



# **Thematic Programing for Multicultural Celebrations**



Presented by:  
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Chesterton, IN



# Background

At Westchester Public Library, we propose and plan our programs quarterly (three months at a time). I oversee programs for ages 2+ (Ages 2-3, Ages 4-6, Grades K-4).

As a librarian of color, I still struggled with integrating authenticity in my cultural celebration programming. I wanted to steer away from cultural appropriation and instead sought after genuine celebrations of achievements, culture, identity, empathy, resilience, and inclusivity.

Then, I discovered the ultimate programming formula:

**THEME + FEATURE = PLAY**



# Meet them where they are

Why play?

## Student Performance Across Subjects

Changes in average scores and scores at selected percentiles, by subject and grade

Subject	Grade/Age	Current Year	Prior Year	Average score	Percentiles				
					10th	25th	50th	75th	90th
Mathematics	Grade 4	2022	2019	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Mathematics	Grade 8	2022	2019	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Reading	Grade 4	2022	2019	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	◆
Reading	Grade 8	2022	2019	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓

[SHOW THE RESULTS FOR OTHER SUBJECTS](#)

↑

Significant increase compared to last assessment year

◆

No significant difference compared to last assessment year

↓

Significant decrease compared to last assessment year

Today, youth librarianship serves three distinctly different generations: Gen Z (1995-2009), Gen Alpha (2010-2024), and Gen Beta (2025-2039).

Let's program beyond the shelves by using data from our community's demographics, the Youth Mental Health Crisis, and the Nation's Report Card to formulate and facilitate programs that narrow disparities.





# Meet them where they are

## Student Performance Across Subjects

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Mathematics	Grade 4	2024	2022	⬆	⬜	⬜	⬆	⬆	⬆
Mathematics	Grade 8	2024	2022	⬜	⬇	⬇	⬜	⬆	⬆
Reading	Grade 4	2024	2022	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬜
Reading	Grade 8	2024	2022	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬇	⬜	⬜

[SHOW THE RESULTS FOR OTHER SUBJECTS](#)

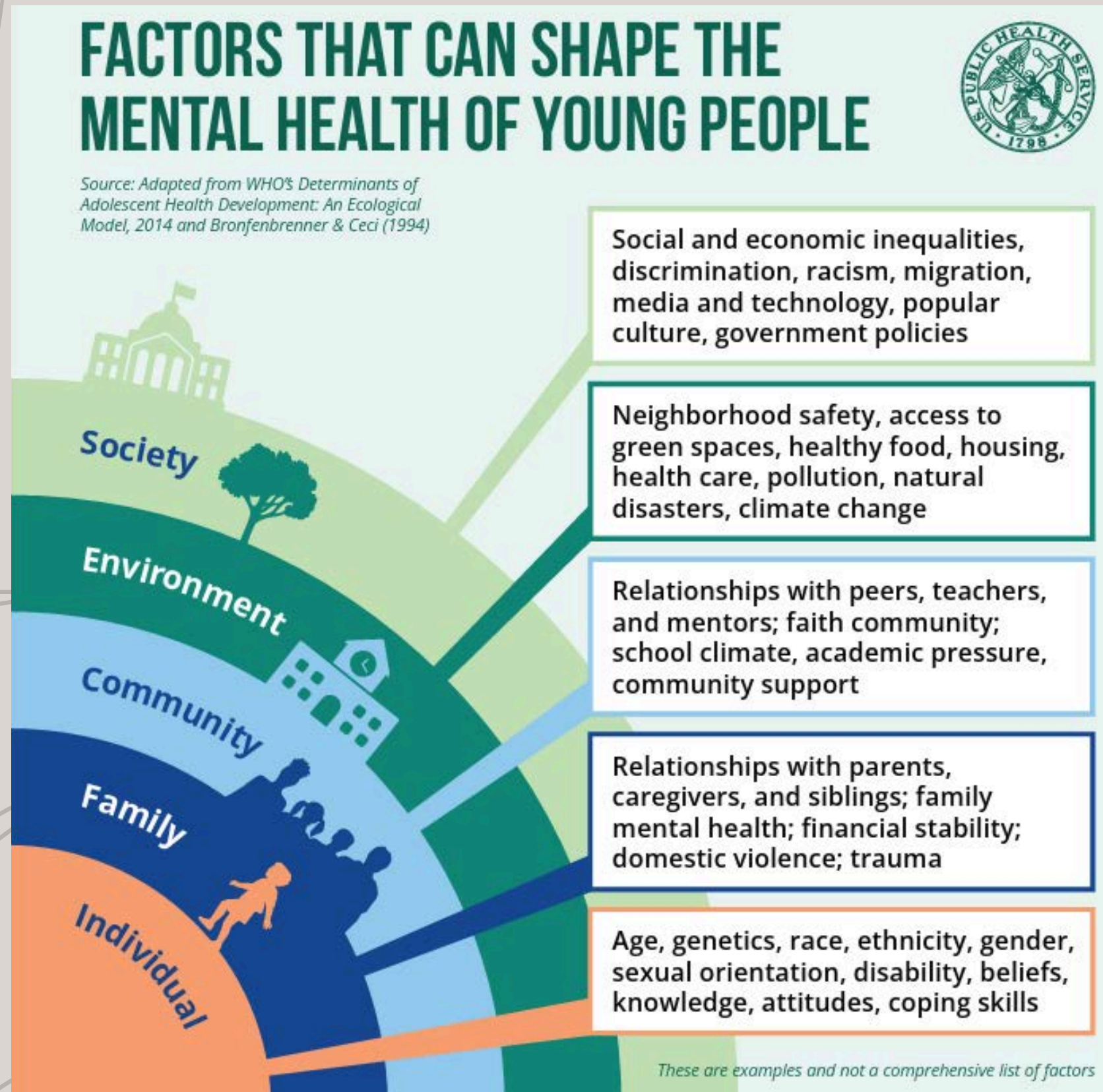
⬆  
Significant increase  
compared to last  
assessment year

