



**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA**  
**Department of Education**

January 30, 2015

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: Steven R. Staples, Superintendent of Public Instruction

**SUBJECT: Black History Month Resources**

Every February, America and Virginia observe Black History Month, celebrating and honoring the many achievements and contributions made by African Americans to the economic, cultural, and political development of America. African Americans are prominent in Virginia and American history. The famous historian, Dr. Carter G. Woodson, a native Virginian and the son of former slaves, brought this fact to the world's attention by founding the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, publishing several scholarly works and establishing Negro History Week, the precursor to Black History Month. The Virginia Department of Education is pleased to provide teachers and school divisions with Black History Month resources. These resources support the *History and Social Science Standards of Learning*.

The U.S. Department of Education, Federal Resources for Educational Excellence, provides an in-depth collection of African American resources at [http://free.ed.gov/resource/african\\_american\\_history\\_month\\_federal\\_resources/](http://free.ed.gov/resource/african_american_history_month_federal_resources/).

*African American Mosaic* is a Library of Congress Resource Guide for the Study of Black History and Culture. Topics include colonization, abolition, and migration <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/african/intro.html>. African American History Month resources are available from the Library of Congress at <http://www.loc.gov/topics/africanamericans>.

African American history sites from the Library of Virginia focus on topics in Virginia history and are available at <http://www.lva.virginia.gov/public/guides/vhr/afam.htm>.

Many African Americans have figured prominently in their respective fields throughout the past century, including such distinguished Virginians as Oliver W. Hill, Esquire, whose 1954 argument in *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, mandated the integration of America's public schools; Maggie L. Walker, a prominent civic leader and founder and President of the St. Luke Penny Bank, the first American bank established and operated by a woman of any race; the Honorable L. Douglas Wilder, Virginia's sixty-sixth Governor and the first African American from any state to win a gubernatorial election; the late Arthur Ashe, winner of the U.S. Open and Wimbledon tennis championships; and Gabriel Prosser, a charismatic blacksmith, owned by Thomas Prosser of Henrico County, who planned to enter Richmond with force, capture the Capitol and the Virginia State Armory, and hold Governor James Monroe hostage to bargain for freedom for Virginia's slaves. Many other African Americans have made important contributions to our society, such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., our nation's greatest civil rights activist; Jackie Robinson, the first African American to integrate Major League Baseball; the Honorable Thurgood Marshall, the first African American United States Supreme Court Justice; and Rosa Parks, whose famous decision to remain in her seat symbolized the spirit of the Civil Rights Movement.

For more information, please contact Betsy Barton, specialist for history and social science, Office of Humanities and Early Childhood, by e-mail at [Betsy.Barton@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:Betsy.Barton@doe.virginia.gov) or by telephone at (804) 225-3454.

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