

Black History Starts Here Celebration

Rocky Mountain Prep-Creekside

Denver, CO



Rocky Mountain Prep-Creekside is home to a diverse student body. Annually, the school celebrates the community's rich cultural diversity with families and students through interactive events. Given the heightened health guidelines as a result of COVID-19, ways to engage with families shifted and events transitioned to virtual platforms. For the family leaders on the Parent Educators and Kids (PEAK) Committee, a virtual shift meant new perspectives, and a new approach to foster the sense of community that has always been associated with Creekside's family events. The group coordinated a month-long celebration of Black History to elevate Black voice, traditions, and historical leaders.



For over two months, PEAK families planned and coordinated event logistics and partnered with committee liaisons to share updates with school staff. The families organized a campus-wide bulletin board design competition. Each grade-level was assigned a historical figure to depict and the winner was announced during the "Black History Starts Here" event. PEAK families connected with local Black-owned businesses to sponsor the winning grade with books and ice-cream from their stores. These community figures were also honored during the virtual celebration. Finally, PEAK families created and distributed lesson plans and activities for each grade to support teachers with instruction about Black History Month. In this way, Creekside's community was included in both the creation and celebration of the event.

"Black History Starts Here" was the top-attended event of the year and led to a climate of inclusivity and celebration. More than 128 families, staff, and local community leaders gathered to celebrate local Black leaders and recognize that Black history is here and now; happening in their own community. Each grade shared their understanding of a historical figure by presenting a video. Guest speakers included School Board member, Tay Anderson, and local doctor, Dr. Dana Roper-Cooper. Students and families were eager to share their learning and continue to elevate powerful traditions, figures, and cultures.

Despite the challenges--and technology issues--associated with hosting a virtual event, PEAK families were able to successfully coordinate and implement the campus-wide celebration. Following the celebration, PEAK families debriefed together to evaluate the areas of strength and growth. The group indicated that the robust attendance, increased student awareness, and positive feedback from families, staff, and community members served as indicators of the events' effectiveness.

The committee plans to continue celebrating important heritage months by partnering with students, staff, families, and community members in similar ways. Through such collaboration, shared learning, and diversity of perspectives, PEAK families and other sites can replicate this experience to foster cultural awareness and joy.