Dear OUSD Community,

Now that we are in April, we wish our communities a Happy Arab American Heritage Month - which also coincides with Ramadan this year. As you know, Oakland is one of the most diverse cities in the country, and our Arab American and Muslim American students, families, and staff are integral parts of our community, who add strength, brilliance, and wonderful richness to our district and our city.

In 2018, the California State Senate unanimously proclaimed the month of April as Arab American Heritage Month. It is an opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the history, achievements, and legacy of Arab Americans, while also connecting with Arab American scholars at OUSD. While the Arab community is vibrant, it does not have a race category recognized by the federal government that represents them, and this makes it difficult to get an accurate count of Arab students enrolled in our schools. Through our efforts to advance racial equity, we have been able to disaggregate and account for approximately 1,200 OUSD students from Arab ethnic backgrounds and/or who come from Arabic speaking families.

We have curated a resource guide to help educators incorporate curriculum, books, and films with a culturally relevant lens that celebrate Arab American Heritage. We’ve also included information and advice for educators on how to better support students during Ramadan - which is a spiritual and meaningful month of fasting, but one that can leave youth and adults alike feeling tired, distracted and weaker during the day.

This year we are excited to collaborate with Arab Youth Organizing (AYO), the youth arm of the Arab Resource and Organizing Center (AROC), to announce the youth-led Arab American Heritage month guide. The guide highlights Arab youth in their own words speaking on their experiences and struggles growing up in Bay Area public schools.

Here’s a message from AROC’s Youth Leaders:

“The Arab American Heritage Month Guide has been a project by and for Arab youth to learn about our identity, to develop leadership and critical thinking skills, and to reclaim space in our classrooms, school districts, and the communities we come from, which make up an integral part of the social fabric of our society. We hope that Oakland can take the lead in uplifting Arab American students by teaching about our history, as part of the expanding Ethnic Studies and history curriculums in the Bay Area, and nationwide. The guide includes an Arab American Heritage Month poster that you can download. We encourage educators, school administrators, and staff to display this poster in their classrooms and offices, and celebrate Arab American Heritage Month in April with all their students!”
Please feel free to utilize the resources linked here:

- Youth Led Arab American Heritage Guide
- Arab American Heritage District Guide

The Office of Equity’s Arab, Asian and Pacific Islander (AAPISA) programs have celebrated and will continue celebrating Arab American culture with community events including:

- Fremont High School hosted an Arab/SWANA Community Celebration on March 15
- 5th Annual Arab American Honor Roll Ceremony happens April 29, 1:00-4:00 p.m. at International Community School
- Multicultural Night at West Oakland Middle School on May 12 at 4:00-6:00 p.m.

Commonly Used Arabic Words:

Marhaba: Welcome, Hello.

Salam: Peace; often used as a way to greet or say goodbye.

We encourage all students and staff to send us your photos and a short narrative of how you are celebrating Arab American History Month at your school to the email addresses below. Every opportunity to showcase what is happening at our school sites provides inspiration, and motivates more participation in future events. Be recognized for what you do! You can also share on social media with the hashtags: #OUSDArabs #OUSDAAPISA

For tips on how to acknowledge Arab American culture and to bring Arab American Student Excellence to your school community, please contact:

Sabria Hassan, Targeted Intervention Specialist : sabria.hassan@ousd.org
Munera Mohsin, Family Engagement Specialist : munera.mohsin@ousd.org

Thank you.
OUSD News