⬜  
No significant difference  
compared to last  
assessment year

⬇  
Significant decrease  
compared to last  
assessment year

[...] some of the challenges and obstacles that this generation of young people face—the ubiquity of technology platforms, loneliness, economic inequality, and progress on issues such as racial injustice and climate change—are unprecedented and uniquely hard to navigate. The impact that these challenges are having on their mental health—their emotional, psychological, and social well-being—is devastating.

# Meet them where they are



Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, mental health challenges were the leading cause of disability and poor life outcomes among young people, with up to 1 in 5 children and adolescents aged 3 to 17 years in the United States having a reported mental, emotional, developmental, or behavioral disorder. Many mental health challenges first emerge early in life, and studies suggest that the average delay between the onset of mental health symptoms and treatment is 11 years.





# 2025 INDIANA KIDS COUNT<sup>®</sup> DATA BOOK

31<sup>st</sup> Edition of a Profile of Hoosier Youth



Family & Community



Health



Economic Well-Being



Education

## Key Highlights

In 2023, Indiana had one mental health provider for every 500 people, an improvement from the 2022 ratio of 529:1.<sup>92</sup>

- All of Indiana's 92 counties had a mental health professional shortage in 2023, up from 91 counties the previous year.<sup>93</sup>

In 2024, Indiana had the 16th highest rate of children under 18 at risk for depression, with 19.3 per 100,000 – an improvement from 2023.<sup>94</sup>

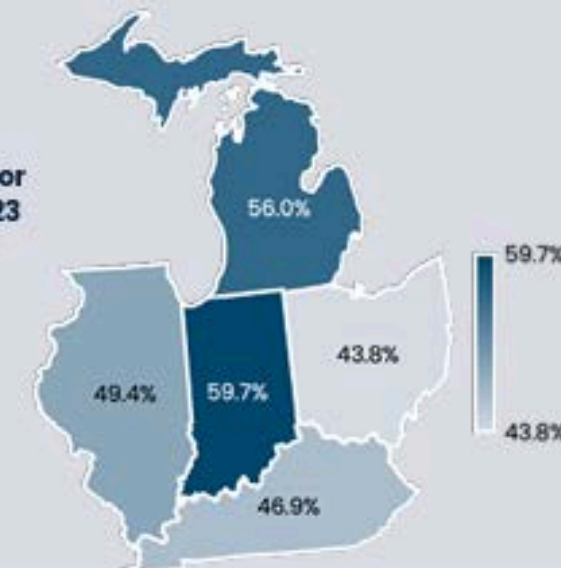
- Additionally, Indiana ranked 11th nationwide for youth under 18 at risk for suicidal ideation in 2024, with a rate of 17.8 per 100,000, moving up from 17th place in 2023.

**62% of LGBTQ youth in Indiana wanted mental health care but could not access the necessary services – the highest rate among neighboring states.<sup>95</sup>**

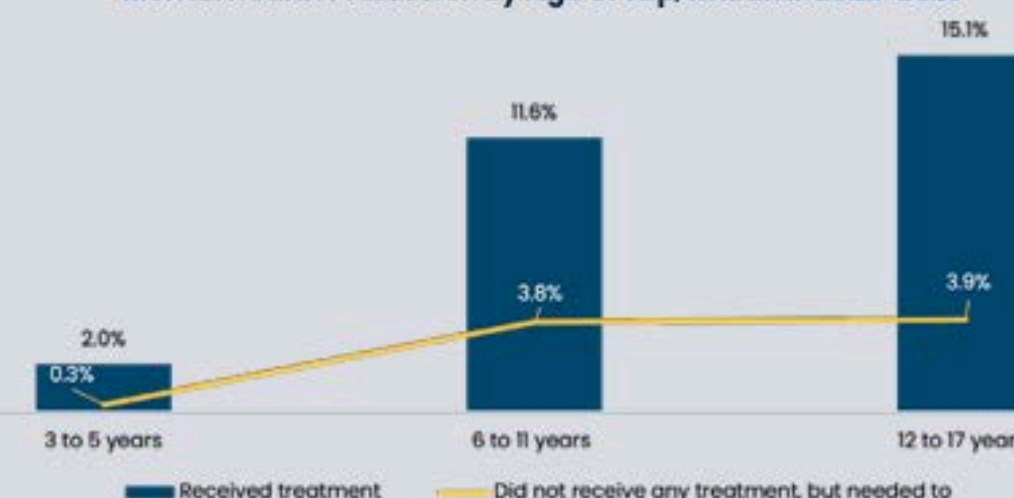
- The most common reason cited for forgoing necessary mental health care was fear of discussing their mental health concerns, aligning with trends across the U.S.

