



monroe one
EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE AND INCLUSIVE GUIDANCE ON

Celebrating Holidays and Heritage Months

*Adapted from NAEYC.org,
AntiBiasLeadersECE.com, and
DistrictAdministration.com*

The importance of celebrating holidays

Learning about holidays can broaden a person's awareness of their own and other's cultural experiences, as long as they are used as part of inclusive learning around cultural diversity.



Benefits

Acknowledging holidays in early childhood programs can bring pleasure to many families, staff, and students and can also be useful in building connections.



Challenges

Holidays can pose a range of challenges to ensure everyone feels respected, seen, and understood, while also providing learning to children around the diversity of families.



Thoughtful decision-making

The solution is not to eliminate holidays in the classroom or office, it is how to do so in a mindful and inclusive way. This includes recognizing that not everyone in a program or department celebrates the same holidays.



A sense of belonging

Fitting in is about assessing a situation and becoming who you need to be to be accepted. Belonging, on the other hand, doesn't require us to change who we are. It requires us to be who we are.

Staff do not need to celebrate every holiday, but are encouraged to include at least one holiday that is important to each member of their school community, and explore the diverse ways families and staff celebrate the same holiday.

It also means making a distinction between asking someone to participate in celebrating a holiday versus inviting them to learn about someone else's holiday.

No student or staff should feel as if they are not a member of our school community because they don't celebrate certain holidays.

STEPS TO TAKE

REFLECT CRITICALLY ON YOUR CURRENT APPROACH TO HOLIDAYS

This includes uncovering your own beliefs and feelings about specific holidays, identifying the messages your activities and decorations convey, considering concerns raised by families or staff, and reflecting on potential challenges to change in yourself, your classroom or office, and program.

COLLABORATE

No one person has all of the answers and insight into every holiday. Even one holiday is celebrated multiple different ways. Collaborate with colleagues, teachers, staff, and families to help shape a new approach to holidays, especially in a way that reflects those in your school community. Brainstorm a list of holiday benefits and challenges, develop an understanding of each other's perspectives and begin to build a shared version of holiday practices. **The goal is to have every student and staff feel seen and celebrated in at least one holiday.**

LEARNING VERSUS CELEBRATING

Place an emphasis on learning about each other's holidays, rather than celebrating them. Provide structures and space for everyone to share about what holidays they celebrate. Encourage students and staff to discuss various ways they celebrate the same holidays.

Learning about a holiday means teaching each other about what the holiday means to different people, and the many different ways those families who honor the holiday celebrate it.

UNDERSTANDING THOSE WHO DO NOT CELEBRATE

Help each other understand why some students or staff do not or cannot celebrate the way they do. Normalize difference. Build a safe learning and working environment where students and colleagues feel safe celebrating differently than others. Acknowledge and learn about holidays year-round.

CREATING SHARED CELEBRATIONS

Consider creating unique class, school, or department celebrations for various parts of the school year. This approach makes it possible for everyone to participate in shared special days with the rest of the class or office. They also build connections and create a community within a program. Think of celebrations such as 'Honoring Our Families' or 'Bring Books Alive' and 'Pajama Day' where each person can incorporate and share special traditions or routines their families have.

HERITAGE MONTHS

In the United States, Heritage Months are periods within the year that are designated to celebrate and acknowledge various ethnic and marginalized groups. These are times not only to celebrate, but also to educate others on various groups' histories and contributions to American History. These are important times that help us to understand some of our own cultures and identities, as well as others.

Adapted from Babson College

SEPTEMBER

Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15-October 15)

The month of September, and part of October, is a time to celebrate Hispanic culture. This time of year is significant because the Latin American countries of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua all received their independence on September 15. Additionally, Mexico and Chile celebrate their independence days on September 16 and September 18. At 55.6 million, people of Hispanic origin are the largest ethnic or racial minority in the U.S. (17.6% of the total population).

MORE INFO: [Hispanic Heritage Month: How Hispanics Are Defining and Redefining America](#)

OCTOBER

LGBTQ+ Heritage Month

The month of October is dedicated to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and diverse identities community's history as well as the history of LGBTQ+ rights. During this time, revolutionary icons, events and contributions made by the LGBTQ+ community are recognized and celebrated.

