

Milton Public Schools

April 8, 2021

Behaving Equitably

Demonstrating Cultural Humility

April is Celebrate Diversity Month, National Arab American Heritage Month, Ramadan and Autism Awareness Month. There is so much to learn and to elevate. In this week's edition of Behaving Equitably we will explore some celebrations within the [Southeast Asian](#) communities, Easter, bringing awareness to Autism and share some upcoming dates to pay attention to.

Easter



To those who celebrated Easter, the Milton Public School hoped you enjoyed the beautiful weather and the celebration that marks the resurrection of Christ. According to the New Testament, it is believed that Jesus resurrected three days after his crucifixion by the Romans. Easter was celebrated on April 4th, 2021. Despite it being a Christian holy day, many current symbols of Easter are derived from [pagan celebrations](#). For example, the significance around the Easter egg hunt is a tradition originated from the pagan spring festival celebrating fertility.

[Countries around the world celebrate Easter differently.](#) In Bermuda the festival begins with a Kite Fest. You can see kites all over the sky. In Antigua, Guatemala the people cover the streets with beautiful carpets. “The Philippines is a mostly Catholic country, so it makes sense that its inhabitants take Easter very seriously. According to DW Akademie, a news site, each year on [Good Friday](#), a few people in the northern Philippines are nailed to crosses to honor Jesus' crucifixion. Though, the Catholic Church has frowned upon these practices, it's an annual tradition that brings in thousands of tourists. ([womansday.com](#)).” If you ever get a chance to travel to a foreign country during this holiday, be sure to pay attention to how the local celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

To learn more about the origins and history behind Easter here are some links to start with (please conduct your own research):

- [History.com](#)
- [Easter – The Facts, History, and Traditions](#)
- [Easter Traditions Around the World](#)

New Year Celebrations

[Southeast Asia](#) is composed of eleven countries of impressive diversity in religion, culture and history: Brunei, Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, Timor-Leste, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Every single country speaks its own language and practices their own cultures and traditions.



The Khmer (Cambodia) New Year begins on April 14th, 2021 and Ends on Friday April 16th, 2021. The Khmer (people) Choul Chhnam Thmey (Khmer New Year) celebration days follow the Lunar Calendar also known as the Chinese calendar. This is the year of the OX (12 Zodiac Years).

Most [Khmer](#) practice Buddhism and in the teaching of Buddha he speaks of the Lunar calendar (also known as the Chinese calendar). The ultimate goal for someone who practices this belief is to reach enlightenment. It is believed that the path to enlightenment is attained by utilizing and demonstrating morality, meditation and wisdom. “Some scholars don’t recognize Buddhism as an organized religion, but rather, a “way of life” or a “spiritual tradition” (History.com).” Siddhartha Gautama is the founder of Buddhism. He was born a prince (in present day Nepal) and lived a luxurious and easy life. However, he noticed that not everyone had the same experience, he was moved and inspired to learn and understand the suffering in the world. Therefore, he gave up his riches and went on a journey of experiencing poverty. It is said that after 6 years, he reached enlightenment under a Bodhi tree and spent the rest of his life helping others reach this spiritual state. Buddha is a staple in how Khmer celebrate their Choul Chhnam Thmey. Many devoted followers go to the wat (temple) with food offerings, donations, and listen to the monks chanting in hopes for forgiveness of their past sins, seek spiritual guidance, and/or meditate to find inner peace.



It is critical to conduct spring cleaning to ensure that all of the old negative vibes are cleaned out and purified prior to the welcoming of the New Year. Khmers [mark their celebration](#) with purification ceremonies, watching [traditional Khmer Ballet dances](#), visiting wats (temples), meditation, sharing food and playing traditional games. One of the most popular Khmer Ballet dances that is observed during our New Year celebration is the [Apsara Dance](#).

To learn more about the Khmer culture and its history here are some sites to start with:

- [Classical Apsara Dance](#)
 - [The Most Attractive and Traditional Games](#)
 - [Reviving Cambodian Original Music](#)
 - [Buddhism](#)
 - [12 Cambodian Zodiac Signs](#)
 - [Cambodia History, Language and Culture](#)
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The [Lao](#) New Year also starts on Wednesday, April 14th 2021 and ends on Friday, April 16th 2021. Although there are many similarities in how Khmer and Lao celebrate the New Year, there are clear differences in the traditions that are practiced. Pi Mai Lao (Lao New Year) comes from two nationalities: Khmer and Mon Burmese.



photo credit: @pawabak by @chhefong

Pi Mai Loa is a three-day celebration (sometimes a week long) where Lao prepares perfume, water and flowers to take part in blessing, cleaning, and purifying the “receivers” before entering the New Year. The first day of the celebration, Buddha images and statues are moved from their stationary locations to more easily accessible locations so the public and/or families have better access to them. The statues are cleansed with water at the wat (temple) or homes. Many believed that once the water has been poured on the statue of Buddha, this water is considered blessed so many bring home this water to pour onto friends and family members (the “receivers”).