## Caregiver Reported Difficulty Obtaining Mental Health Care for Their Child Age 3 to 17; 2022-2023

Source: National Survey of Children's Health Indicator 4.4a



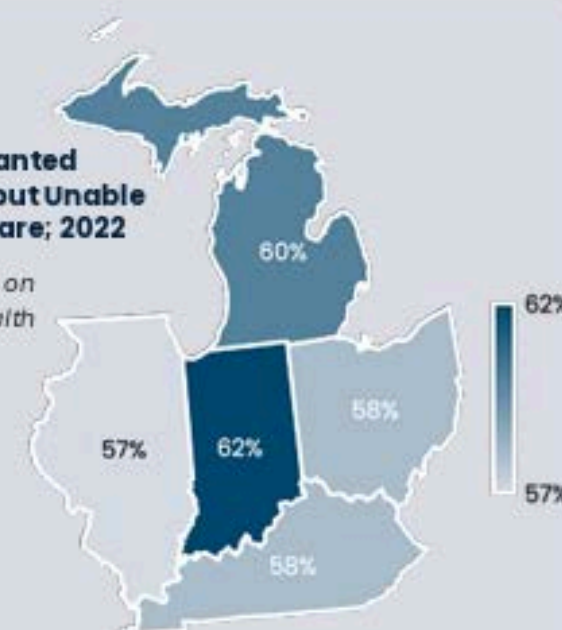
## Child 3 to 17 Years Did Not Receive Treatment or Counseling from a Mental Health Profession by Age Group, Indiana: 2022-2023



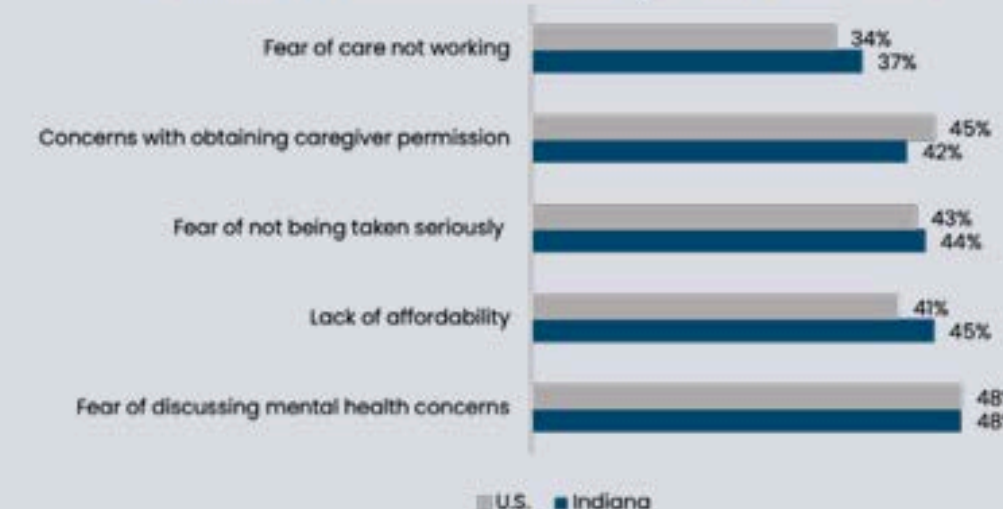
Source: National Survey of Children's Health Indicator 4.4

## LGBTQ Youth Who Wanted Mental Health Care but Unable to Receive Needed Care; 2022

Source: National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health



## Top Five Reasons LGBTQ Youth Who Wanted Mental Health Care but Unable to Receive Needed Care, Indiana: 2022-2023



Source: National Survey of Children's Health Indicator 4.4



# Meet them where they are

Per the Office of the Surgeon General, this is what community organizations can do for Youth Mental Health:

*Address the unique mental health needs of at-risk youth, such as racial and ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ youth, foster youth, youth in the juvenile justice system, and youth with disabilities.*

**Elevate the voices of children, young people, and their families.**





# What is Thematic Programming?

Focus on an overarching theme, then plug and play by featuring a prolific person, group, event, or folktale from that culture.



