

Eastern is kicking off Black History Month in style with its annual participation in a nationwide tradition, the African American Read-In.

Beginning next Wednesday, February 13 at 10:30 a.m. in Powell Lobby, students, faculty and friends are invited to come read and listen to some of the most famous and accomplished Black writers' works.

"The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) started this years ago as a way for people to come together and just read—poetry, short essays, short excerpts from books by African and African American and African Caribbean writers, basically a celebration of black authors," said Salome Nnoromele, director of African/African American Studies."

The event, which is celebrating its 24th year on a national level, hopes to bring people of all stripes and ethnicities together for one shared purpose.

"It's a good time, truly—people come, grab a book, read a little Maya Angelou, eat some za. Fun is had by all!" said Linda Frost, director of the Honors Program and a member of the committee organizing the read-in.

In addition to Eastern students, this year the event is also bringing in students from the four area high schools, Model, Madison Central, Berea Community and Madison Southern, to take part in the festivities.

"In the past, they've done some really wonderful things," Nnoromele said. "A couple years ago we had a kid read an original poem, which was great. Sometimes they just do a short something performance-related."

The read-in offers free food to all who come and a free t-shirt to all who participate. It's also trying something different this year: live music.

"Ron Jones is a very well-known jazz musician from Louisville, so he's coming with some people in his band and they're going to kick it off at 10:30," Nnoromele said. "The reading will start at 11 and we're going to have President Whitlock as our first reader. After that, people can just sign in as they come in."

Nnoromele said these events are dear to her because of her love of the art form.

"I love words. I love literature," Nnoromele said. "Because I think we not only learn about each other, we also learn about ourselves as we read. And I think what happens when you hear these words and these voices, it evokes something within you, that shared humanity of experiences."

"And it also forms a community, too," Nnoromele said. "It's a wonderful way to kind of remind ourselves about the Black experience, some of the challenges they've had to overcome and some of the progress they've made, too. I think that's really what poetry and literature does: You acknowledge those dark places that people might experience, but you also celebrate the triumphant spirit."

The African American Read-In is a free event and will last from 10:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.