The second day of the New Year is considered the “day of no day”. It is neither a day in the past year nor a day in the New Year. It is important not to nap on this day as it is believed it will result in sickness in the coming year. Young people are encouraged to respectfully pour water on the elders to receive their blessings. “In Laos, community members will build thousands of structures with sand on the banks of the Mekong River. The sand structures are decorated with flowers, flags, white lines, and splashed with perfumed water. This is believed to ward off the evil spirits trying to enter the New Year. Here in the states, we’ll typically bring the sand to the temple and build the structures on the temple grounds. [\(The New Primal\)](#)”

The third day of the New Year is a day where family holds the “[Baci ceremony](#) at their homes to welcome the Lao New Year as well as to wish their elders good health and long life.” Once the Baci celebration is completed at the house “devotees go to the temples to listen to the monks chanting as an act to ask for forgiveness from the monks as well as from the Buddha images for what they did (pouring water on them) in this past few days that might have accidentally touched them (monks and Buddha are not to be touched) [\(Laos-guide-999.com\)](#).” Being blessed by the monk is also part of the tradition. A monk or an elder will tie a white and/or orange string around your wrist while saying a blessing. These strings are worn until it falls off.



Please note that some households do not stick strictly to the three-day schedule of how to celebrate the New Year. To learn more about Lao traditions and history here are some sites to start with:

- [12 Things you See at a Lao New Year](#)
- [Baci Ceremony and Holidays and Festivals in Laos](#)
- [Laos White String Bracelets](#)
- [Traditional Dress & Costumes of Laotians](#)
- [What Languages Are Spoken in Laos?](#)



Inclusion



April is also Autism Awareness month. Autism also known as autism spectrum disorder (ASD), “refers to a broad range of conditions characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech and nonverbal communication (autismspeaks.org).” The Center for Disease Control (CDC) reported that autism affects (estimation) 1 in 54 children in America. This condition is influenced by a combination of genetic and environmental factors. Their ability to function, learn, think, and problem solve can range from significant supports to being entirely independent. “[Signs of autism](#) usually appear by age 2 or 3. Some associated development delays can appear even earlier, and often, it can be diagnosed as early as 18 months. Research shows that early intervention leads to positive outcomes later in life for people with autism (autismspeaks.org).”

Did you know that in 2020 the CDC reported that Boys are four times more likely to be diagnosed with autism than girls? One out of 34 boys was identified compared to one out of 144 girls in 2020. The CDC also indicated that the minoritized population tends to be diagnosed later and less often.

The CDC states, “There are many ways to get involved in the autism community. The Autism Society encourages its members and supporters to keep current on and active in ongoing advocacy issues regarding autism, stay abreast of the latest in autism-related news and issues through our online newsletter, *Autism Matters*, and make an effort to attend autism events and conferences in your area. The benefits of being involved in the autism community are many—not the least of which is educating yourself about the most appropriate treatments and resources available to help your loved one on the spectrum.”

Some resources that is available:

- Autism Response Team (ART): 1-888-AUTISM2, En Espanol 1-888-772-9050 email help@autismspeaks.org
- [New Autism Center](#)
- [Lurie Center for Autism](#)
- [Advocates for Autism in Massachusetts](#)
- [Autism Society](#)

Additional dates in April that represents Diversity and Inclusion (DiversityBestPractices.com):

- **April 1:** Holy Thursday (Maundy Thursday), the Christian holiday commemorating the Last Supper, at which Jesus and the Apostles were together for the last time before the Crucifixion. It is celebrated on the Thursday before Easter.
- **April 2:** Good Friday, a day celebrated by Christians to commemorate the execution of Jesus by crucifixion. It is recognized on the Friday before Easter.

