

ORLEANS PARISH SCHOOL BOARD

RESOLUTION NO. 17-26

The following resolution was offered by _____ and seconded by _____.

A resolution establishing New Orleans Black Education History Week.

WHEREAS, the city of New Orleans has a profound and pioneering legacy of Black educational leadership rooted in cultural preservation and community self-determination, beginning as early as 1837 when Marie Couvent, a formerly enslaved West African woman who became a free person of color, bequeathed land for the establishment of a free school for colored orphans, which opened in 1848 as the Couvent School and was completely Black governed; followed by the Sisters of the Holy Family opening St. Mary's Academy in 1867, the first Black Catholic high school in New Orleans; and continuing with the establishment of McDonogh #35 Senior High School in 1917, the city's first public high school for Black students, alongside other historic institutions including Gilbert Academy, McCarty Elementary School, Valena C. Jones Elementary, The Learning Workshop, Ahidiana Work/Study Center, Xavier University Preparatory School, St. Augustine High School, Booker T. Washington High School, George Washington Carver High School, Joseph S. Clark High School, Frederick Douglass High School, and countless others all of which created a standard of excellence in Black education centered on the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual development of children and community; and

WHEREAS, on November 14, 1960, four courageous six-year-old girls—Gail Etienne, Leona Tate, Tessie Prevost, and Ruby Bridges, known collectively as the New Orleans Four—integrated William Frantz Elementary School and McDonogh 19 Elementary School, escorted by U.S. Marshals through angry, violent crowds, forever changing the course of public education in New Orleans and the American South; and

WHEREAS, on November 30, 2005, following Hurricane Katrina, the Louisiana Legislature passed Act 35, fundamentally transforming New Orleans' public education system and creating both opportunities and challenges as the city rebuilt, while underscoring the ongoing importance of preserving the cultural knowledge, community connections, and educational traditions that have long sustained Black students and families in New Orleans; and

WHEREAS, between these two pivotal dates – November 14, 1960 and November 30, 2005 – lies a week to reflect on both the courage that expanded educational access and the ongoing work to ensure that access leads to genuine opportunity; and

WHEREAS, from 2023 through 2025, BE NOLA (Black Education for New Orleans), a Black-led, Black-governed nonprofit organization, conducted multi-year community-driven research and engagement exploring how Black educational spaces in New Orleans have ignited Black Brilliance for generations, including: publishing research on Black-governed, Black-led schools (2023); launching the Black Is Brilliant Speaker Series featuring leaders from historic institutions (2024); creating the Black Is Brilliant Digital Syllabus (2025); and launching community study groups to examine the characteristics of powerful Black education (2025); and

WHEREAS, this research identified Five Pillars of high quality Black education in New Orleans that promote student achievement, cultural pride, and community wellness: (1) Belonging – creating spaces where Black students see themselves reflected and valued; (2) High Expectations

with Love—rigorous yet supportive learning environments rooted in care; (3) Exposure – culturally relevant learning connected to students' lives and communities; (4) Legacy – cultural retention and connection to the history of Black achievement; and (5) Rigorous Sight – social consciousness and awareness of how systemic injustices are historically derived; and

WHEREAS, in June 2025, sixty-five community members convened at Ashé Powerhouse to co-author draft language for a New Orleans Black Education History Week resolution, transforming years of research and dialogue into actionable policy through a democratic, community-led process; and

WHEREAS, February 2026 marks the 100th anniversary of Carter G. Woodson's founding of Negro History Week, which evolved into Black History Month, and 2026 also marks America's Semiquincentennial – 250 years of democracy – making this a particularly significant moment to affirm our commitment to teaching complete and truthful history; and

WHEREAS, in a district where 82% of students are Black, it is essential that young people understand their local role in American democracy, see themselves as inheritors of educational excellence, and recognize themselves as builders of a just and inclusive city; and

WHEREAS, as New Orleans education continues to evolve, we have a responsibility to preserve and carry forward the legacies of historic educational institutions, ensuring that the cultural knowledge, pedagogical innovations, and traditions of excellence developed by these schools and educators continue to inspire and guide current and future generations of students, educators, and communities; and

WHEREAS, research demonstrates that culturally relevant pedagogy improves academic outcomes, increases student engagement, and supports the social-emotional wellness of all students, making New Orleans Black Education History Week not only a celebration of heritage but also a strategic investment in student success; and

WHEREAS, the intentional teaching and celebration of local Black educational history promotes cultural pride, fosters belonging, supports student achievement, and affirms the Orleans Parish School Board's commitment to equity, inclusion, and historical truth.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Orleans Parish School Board officially recognizes the third week of November as New Orleans Black Education History Week, to be observed annually beginning in November 2026; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that programming for New Orleans Black Education History Week should be grounded in the Five Pillars of Black education – Belonging, High Expectations with Love, Exposure, Legacy, and Rigorous Sight – ensuring that all students across our diverse district engage with this history as part of our shared civic heritage, fostering cultural understanding, academic excellence, and a deeper appreciation of the contributions that have shaped education in New Orleans for all communities.

This resolution having been submitted to a vote, the vote thereon was as follows:

YEAS:

NAYS:

ABSENTS:

ABSTENTIONS:

PASSED AND ADOPTED AT THE ORLEANS PARISH SCHOOL BOARD BUSINESS MEETING held at Timbers, 2401 Westbend Parkway, Multi-purpose Room 1050, New Orleans, Louisiana, on the 30th day of July, 2026.

ORLEANS PARISH SCHOOL BOARD

Leila Jacobs Eames, Board President

CERTIFICATE

STATE OF LOUISIANA

PARISH OF ORLEANS

I, the undersigned Secretary-Treasurer of the Orleans Parish School Board, State of Louisiana, do hereby certify that the foregoing two pages constitute a true and correct copy of Resolution No. 17-26 adopted by said Orleans Parish School Board on July 30, 2026.

IN FAITH WHEREOF, witness my official signature and the impress of the official seal of the School Board at New Orleans, Louisiana, on this the day of July, 2026.

(SEAL)

Dr. Fateama S. Fulmore, Secretary-Treasurer