



## **FREEDOM SCHOOL PILOT**

The Manasota ASALH Freedom School is a free, community-based Saturday school program that will improve students reading and literacy skills while teaching the history of African Americans, including the history of Africa, the Middle Passage, Enslavement, Emancipation, the Freedom Movement, contemporary Black life and culture and the contributions of African Americans to the foundation of American wealth, power and global position.

Children from all communities are required to receive instruction on African and African American history in accordance with Florida Statute 1003.42(h). Knowledge and appreciation for the role that African Americans played in the American story, including the difficult history of racism, segregation and discrimination, will equip students to think about that history and how it influences today. All children, regardless of background, should gain a fuller understanding of the American experiment and learn the importance of living, and not merely reciting, the principles espoused in the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution.

Freedom schools evoke the legacy of the free community schools launched by the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee during the Civil Rights Movement in order to educate Black children on their history and empower them to fight for social, political, and economic equality. Recent laws and decisions from Florida's political leadership make this history more difficult to teach in the public schools. We believe this instruction is both required by current Florida law and essential for the education of all of our children. It marginalizes no child, while providing critical validation for children of African descent.

We will begin our Freedom School, as a pilot, on Saturday, February 18 and continue through Saturday, April 29, 2023 at the Betty J. Johnson library in Newtown. Classes begin at 12:00 p.m. and end at 2:00 p.m. Our target is to enroll 25 students, from 3rd grade through 12th grade. Five certified teachers have indicated an interest to teach, on Saturdays, aided by volunteers from Manasota ASALH and the community.

We will use the curriculum designed by the BH365® company because it provides interactive, age and grade appropriate content that will be attractive to young people. We will measure student learning gains, pre and post courses, and provide incentives (recognition, volunteer opportunities and ASALH memberships) to encourage the student's continued exploration of Black history. Using the information and feedback we gain from the pilot, we expect to resume the Freedom School in the Fall of 2023.

Contact David Wilkins at (989) 980-0555 or Dave Harralson at (941) 870-5516 for more information.