National Coming Out Day (October 11)

This holiday coincides with the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights and stemmed from the idea that the most basic, yet powerful, tool the LGBTQ+ community has is coming out, and coming out could lead to more support for its members.

MORE INFO: [Celebrate National Coming Out Day with the Human Rights Campaign](#)

NOVEMBER

Native American Heritage Month

November is a time to celebrate rich and diverse cultures, traditions, and histories and to acknowledge the important contributions of Native and indigenous people. This month is also an opportune time to educate the general public about tribes, to raise a general awareness about the unique challenges Native and indigenous people have faced both historically and in the present, and the ways in which tribal citizens have worked to conquer these challenges.

MORE INFO: [Native American Heritage Month, National Congress of American Indians](#)

NOVEMBER

Trans Awareness Week (November 13-19)

For much of history the trans community has struggled to gain visibility and voice within society. To help turn the tides of history, November 13-19 has been dedicated to trans awareness. This week is a chance for citizens to aid in the fight to increase visibility of the transgender and gender non-conforming community. The purpose of this week is to improve the climate of settings such as school, the workplace, and everyday interactions by educating the public and addressing challenges of prejudice, discrimination and violence against the trans community. The week culminates with Transgender Day of Remembrance on November 20 to pay tribute to trans people who lost their lives as a result of violence and bias.

MORE INFO: [Trans Awareness Week, GLAAD](#)

FEBRUARY

African American Heritage Month, Black History Month

African American Heritage Month actually began as one week in February in 1926. This week of recognition was expanded to a month in 1976 and President Gerald R. Ford believed it was the opportune time for America's people to "seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of Black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history."

MORE INFO: [BlackHistoryMonth.gov](#)

MARCH

Women's Heritage Month

Originating in California, Women's Heritage Month is dedicated to the observance of women's contribution to history, culture and society. In the United States, this has been celebrated in the month of March since 1987. Women's Heritage Month originated as a weeklong observance, but now is the entire month of March which includes an International Women's Day on March 8.

MORE INFO: [Women's History Month, History.com](#)

APRIL

Arab American Heritage Month

Arab American Heritage Month, observed in April, marks a time to reflect on the contributions Arab Americans have made to the U.S. and the diverse group of people who make up the nation's Middle Eastern population.

MORE INFO: [Celebrating Arab American Heritage Month, ThoughtCo.](#)

MAY

Asian Pacific Islander American Heritage Month

Beginning in May of 1979, Asian Pacific Islander American Heritage Month works to recognize Asians and Pacific Islanders within the United States. Asian/Pacific is an umbrella term that includes all of the Asian continent and the Pacific islands of Melanesia (New Guinea, New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Fiji and the Solomon Islands), Micronesia (Marianas, Guam, Wake Island, Palau, Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Nauru and the Federated States of Micronesia) and Polynesia (New Zealand, Hawaiian Islands, Rotuma, Midway Islands, Samoa, American Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, Cook Islands, French Polynesia and Easter Island).

MORE INFO: AsianPacificHeritage.gov

Jewish American Heritage Month

In April of 2006, President George W. Bush declared May would be Jewish American Heritage Month. This declaration came from fervent efforts of Jewish community leaders to recognize the 350+ year history of Jewish contributions to American culture. When resolutions to recognize this community moved to the House of Representatives (December 2005) and later to the Senate (February 2006), they were passed unanimously. The Jewish American Heritage Month Coalition, created in March 2007, spearheads the annual celebration that occurs every May.

MORE INFO: JewishHeritageMonth.gov

JUNE

LGBTQ+ Pride Month

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer/questioning and diverse identities/sexualities pride month (LGBTQ+ Pride Month) is currently celebrated each year in the month of June to honor the 1969 Stonewall riots in Manhattan. The Stonewall riots were a tipping point for the Gay Liberation Movement in the United States. In the United States the last Sunday in June was initially celebrated as "Gay Pride Day," but the actual day was flexible. In major cities across the nation the "day" soon grew to encompass a month-long series of events. Today, celebrations include pride parades, picnics, parties, workshops, symposia and concerts, and LGBTQ+ Pride Month events attract millions of participants around the world. Memorials are held during this month for those members of the community who have been lost to hate crimes or HIV/AIDS. The purpose of the commemorative month is to recognize the impact that LGBTQ+ individuals have had on history locally, nationally, and internationally.

MORE INFO: [Pride Month, Library of Congress](#)