

January 17, 2019

Dear Families,

In the Cedar Park library this month, K-5 students are exploring the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, Rosa Parks, The Little Rock Nine as well as lesser known **heroes of the civil rights movement**. On February 1st, Book-It Theatre will visit Cedar Park to perform a play based on New Shoes, a historical fiction story on the themes of segregation, problem solving, and resilience.

At Cedar Park, we believe that lessons about civil rights should not be limited to January for Martin Luther King Jr's birthday or February for Black History month, but that topics of **identity, bias, and social justice** should be woven into discussions **all year long**.

We believe that all **children deserve to see themselves and their families featured as protagonists in the books we read**—not only in painful stories of historical injustice, but also in **universal moments of joy and challenge** both large and small. We believe in offering our students **ongoing exposure to a wide range of inspiring changemakers, innovators, and everyday heroes**, particularly **those whose voices continue to be underrepresented**.

We have **prioritized a diverse library collection** at Cedar Park, not only through books that teach about social issues but also through stories that offer “**casual diversity, identity safety, and celebration of kids just being kids**.”

We believe that **stories break down walls** and that books hold the power to help us see ourselves more clearly, connect more deeply with others, and nurture our development of empathy and growth of character.

To enact these values all year long, we'll launch a “**Reading Without Walls**” **Challenge in February** (first introduced by Gene Luen Yang as the 5th Ambassador for Young People’s Literature). Students will be challenged to read a book about a character who does not look like them or whose life is different from their own. As students add to our display of completed titles, they'll be invited to give "book talks" and share reflections and recommendations with peers.

If you have questions, book requests, or would like to read along, stop by the library or contact me at ahlevin@seattleschools.org.

In partnership,
Abby Levin
Teacher-Librarian, Cedar Park