- **April 2:** World Autism Awareness Day, created to raise awareness of the developmental disorder around the globe.
- **April 4:** Easter, a holiday celebrated by Christians to recognize Jesus' return from death after the Crucifixion.
- **April 7-8:** Yom HaShoah, Israel's day of remembrance for the approximately 6 million Jews who perished in the Holocaust.
- **April 12-May 11 (sundown to sundown):** Ramadan, an Islamic holiday marked by fasting, praise, prayer and devotion to Islam.
- **April 12:** Hindu New Year.
- **April 13:** Equal Pay Day, an attempt to raise awareness about the raw wage gap, the figure that shows that women, on average, earn about 80 cents for every dollar men earn. The date moves earlier each year as the wage gap closes. Equal Pay Day began in 1996 by the National Committee on Pay Equity as a public awareness event to illustrate the gender pay gap.
- **April 14:** Vaisakhi (also known as Baisakhi), the celebration of the founding of the Sikh community as the Khalsa (community of the initiated) and the birth of the Khalsa.
- **April 16-17 (sundown to sundown):** Yom Ha'Atzmaut, national Independence Day in Israel.
- **April 20-May 1:** The Festival of Ridvan, a holiday celebrated by those of the Bahá'í faith, commemorating the 12 days when Bahá'u'lláh, the prophet-founder, resided in a garden called Ridvan (paradise) and publicly proclaimed his mission as God's messenger for this age.
- **April 21:** Ram Navami, a Hindu day of worship and celebration of the seventh avatar of Vishnu (Lord Rama). Devotees typically wear red and place extravagant flowers on the shrine of the God.
- **April 22:** Earth Day promotes world peace and sustainability of the planet. Events are held globally to show support of environmental protection of the Earth.
- **April 23:** St. George's Day, the feast day of St. George celebrated by various Christian churches.
- **April 23:** The Day of Silence, during which students take a daylong vow of silence to protest the actual silencing of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students and their straight allies due to bias and harassment.
- **April 24:** Lazarus Saturday, a day celebrated by the Eastern Orthodox Church and Oriental Orthodoxy to commemorate the raising of Lazarus of Bethany.
- **April 24:** Armenian Martyrs' Day recognizes the genocide of approximately 1.5 million Armenians between 1915 and 1923 in Turkey.
- **April 25:** Mahavir Jayanti, a holiday celebrated by the Jains commemorating the birth of Lord Mahavira. It is one of the most important religious festivals for Jains.
- **April 28:** Ninth Day of Ridvan, a festival of joy and unity in the Bahá'í faith to commemorate the reunification of Bahá'u'lláh's family, and by extension the unity of the entire human family the Bahá'í faith calls for. It permeates the symbolic meaning of the Ninth Day of Ridvan.
- **April 29-30 (sundown to sundown):** Lag BaOmer, a Jewish holiday marking the day of hillula of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai.

Equity Work

The Milton Public School District has been hard at work with practicing equity.

Here are a few things that are happening:

- Establishment of the Mosaic Club, an affinity group for Pierce BIPOC students

- Mentoring Program: Pierce has partnered with the four elementary schools to implement a program in which middle school students will work as mentors to fifth grade students. The program is a social justice enrichment program for Milton youth and is intended to bring together a group of young people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds to build community through exploring identity and social justice issues. This program will also help to support fifth graders' transition to Pierce in the fall.
- Discipline practices and policies review: The Pierce site council has been engaged in a review of the school's discipline policies and practices with an eye toward creating a plan for remediating disparities in student discipline
- Pierce family outreach initiative: This year, Pierce established a family outreach program that is focused on supporting students and families during this challenging school year. One of the goals of this program is to provide students and families with a staff member at Pierce who can check in regularly with students and be a link between home and school.
- DEI Workshops: Early in the winter, the Pierce diversity, equity and inclusion committee held several "family forums" as opportunities to bring parents and guardians together around their children's experiences with school up to that point in the school year. In response to the ideas and opportunities that emerged from the family forums, we are pleased to invite all MPS parents, guardians and caregivers to attend several virtual workshops on a variety of topics. Each workshop will be facilitated by a panel of professionals with a broad range of experience and expertise in supporting families, children, and educators. The first workshop will be an opportunity to reflect on our experiences and learn strategies for self-care, self-regulation, and stress reduction. The second workshop will be a forum for parents, caregivers and students to discuss the impact of Coronavirus and racial tensions in America.
- The Asian Culture club at Milton High School engages in conversations around the impact of the ATL event, hate against Asian, violence against Asians, racism against Asians, and building capacity to challenge those who demonstrate such behaviors.

