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Lancaster ISD Presents "Who Do You Think You Are?" My History Bowl

Lancaster, Texas/Lancaster ISD

In an effort to build a community with a strong knowledge of culture, heritage and history, teams of Lancaster ISD students in grades 4-12 and community members will compete in the inaugural **"Who Do you Think You Are?" My History Bowl Competition** at the **Lancaster IB/STEM High School at 9 a.m. on Saturday, February 22.**

"There are few things as powerful and important as a people steeped in its own history. Traditionally, schools teach a survey of all cultures and history and thus, do not have the time to explore in-depth the contributions of any one culture,"

Lancaster ISD Professional Development Director Connie Isabell said.

Isabell, who is spearheading this district event, said that aside from the rote remembrance of history facts, she hopes this competition will also accomplish two major objectives.

"First, we aim to deepen our student's sense of self and racial pride. Secondly, to provide opportunities to enhance their life skills like research, team work, reasoning, communication and cooperation."

The National Assessment of Educational Progress National Report Card released in 2011 found that Fifty-five percent of high school seniors failed to meet even the "basic" level of history knowledge, meaning that they could not interpret a short text excerpted for multiple-choice questions. It further reported that overall, American schoolchildren were found less capable in U.S. history than in any other subject which was a reflection of the consistent decline of cultural life in the country over the last few decades.



Lancaster ISD Superintendent Dr. Michael D. McFarland said that one of the district's emphasis will focus on preparing students to learn more about their history outside of the traditional Black History or Hispanic Heritage months.

“Our challenge is to engage in the difficult work of transforming our students' self-concept,” he said. “We must intentionally create opportunities to expose them to current and past models of success so that they can begin to see themselves differently.”

According to Isabell, the goal of this initial competition is to increase the number of youth and adults exposed to the history, culture and contributions of African Americans. However, she confirmed that future events would acquaint students with other cultures and ethnic groups.

“We will be able to give recognition and celebrate the richness and complexities of various cultures throughout the year,” she said.

America ranks 13th in the world in the education of its population, according to Isabell and the typical community education to entertainment ratio is about 1 to 200. She believes that it is time to change.

“Our desire is to start a movement which values education more than it does entertainment,” she said. “When Lancaster ISD reverses this trend as designed in our STEM program, we will lead the world. When our students are made aware of who they are, visualize their unlimited potential and create plans to excel far beyond any generation before them, America wins on every front.”

While this event is new to the district, it is not truly new to Isabell, who has sponsored a community based African-American History Bowl before in Tyler, Texas. She feels that the time is right to launch this tournament in Lancaster.

“For America to return to its eminent economic and political position, it will need to educate all of its citizens beyond high school. What better way to start the process than to excite students about what others, just like them, have achieved.”

Eighteenth century, Irish statesman and philosopher, Edmund Burke stated that, “Those who don't know history are destined to repeat it,” and Mazie Leichman, K-12 STEM Coordinator for ELA and Social Studies, sees this competition as another way to ensure our students' societal progress and cultural connection outside the classroom.

“Lancaster ISD is committed to educating the whole child. The history bowl is truly a celebration of culture, self and community affirmation,” she said. “We believe that beyond knowing history for history's sake, participants in these kinds of tournaments are sure to come away with a renewed sense of pride in the courageous works of those who came before us and, hopefully, a revived sense of duty to continue and expand those good works.”

Students, parents and community members are invited to attend. Winners will receive a team trophy for 1st and 2nd places in each division along with individual student medals. A cash prize will be given to 1st place participants in both divisions. Senior division winners will receive a trip to Washington D.C. There is no fee to participate, but sponsors are welcomed.

Please contact Ms. Connie Isabell at info@lancasterisd.org or via phone at 972-218-1494, district parents can contact the My History Bowl Coach on your child's campus.

The Lancaster Public Schools serve more than 6,000 pre-kindergarten through grade 12 students in 11 schools. The mission of the Lancaster Independent School District, a leader in providing innovative, quality programs, is to educate every student with the knowledge; skills; and principles to succeed and contribute in a competitive and technologically advancing world by providing rigorous and engaging learning opportunities that promote diversity; create an environment of integrity and respect; and establish a commitment to continued improvement in partnership with families and community.

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