



Beyond Black History Month

By Educator Barnes – February 24, 2021

Black History Month is quickly coming to a close. This month is a time to highlight Black excellence and remind us all that Black history is part of American history. What happens when Black History Month is over? This is the conversation that many educators and school leaders need to have.

Let's look at some common actions that take place during Black History Month and use them as a spring board to meaningful change and learning for our students.

Many educators highlight books written by Black authors or books about Black people. These books should be incorporated into the curriculum through out the year. This is a good opportunity for a pulse check to see how many Black authors are in the curriculum. If the

number is low, identify books that students enjoyed during Black History Month and add them to classroom libraries and the curriculum. Remember, teachers are teaching standards not books. Many of the books written by Black authors and/or features Black people can be used to teach the standards.

Another common feature during Black History Month are door decorating contests and bulletin boards featuring Black people. When the decorations come down off of the doors and the bulletin boards are replaced with different information, will students see Black people somewhere on display inside of the school? Even if a school has no Black students, Black people should be displayed. For example, if there is a bulletin board that features scientists, some of those scientists should be Black. This will help Black students feel seen, and it will help portray a positive image of Black people to non-Black students.

Last, Black History Month is typically filled with little known Black history facts or different Black people, who exude Black excellence, being highlighted. Black History Month should not be the only time Black people are highlighted in a positive light. Our history started before Black people were kidnapped and enslaved. Black people being enslaved should not be the focal point nor the main history students learn about Black people. Black people are more than the tragic events that have happened. We are so much more.

This is only a start. I encourage teachers and school leaders to take some time to think about what took place during Black History Month and find meaningful ways to expand those activities throughout the year.