



Martin Luther King Day March:
Celebrate Martin Luther King Day with
an age-appropriate all-school march.

Lesson Plans For Educators

families

schools

design

health

public safety

Martin Luther King Jr. Day All-School March

(with appreciation to Bailey Gatzert Elementary School)

The Birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. is observed on the third Monday of January each year, around the time of King's birthday, January 15. Consider marking this important date with an all-school march around your school neighborhood on the Friday preceding the holiday. Your students will experience the excitement of a large-scale march and appreciate the power of historical events in a visceral way.

This is a wonderful event to invite family participation! Invite parents, grandparents and guardians along for the walk. You will find that many are willing to take a day off work for this celebration.

Preparing for the event:

- Your event may require a permit from the Special Events Office of the Parks and Recreation Department. To apply for a permit, contact your local police department. The process can take several weeks.
- Choose a safe route through the neighborhood. Walk the route, so that you are familiar with all the crossings, traffic, and other safety considerations and can plan accordingly.
- If your school is near a business district, consider walking past the storefronts for maximum visibility during school hours.
- Schedule the event. Bailey Gatzert Elementary follows this schedule on the Friday prior to the MLK holiday:
 - o Classrooms gather in the lunchroom at 2:00
 - o March begins at 2:15
 - o March ends at 2:45; gather in front of school for song
 - o Students return to classroom for 3:20 dismissal.

Classroom Preparation:

- In addition to your usual MLK curricular activities, have students create signs and banners that celebrate the life and spirit of Dr. King to carry on the march. Make signs by using stiff poster board and paint stirrers for handles, or by cutting head-sized hole in the center of a large piece of poster board so that it may be worn over the shoulders. Here are some suggestions for content:
 - o On a cloud-shaped sign, finish the phrase "I have a dream that..."
 - o Brainstorm words and concepts central to civil rights (i.e. Freedom, Justice, Equality) and paint them boldly on your sign
 - o Cut a hole in a sign big enough to place around your face. Write, "I am the dream" above, and write a reason why below.
- Teach your students songs and slogans from the civil rights era to sing or chant as you march.

Prior to the Event:

- Communicate with families. Send home flyers and newsletter articles advertising the date and inviting participation.
- Leaflet neighbors and businesses a few days before to alert them to the event and invite them to come out and wave to the parade.
- Ask neighborhood groups like the Rotary Club or nearby senior center if they would like to participate and help chaperone.

During the Event:

- Use student patrol to help at intersections.
- A large school banner is great for containing a crowd. Have the lead marchers hold it at the front and make clear that all children must stay behind it.
- It is helpful to have walky-talkies for communication between adults at different points on the route. Similarly, the principal or other staff person may use a megaphone to speak to marchers and/or lead chants and songs.
- Be sure to have a first aid kit and trained staff along in case of injury.