

9c. Holidays, Celebrations and Traditions Policy

- *Created 3/00*
- *Revised 4/16*

Philosophy

Holiday's, traditions, celebrations and social activities are an important part of every child, family and staff's life. We recognize that our families and staff come from diverse backgrounds. They have different beliefs, traditions, and values. Families and staff celebrate special events in many different ways. All celebrations will be developmentally appropriate.

Goals

To provide a program for children, families, and staff that is inclusive and values and respects the diverse backgrounds of our families and staff. Reduce the stress and pressure on young children, families and staff dealing with these events. Any program-planned activity will include parents in the dialogue and discussion of planning the activity.

Guidance

When carefully planned and thought out as one part of a multicultural curriculum, holidays can be a vehicle for learning about the traditions and values of the families in our programs and exposing children to the traditions of others. When poorly planned, holiday celebrations might trivialize or provide incorrect information about cultural or religious celebrations, or encourage myths or stereotyping of groups of people. Celebrations will reflect on what is meaningful and appropriate for the children you teach and their families. Therefore the following guidelines will apply when planning celebrations:

- Your classroom is a community. All activities, decorations, and materials should address your own classroom community. Therefore, celebrations should be different in each classroom. All activities must be able to include all children and families in your classroom.
- Parents will be involved in dialogue and discussion of planning in holiday activities. Teachers must ensure the appropriateness of all activities and help parents modify their suggestions when needed. Teachers will steer away from using parties as a primary means of celebrations.
- Activities are connected to specific children and families in the group. This helps children understand holiday activities in the context of people's daily lives. Children should have the chance to explore the meaning and significance of each activity.

- Consider that there are many ways children can experience various holidays other than through eating food, making decorations or gifts, and having parties. Begin by thinking about some of the big ideas that you hope children will learn from your discussing different holidays into the classroom.
- Holiday's should be incorporated into seasons, but not promoted with commercialized activities. Maintain a focus on the "feeling" a holiday provides versus the commercialism that accompanies it.
- Holiday activities do not drive the curriculum. Holidays should have no more significance or emphasis than any other subject you explore in your classroom at any time during the year.
- Remember that preschool children, with their limited understanding of time concepts, may not remember what their families did last year and may have difficulty thinking about celebrations that will take place several weeks from now. Pre-school children are concrete thinkers, keep in mind Holidays are very abstract and difficult for children to understand.
- Think about other ways to respond to what children notice about the observance. For example, many objects children notice--pumpkins, gourds, lights, candles, and decorated trees, hearts, and eggs--can become materials for scientific investigations rather than holiday-related activities. You can make use of these learning opportunities.
- Think about ways to involve family members. Invite family members in to talk about their family customs and to share special objects related to the observance or holiday.
- Preserve the regular routines of your classroom. Remember that holidays can be overstimulating for young children. Following the simple routines that they have learned in your classroom can be comforting.
- Keep activities simple and low-key. With this in mind, look for books that describe different practices. Learn songs (nonreligious) from different cultures and about traditions. Consider what related objects you can make available for children to explore in interest areas.
- An [EDUC 9d. Activity Proposal Form \(lowercolumbia.edu/publications/head-start-handbooks/EDUC/09-lesson-planning/d-celebration-activity-proposal-form\)](https://lowercolumbia.edu/publications/head-start-handbooks/EDUC/09-lesson-planning/d-celebration-activity-proposal-form) must be completed and approved by your Area Manager at least two weeks prior to the activity.
- Staff Clothing, room decorations, and accessories will be sensitive and appropriate. Classroom decorations should reflect all families and staff.
- Special Day/Birthdays will be jointly planned by staff and parents.

When in doubt, remember that "less is more." Listen to your children. Respond to a child who talks about Santa Claus a lot by showing him books about Santa Claus, without having the whole class focus on Santa Claus for the month.

What is most important to the children is that you, their teacher, remain calm and relaxed at this time of the year. Then, you can respond to the questions children ask about and build holiday activities and celebrations that do not take over but that acknowledge children's own experiences and respond to their interests and those of their families.

End of Year Celebrations

Teachers, Assistants and Family Advocates will plan a special “end-of-year” celebration for children and families.

Procedure

1. Staff will determine the dates and times of celebrations by the last day of April and should not be during class time unless approved by Area Manager.
2. Teachers will complete NUTR 3d. End of Year Closing Ceremonies - **link coming soon** and send to Area Manager for approval and a copy will be sent to Food Service Supervisor by last business day in April.
3. Teachers and/or Family advocate will create invitations and turn into Area Manager for approval.
 - a. Invitations will be sent to parents, volunteers, and others at least 1 month in advance with reminders as the day of celebration gets closer. (Please remember that you need to give time to have these invitations translated.)
4. Teachers and/or Family Advocate will develop a written program for the closing celebration at least a month in advance and turn into Area Manager for approval.
5. Teachers will receive a roster and instructions from program coordinator and teachers or family advocate will follow the instructions given so the program coordinator will be able to complete the certificates for the celebration.
6. Teachers and assistants will create a portfolio of children’s work throughout the year to share developmental growth with parents. This will include:
 - a. Pictures
 - b. Art work
 - c. Writing samples
 - d. Teaching Strategies Gold Family Conference Form
7. Teachers will plan a brief program, guiding children to share songs, stories or favorite activities.
8. Teachers and Family Advocates may honor volunteers or others during the program.

Picnics are not a requirement and will be treated as a field trip. Please complete a [Field Trip Request Form \(EDUC 9f\)](https://lowercolumbia.edu/publications/head-start-handbooks/EDUC/09-lesson-planning/f-field-trip-request-form) (lowercolumbia.edu/publications/head-start-handbooks/EDUC/09-lesson-planning/f-field-trip-request-form) and turn into your area manager.