

Winter Break Option: Kwanzaa Celebration

By Shawnta S. Barnes – December 25, 2017



Arguably the roughest weeks for teachers are the weeks between Thanksgiving break and winter break. When the school bell rings on the last

day before break, students have two weeks to spend at home with their parents. For parents, the thought of having their children at home for two weeks might bring anxiety. Yes, parents want to spend time with their kids, but when they are at school, there is a nice schedule of activities for them to complete and topics to learn. When children are at home, the responsibility of scheduling the day falls to parents. Before and throughout winter break, I plan to highlight options, free and for a fee, parents can take advantage of during winter break with their children.

Kwanzaa is a holiday celebrated from December 26 – Jan 1. According to History.com:

Dr. Maulana Karenga, professor and chairman of Black Studies at California State University, Long Beach, created Kwanzaa in 1966. After the Watts riots in Los Angeles, Dr. Karenga searched for ways to bring African-Americans together as a community. He founded US, a cultural organization, and started to research African “first fruit” (harvest) celebrations. Karenga combined aspects of several different harvest celebrations, such as those of the Ashanti and those of the Zulu, to form the basis of Kwanzaa.

There are seven principles of Kwanzaa: unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith. Each day of the holiday, a principle is celebrated.



JB

painting an African mask during the 2015 Indianapolis Kwanzaa Celebration held at Crispus Attucks High School.

Annually, The Indianapolis Kwanzaa Committee holds a Kwanzaa celebration. This year, their 51st celebration, “Kwanzaa Plant the Seeds for 2018, Harvest Time” will be held downtown at Central Library in the recently opened Center for Black Literature and Culture from 5-9 p.m.

This event is free and open to all regardless of background or heritage. Local musical artists will fill the air with a powerful beat where you will be drawn in to move your feet. You’ll be intellectually stimulated through spoken word

and you'll be able to witness the joy and unity of African dance. There will be plenty of activities to keep the little ones busy. My boys enjoyed making masks at a past celebration, which are still hanging up on the wall in our house today. Vendors and food will also be available.

From our boys:

***JJ:** Kwanzaa is cool because you get to dance and light the candles. I enjoyed making my own mask that I got to paint all by myself. I was even able to use gold paint, which is super shiny and that was nice.*

***JB:** I like Kwanzaa because you get to light the kinara. The best part is the dancing. I love that I get to move around.*



& JB painted these masks during the 2015 Indianapolis Kwanzaa Celebration.

Resources for more information about Kwanzaa:

Kwanzaa – Sesame Street

Kwanzaa History – The History Channel

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