Some of the Professional Development offered to the staff of the district:

- **Coalition of Schools Educating Boys of Color (COSEBOC)**- Free upcoming session! "**Representation Matters**" with David Miller is the latest in COSEBOC's teleconference series "**Conversations with Deep Thinkers**". This discussion will explore diversity in children's books and the power of exposing young males of color to empowering text with culturally relevant themes,
- "**Stay True to the Teacher in You**" **Virtual Summit**, organized by [Identity Talk Consulting, LLC](#) is an upcoming 4-day professional development experience designed to help K-12 educators prioritize their personal and professional well-being in order to be their most authentic selves within their school communities and beyond. By proactively taking this approach, educators can position ourselves to, not only have success and longevity in the education field, but to engage in the advocacy work necessary to transform educational outcomes for Black & Indigenous People of Color. The workshops for this Summit will focus on the following areas: 1) *Teacher Wellness & Self-Care* 2) *Culturally Responsive & Anti Racist Practices* 3) *Social-Emotional*,
- **Intro to Restorative Justice Practices & Circle Training, Restorative Mindset and Restorative Classroom Management, and Restorative Discipline and Healing** through Suffolk University Center for Restorative Justice, and
- **Dismantling White Supremacy Culture in Schools Conference | June 14-18**
Sponsored by Truss Leadership. It's time to get new insights and tools to put antiracism into practice and policy! School principal and anti-racist educator, Joe Truss is hosting this virtual

conference just in time for summer professional learning. Keynotes include Dr. Bettina Love and Dr. Gholdy Muhammad, author of Cultivating Genius. The conference is bringing together a diverse set of Indigenous, Latinx, African-American presenters. Workshops include Decolonizing Education, Anti-Racist Discipline, and Leading Classroom Conversations About Race.

Quality Review

Please look out for communication from Superintendent Jette and school principals about the process, progress, and the next phase of the quality review.

Meanwhile if you are interested in participating here are some ways in which you can participate.

As a community member, you can participate in the Quality Review with an Equity Lens by providing your feedback through surveys and focus groups. The information gathered from the surveys and focus groups will help formulate a picture of the districts work, behaviors, and practices. The more responses we can get from the community we serve, the clearer the picture can become. **ALL participation is optional, anonymous and confidential!**

Parent, Guardian, and Support System Surveys

If you are interested and did not receive a link to complete the survey please click on (or copy and paste into browser) the link: <http://milton-parents-survey.cedu.io>

Focus Groups

If you would like to be included in the focus groups please email Renee **before April 13** at renee.chandonnet@mottmac.com.

ALL participation is OPTIONAL

If you do not want your child to participate in surveys, virtual observations, or focus groups with the review team, please notify **your child's principal**.

Steering Committee and Selection Task Force

We are currently searching for constituents who would like to serve on the Quality Review Steering Committee and the Selection Task Force.

Steering Committee and how to apply:

The MPS Quality Review Steering Committee is a community-based WORKING committee whose purpose is to support the MPS to work purposefully towards building sustainable equitable practices for ALL Learners. The Steering Committee will work to ensure that the process meaningfully involves diverse stakeholders and the alignment of the MPS strategic plan reflects equity, community values, mission, and

Languages Available

Click the link below

[Portuguese Application](#)

[Haitian Creole Application](#)

[Vietnamese Application](#)

[Spanish Application](#)

priorities. Please click on the link to learn more about the [Steering Committee and how to apply to be a member](#).

Selection Task Force and how to apply:

In order to ensure equity is baked into the process, we are also doing an all call for the Selection Task force. The Milton Public Schools Equity Department is looking for individuals who would like to be part of a team to assist in the selection of the Quality Review Steering Committee. This group will be charged with reviewing applications, interviewing, and vetting candidates for the [Quality Review Steering Committee](#). If you are interested in serving on this selection team, please fill out [this form](#). We are looking to have 9-11 people on this selection committee who will use a [rubric](#) (link) to guide the selection of candidates for inclusion. The total commitment will be about ten hours over the next several weeks. If you plan on applying for a position on the Steering Committee, you cannot be on the selection team. However, this is a great way to contribute to the Quality Review process if you are not able to make the time commitment required of the Steering Committee.

ALL CALL	Selection Task force 2/8/21 - 4/16/21 Steering Committee 2/8/21 - 5/7/21
Application review	5/10/21 - 5/14/21
Interviews	5/17/21 - 5/21/21
Call Backs	5/24/21 - 5/28/21
Orientation	TBD
Work begins	6/7/21



The Milton Public School District is committed to behaving equitably!