3-1](#)," a 75-minute documentary film about Elgin's black community from the Civil War-era "contrabands," who were the first blacks in Elgin, to the present day. It won the 2015 Image Award from the City of Elgin Image Commission.

"We showed the documentary last year, as well. We are bringing it back because it was such a good response from the community," Jones said.

Kimberly Foxx, the first black woman to lead the Cook County state's attorney's office, will be a guest speaker at the event. Foxx took the helm of the second largest prosecutor's office in the country Dec. 1, 2016.

U-46 school board member Traci O'Neal Ellis will read an excerpt from her recently completed book. Larkin High School's Black History Club will conduct an interactive activity.

Jones said the presentations will highlight what advocating for social justice and participating in it looks like in the many spheres of society from "the performing arts to literature to the courtroom."

"We want kids to be activated and engaged in this," Jones said.

---Courier News--- 11/17/17

U46 schools lauded for behavioral support

BY RAFAEL GUERRERO



Representatives from six schools in District U46 receive recognition at a recent meeting from district officials and school board members for implementing a behavioral support system. (Rafael Guerrero/Courier-News)

Six schools in School District U46 attained the highest implementation level of a behavioral supports system used district-wide.

The schools — Century Oaks, Highland and Washington elementary schools in Elgin, Laurel Hill and Ontarioville elementary schools in Hanover Park, and Larkin High School — attained platinum level for their use of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports or PBIS after being reviewed by the Midwest PBIS Network, according to a district news release.

Seventeen schools have earned gold level and another 26 have received bronze or silver status, the release said. All U46 schools have adopted PBIS.

“PBIS helps us create learning environments where all students know what is expected of them. It promotes positive behavior in students and schools, improving social, emotional and academic outcomes for all students,” U46 CEO Tony Sanders said.

The system has been credited by many participating schools with helping reduce the number of in- and out-of-school suspensions.

To earn platinum level, PBIS must be implemented at three levels/tiers, the release said. The first tier requires schools provide core instruction on social and emotional well-being to all students. At the next

level, the school must have behavioral and social skill interventions for students who need more support. The third tier requires the school to provide individualized, child-centered plans for some students.

At Century Oaks, tickets are handed out by staff to students when they observe behavior aligning with expectations, such as picking up trash on the floor and walking quietly down the hallways.

“We set the standard for schoolwide expectations,” Principal Andrea Erickson said. “We use common language, what that behavior looks like and sounds like in all areas of the school. We proactively teach those behaviors. When a child doesn’t do well or forgets, we will reteach, review and remind.”

---Courier News--- 11/17/17

New geometry class could reduce number of students failing algebra

BY RAFAEL GUERRERO

Math officials at the state’s second-largest school district want to incorporate algebra elements into a new geometry class.

Under the proposed Geometry Bridge high school course, algebra skills taught at the late-elementary and middle school levels in School District U46 would be embedded into geometry instruction, officials said. The goal is to reduce the number of students who fall behind or struggle to pass algebra.

As many as 1,000 students in U46 high schools end up in danger of failing an algebra class, district math coordinator Amy Ingente told the school board last week.

“About 15 to 20 percent of students fail one of the semesters of algebra,” Ingente told board members.

The course would have pre-algebra skills, such as fraction operations, slopes and linear equations, incorporated into the geometry curriculum, Ingente said Tuesday. These skills easily embed themselves into geometry units of study, including coordinate geometry, area and volume, circles and others.

Under this proposal, the typical math course sequence for a high school student taking Geometry Bridge would change, as the student would take geometry in freshman year rather than sophomore or junior year, Ingente said. The proposed course would count toward the student’s geometry graduation requirement.

Trisha Shrode, U46 curriculum and instruction director, told the school board this option prevents a “gap year,” which occurs when students take geometry between Algebra 1-2 and Algebra 3-4.

“We won’t have a whole year for them to forget quadratics,” Shrode said.

The other goal of the course is to reduce the number of students who end up retaking a failed math course, which then prevents them from taking a new course in their senior year.

“We wanted them to be proactive and not fall behind and have to take another course to catch up,” Ingente said Tuesday.

Because pre-algebra courses in U46 count as an elective and not toward a student’s math requirement, many of those who failed were unable to take a fourth-year math course, she said.

If approved this fall, Geometry Bridge would be fully adopted on a districtwide basis next school year, with professional development on the course beginning this school year.