Alexandria City Public School’s 2022 Black History Month Social Media Campaign: Celebrating Legends, Building Legacies

Black History Month is a widely-celebrated observance in the U.S. At Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS), a diverse urban-suburban school division in Northern Virginia that serves about 15,500 students who hail from more than 145 countries and speak 132 languages. Black history is our history — from one of our nation’s first opportunities for Black children to receive a free education at the Alexandria Academy in 1812 to the 1971 integrated football team immortalized in “Remember the Titans” to present day. Additionally, the ACPS Equity for All 2025 Strategic Plan charges us to make educational equity a pillar in our community. As we began planning for February, it became clear that our communications campaign around Black History Month needed to be as unique as our division.

We decided to focus on Black individuals who had contributed to the history and culture of Alexandria. Our goals were to inform the public about our history, celebrate these local legends, and empower current students to build their own legacies. Our target audience was primarily members of the ACPS community who already follow us on social media, but we also broadened our reach by including the national #BLM hashtag, which enhanced our engagement.

Prior to developing our communications plan, we met with the ACPS Office of Equity and Alternative Programs to coordinate and support their programming. We learned of a grassroots effort initiated by a community member to teach ACPS students about Alexandria native Earl Lloyd, who was the first Black basketball player to compete in the NBA. This conversation helped us develop our theme, “Celebrating Legends, Building Legacies.”

In selecting individuals to feature, we made sure to select legends who had contributed to different aspects of society—including education, law, and sports—as well those from the early 19th century to present day. Our list included the five schools in our division named after Black trailblazers. We also consulted the City of Alexandria’s Black history resources for additional information.

Over the month, we featured 11 individuals on our three main social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. We also shared a link to a dedicated webpage we created for Black History Month, twice on Facebook and Twitter and once on Instagram, that included resources, multimedia stories, information from the City of Alexandria and our social media campaign. Another Black History Month post announced that our division’s process of renaming two schools received a national award. Additionally, two videos — the superintendent’s monthly spotlight and a profile of a former enslaved woman who founded a tuition-free school for Black children — were shared on social media. In total, there were 14 Facebook, 16 Twitter, and 13 Instagram Black History Month posts spread out across a 28-day period. Additionally, we encouraged each school to post their own Black History Month celebrations using divisionwide hashtags (#ACPSBHM and #ACPSLegends) and shared their posts throughout the month.

Our posts were well received by the ACPS community, earning an average engagement rate (measured by engagement divided by total impressions, multiplied by 100) of 7.74% on Facebook, 2.96% on Twitter, and 8.18% on Instagram. Additionally, community members shared their appreciation of the posts; one Facebook user commented “Now That’s Black History.” Others shared their memories with present-day ACPS legends. With a total of 88,182 impressions tracked across all three platforms, we accomplished our goals of informing the community and honoring these local legends.

Importantly, celebrating Black history in ACPS does not end in February. In March, we featured a profile of Naomi Lewis Brooks — a Black teacher whose legacy lives on through Naomi L. Brooks Elementary School — in celebration of both Black history and Women’s History Month. The Office of Communications remains in close contact with the Office of Equity and Alternative Programs to continue to celebrate our division’s Black history with the ultimate objective of empowering our students to achieve their goals and attain their dreams.

Examples
For more examples, visit the ACPS Black History webpage or view #ACPSLegends on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.