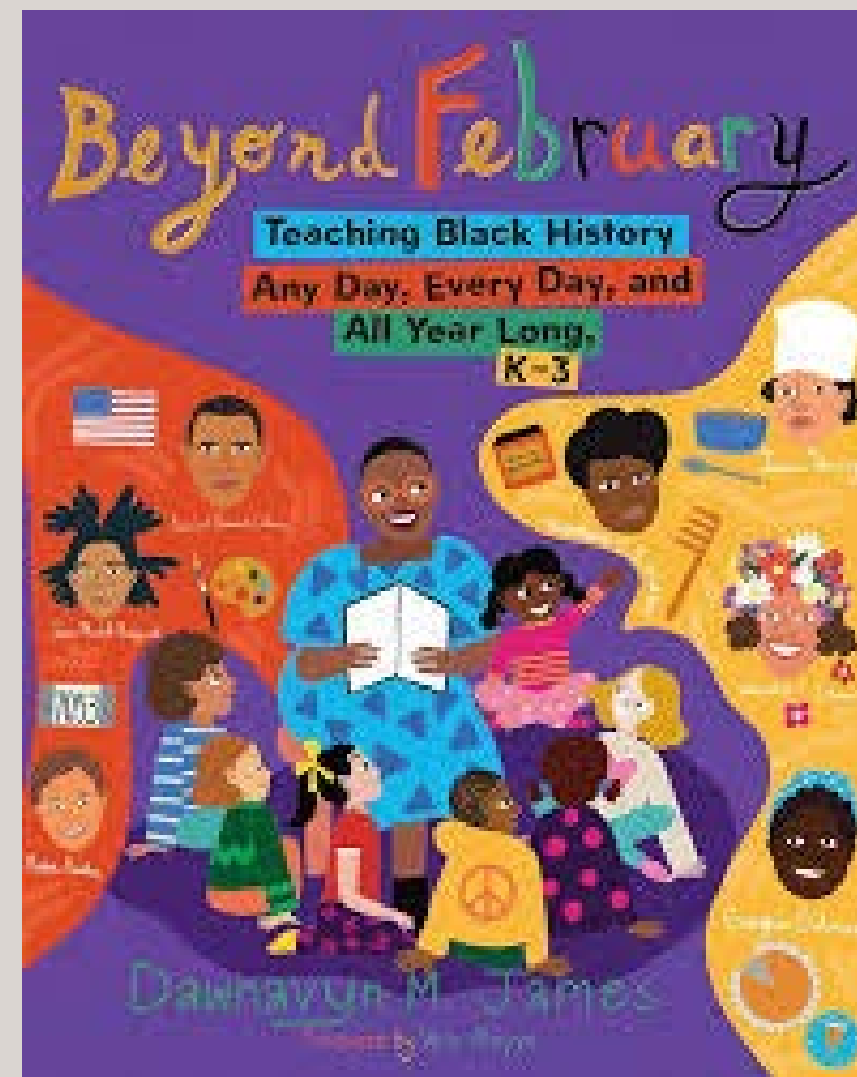


# Suggested Reading

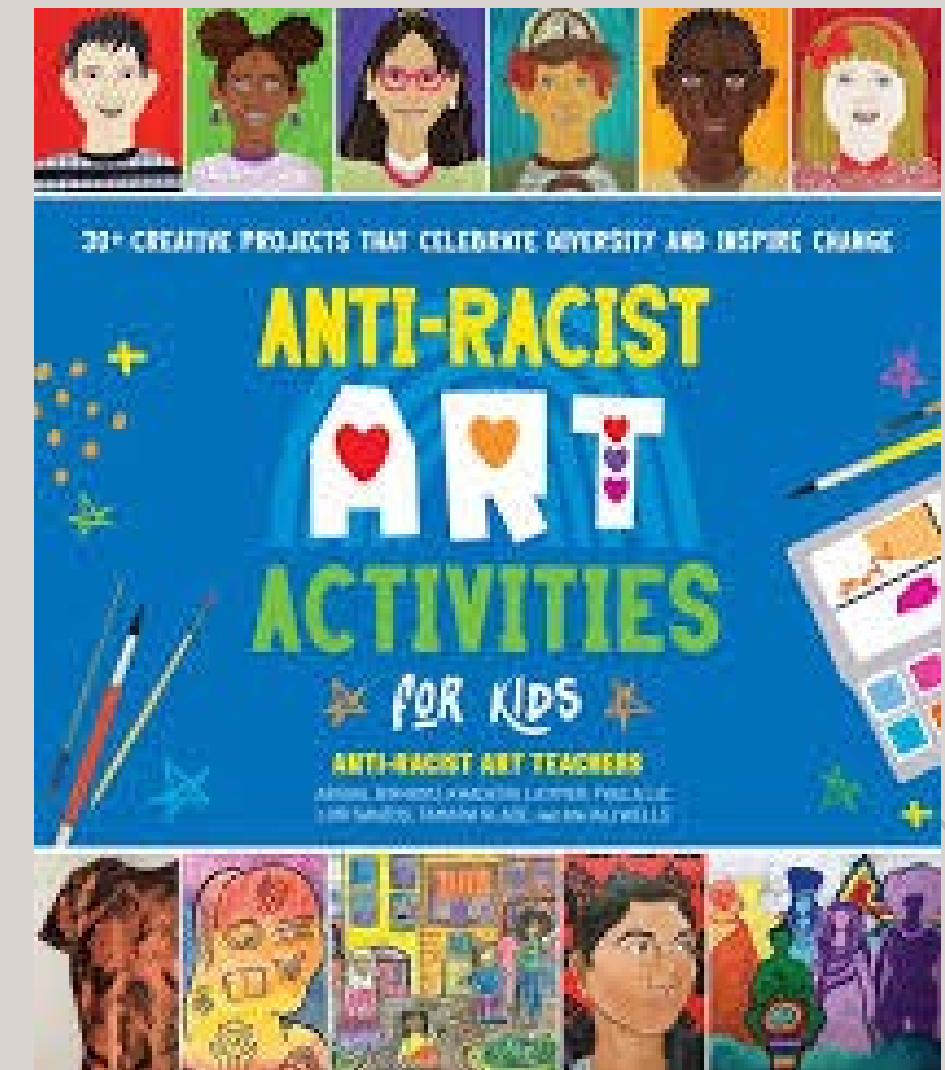
**01. Let's talk About Race in Storytimes by Jessica Anne Bratt**



**02. Beyond February: Teaching Black History All Day, Every Day, and All Year Long, K-3 by Dawnavyn M. James**



**03. Anti-Racist Art Activities for Kids by Birhanu, Latimer, Liz, Santos, Slade, and Wells**



# Theme Examples

**01** Music

**02** Art

**03** Dance

**04** STEM

**05** Coding

**06** Baking

**07** Food

**08** Gardening

**09** Folktales

**10** Movement

**11** Mindfulness





# Feature Examples

**01** Black History Month

**02** Women's History Month

**03** Asian American & Pacific Islander Heritage Month

**05** Arab American Heritage Month

**04** Hispanic Heritage Month

**06** Native American Heritage Month



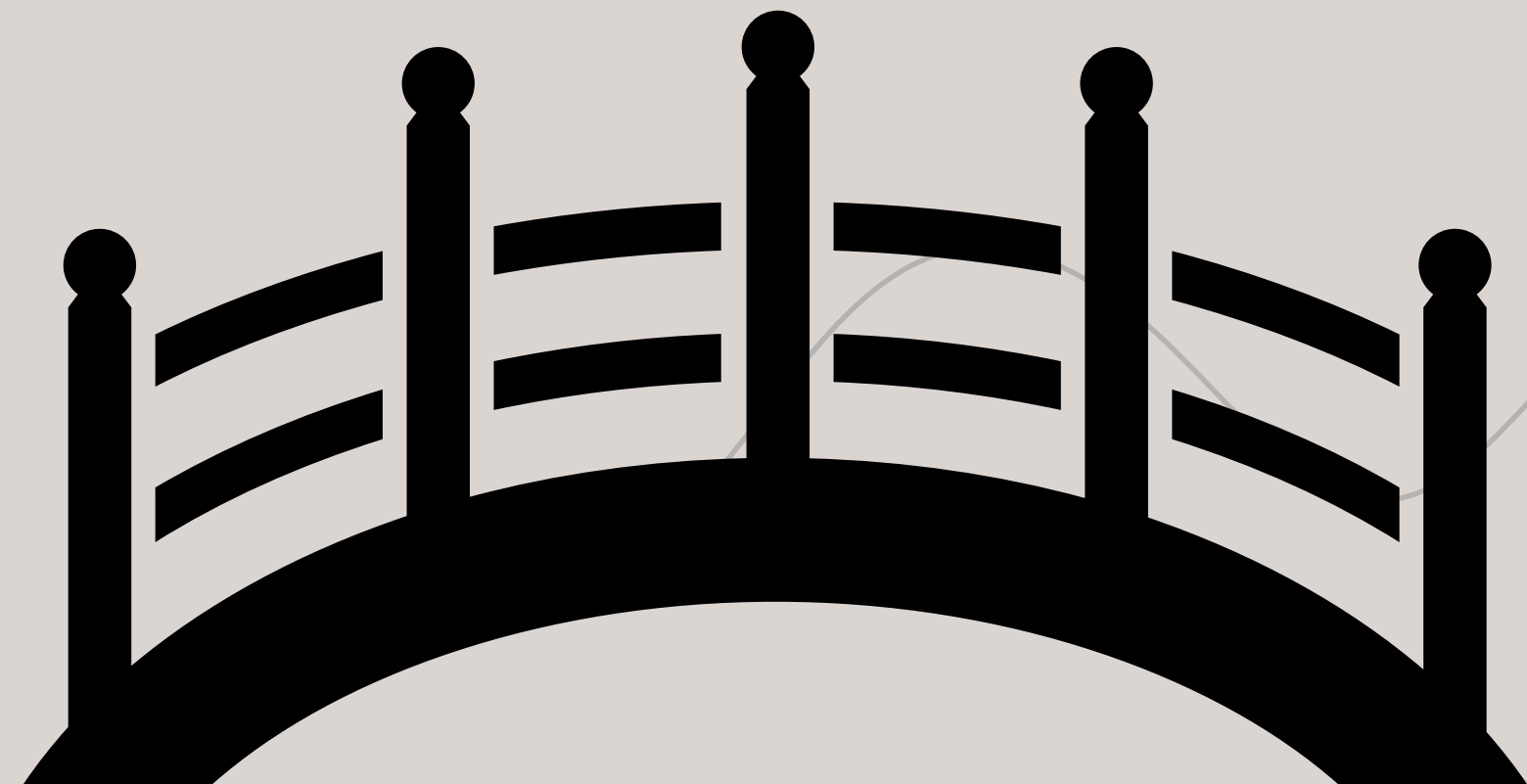
# Why feature?

It takes courage to start multicultural programming, but doing so bridges divides.

We are not only Librarians, but also Information Scientists and Research Professionals. *We are trained to have the ability to research what we do not already know.*

Break it down: Who, What, When, Where, Why, & How.

Then, make a \*short\* slideshow for your program.





# Now, what are examples of Play?

Sensory play does not have to end with toddlerhood. Integrate an immersive experience with an awakening of senses, movement, and creativity for all youth ages.

*Given blank canvas, kids can change the world.*





# Music & Arts Social Club

Music & Arts Social Club  
(THEME):

Introduce kids to an artist  
or art form (FEATURE),

and listen to music from  
that era or country  
(FEATURE)





# Little Explorers

My storytime for 4-6 year olds. Held in 4-6 week sessions.  
Each session is a different theme, and each week has a  
different feature and play:

Folktales (we visit a different continent each week)  
How Things Work (STEM)  
Poetry Lab (BIPOC Authors)  
Mindfulness & Movement (Mental Health)  
Math Rocks!

Show the kids the author's photo before reading the book.





# Music & Arts Social Club

**MUSIC & ARTS  
SOCIAL CLUB:  
THE 80s**

For Kids in Grades K-4

**Wednesday, June 12  
4-5 PM**

Kids will learn about artist Jean-Michel Basquiat in the neo-expressionism movement, when street art united hip hop culture and punk music. Join us as we listen to the music that shaped an era and create your own Basquiat-inspired painting.

**THOMAS BRANCH  
MEETING ROOM**

Registration opens JUNE 5

Register online or call 219-926-7696 to reserve your spot.

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Juneteenth: the 80s –  
Basquiat and the music  
that united an era: hip  
hop and punk

Black History Month:  
Hip Hop Dance Class; or  
Jazz & Romare Bearden  
in the Harlem  
Renaissance

**HIP HOP  
DANCE CLASS**

Featuring Dancebizz  
Centre for Dance

For Kids in Grades K-4

**Thursday, February 16  
4 - 5 PM**

**BAUGHER CENTER**

Join us as we learn the roots and moves of hip hop in celebration of Black History Month.

Registration opens FEBRUARY 9  
Register online or call 219-926-7696 to reserve your spot.

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# Baking History

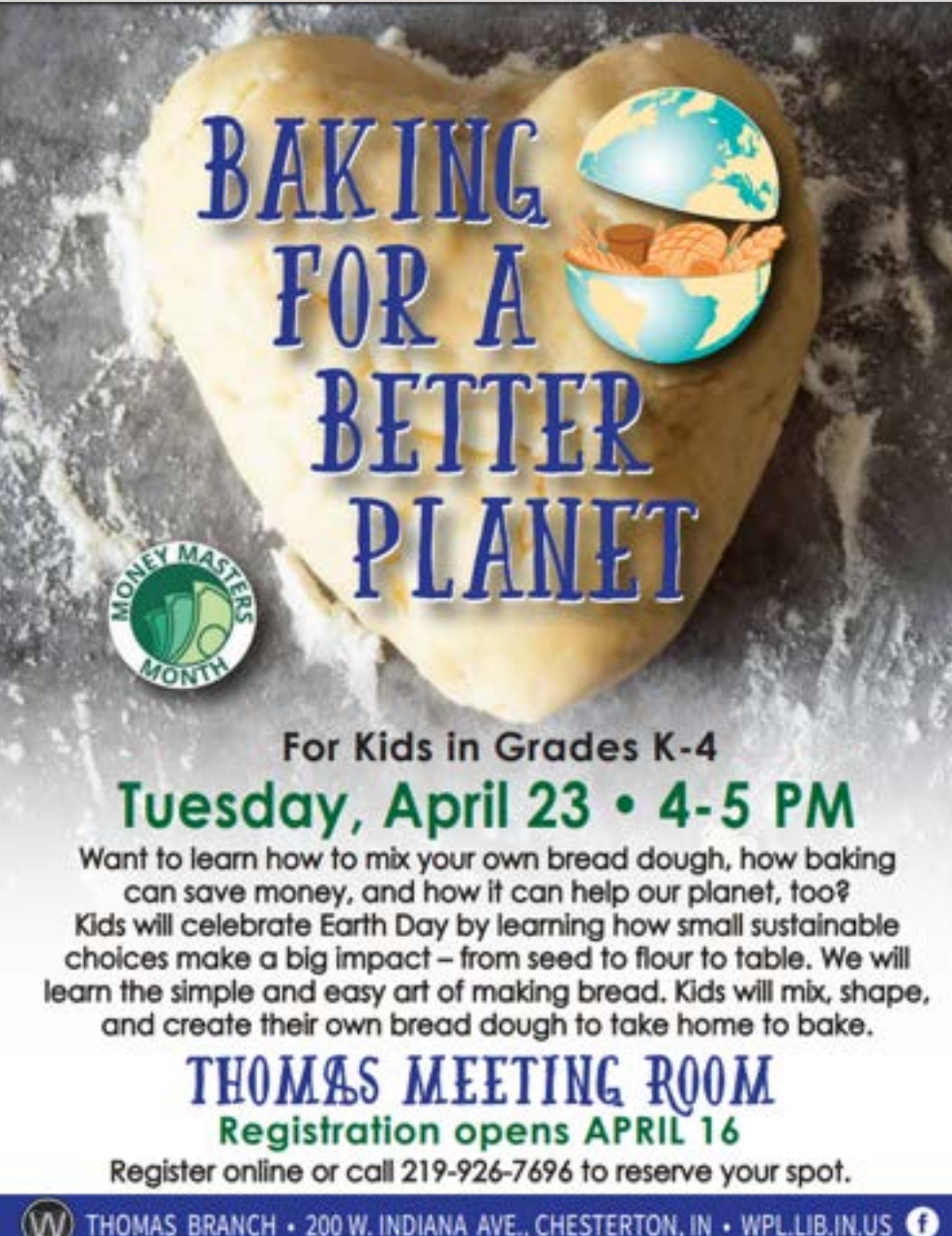
## Overview

Baking (THEME): Introduce kids to a dough (FEATURE) they can mix, knead, and make (PLAY) at the Library that they can take home to bake


## Examples

Soul Food: Jamaican Hummingbird Bread

Bread - Read *The Only Way to Make Bread* by Cristina Quintero (every culture has their own way of making bread)



**BAKING FOR A BETTER PLANET**



For Kids in Grades K-4  
**Tuesday, April 23 • 4-5 PM**

Want to learn how to mix your own bread dough, how baking can save money, and how it can help our planet, too? Kids will celebrate Earth Day by learning how small sustainable choices make a big impact – from seed to flour to table. We will learn the simple and easy art of making bread. Kids will mix, shape, and create their own bread dough to take home to bake.

**THOMAS MEETING ROOM**  
Registration opens **APRIL 16**  
Register online or call 219-926-7696 to reserve your spot.

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**BAKING HISTORY:**  
**Soul Food**

For Kids in Grades K-4  
**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 20  
4-5 PM**

Join us to learn about the history and origins of Soul Food. We will also learn how a little patience and sweetness can go a long way in a recipe. Kids will mix and make their own hummingbird banana bread, a Jamaican recipe, to take home and bake.

**Thomas Meeting Room**  
Registration opens **FEBRUARY 12**  
Register online or call 219-926-7696 to reserve your spot.

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# Music & Arts Social Club

Sheila Hicks, 1963. Courtesy of the  
American Craft Council Library and Archives.



Women's History Month:  
Women of Bauhaus and  
their textile art that still  
inspires artists today --  
provide each child a loom  
and learn how to weave



Gunta Stölzl, 1927-1928





# First Aid + CPR for Kids

Women's History Month:  
collaborate with your local Fire Department for a First Aid + CPR introduction for kids. Teach families about the pioneer of modern nursing and American Red Cross founder Clara Barton

A poster with a teal background. At the top is a large white heart containing a photo of a man in a blue polo shirt with a Red Cross logo on his chest, kneeling and talking to a young girl. To the right of the heart is a large red cross. Below the heart and cross is the text 'FIRST AID &amp; CPR FOR KIDS' in bold blue letters. Underneath that is 'FOR KIDS IN GRADES K-4' in smaller black letters. Then, 'Thursday, March 21' and '4-5 PM' in red. Below that is a paragraph of text: 'Join us to gain confidence, knowledge, and awareness about first aid basics in this interactive, hands-on program with WPL and Chesterton Fire Department. In observance of Women's History Month, we will also learn about the pioneer of modern nursing and American Red Cross founder Clara Barton.' Then, 'THOMAS MEETING ROOM' in bold blue letters, followed by 'Registration opens MARCH 14' in red. At the bottom is 'Register online or call 219-926-7696 to reserve your spot.' and a red banner with the library logo, 'THOMAS BRANCH • 200 W. INDIANA AVE., CHESTERTON, IN • WPL.LIB.IN.US', and an information icon.





# Music & Arts Social Club

**FAMILY CRAFT!**

## Shibori Indigo Dyeing

**FOR KIDS AGES 6+ AND THEIR CAREGIVER**

Celebrate Asian American and Pacific Islander Month by learning a Japanese Shibori indigo dyeing method. Indigo dye comes from the leaves of the Asian plants of the indigofera genus. We will use the natural dye to color linen drawstring bags.

**Tuesday, May 11 • 4:30-5:30 PM**  
**HAGEMAN LAWN**

Program is located outside, bring your own blanket or chairs.  
 Registration is required.  
 Reserve your spot online or by calling 219-926-9080 starting May 4.

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Asian American &  
Pacific Islander Month:

- Anime & Manga Con
- Shibori Indigo Dyeing
- Little Explorers: Folktales (Chinese Paper Lantern, Rangoli sand art)

## ANIME & MANGA CON

FOR KIDS IN GRADES K-4

**WEDNESDAY, JULY 10**  
**4 - 5 PM**

A Comic-con with a twist. Kids will have an introduction to all things anime and manga. They will learn about the genre and style that is loved internationally. Then, kids will design their own cosplay and learn to draw the manga style expressions. From Pokémon to Miyazaki and Naruto to Yo-Kai Watch — all kids are welcome! Who knows? You might discover a new favorite.

**THOMAS MEETING ROOM**  
**Registration opens JULY 2**  
 Register online or call 219-926-7696 to reserve your spot.

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# Music & Arts Social Club

Asian American &  
Pacific Islander Month:

- Boba Party
- Artist Yayoi Kusama
- Origami Crane Kinetic Mobiles



**MUSIC & ARTS  
SOCIAL CLUB:  
CALDER'S  
KINETIC  
MOBILES**

For Kids in Grades K-4

**Thursday,  
January 16  
4-5 PM**

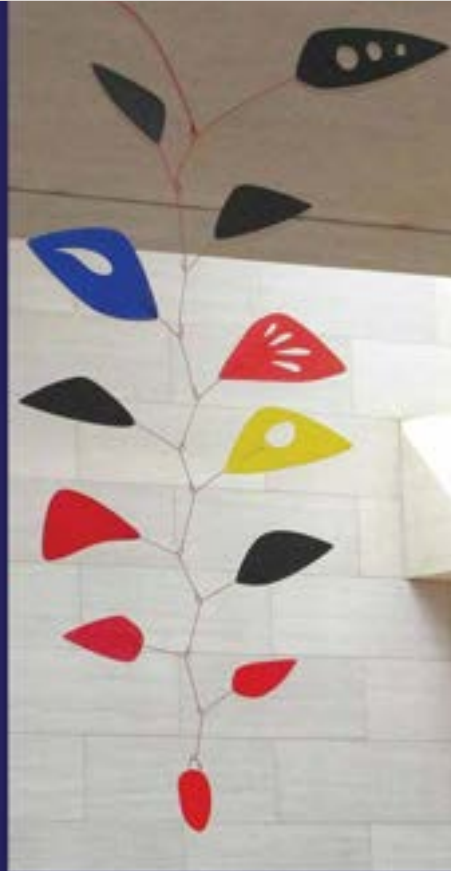
Join us to learn about Alexander Calder and his kinetic sculpture during the early 20th century, when artists experimented with three-dimensional processes. Kids will design and build their own origami kinetic mobile and listen to music while they create.

**THOMAS MEETING ROOM**

Registration opens **JANUARY 9**

Register online or call 219-926-7696 to reserve your spot.

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**BOBA PARTY**

FOR KIDS IN GRADES K-4

**Thursday, July 18  
4 - 5 PM**

Have you heard of bubble tea, but haven't had a chance to try it? Or, do you love boba, but want to try more flavors? Join us for a boba mixing, marbling, taste testing, recipe book making, flavorful party. Kids will also make their own custom bubble tea keychain for back to school gear.

**THOMAS  
MEETING  
ROOM**

Registration opens  
**JULY 11**

Register online or call  
219-926-7696 to reserve your spot.

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# Music & Arts Social Club

Hispanic History Month:

Frida Kahlo: how do you see yourself rather than how others see you – (self-identity and self-expression)

(see National Gallery of Art lesson plans)

**MUSIC & ARTS  
SOCIAL CLUB:  
FRIDA KAHLO**

For Kids in Grades K-4  
**Thursday, June 27  
4-5 PM**

How can art help us understand ourselves and our world? Through an introduction of Frida Kahlo's self-portraits, we will explore traits of self-identity. Kids will have the opportunity to create their own self-portrait while listening to music.

**THOMAS BRANCH  
MEETING ROOM**  
Registration opens JUNE 20

Register online or call 219-926-7696 to reserve your spot.

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# Coders Unite

## Overview

Coding (THEME): Introduce kids to BIPOC leaders in the tech industry (FEATURE) by learning how to code (PLAY)



## Examples

Hispanic Heritage Month: NASA Edition that lets kids code their own galaxy and use sonification

Women's History Month: talk about girls in tech using:

- Python
- Roblox Studio
- Hour of Code







# Music & Arts Social Club

**MUSIC & ARTS  
SOCIAL CLUB:  
NATIVE  
AMERICAN  
ART**

For Kids in Grades K-4  
**Thursday,  
November 7  
4-5 PM**

In the spirit of Native American artist Wendy Red Star's creative printmaking, kids will make their own photography collage using poetry and scenic transcendence. Each kid will get a Polaroid photo, and they will make, create, and write their art piece while we listen to Native American music for inspiration.

**THOMAS MEETING ROOM**  
**Registration opens OCTOBER 31**  
Register online or call 219-926-7696 to reserve your spot.

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Native American  
Heritage Month:

Wendy Red Star's scenic  
transcendence in her  
creative printmaking;

or Braiding Sweetgrass

**BRAIDING  
SWEETGRASS  
FOR KIDS**

For Kids in Grades K-4  
**Thursday, November 2  
4-5 PM**

In observance of Native American Heritage Month, we will gather to learn about Native American history, traditions, and teachings. Together, we will also learn to make sweetgrass braids as we discuss the strength it represents.

**HAGEMAN BRANCH**  
**Registration opens OCTOBER 26**  
Register online or call 219-926-7696 to reserve your spot.

*Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* is a New York Times bestseller by Robin Wall Kimmerer, a mother, scientist, professor, and enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation.

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# Seeds for Thought

Seeds for Thought (THEME)  
for Mental Health Awareness Month  
(FEATURE) by planting vegetable seeds  
(PLAY)



# Thank You

Presented by:  
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