



Bellevue Free Academy
Northwest Career & Technical Center
Fairfield Center School
St. Albans City School
St. Albans Town Educational Center
Early Childhood Programs

Recommendations and Guidance for Inclusive Celebrations at Maple Run

We are reissuing Maple Run's guidance for celebrations within our schools. The leadership team wanted to reshare the ideas and resources for teaching about cultures, holidays, and traditions throughout the school year. During the 2021-2022 school year, the social study committee outlined teaching about different cultures' celebrations throughout the school year, focusing on the early grades. In addition, our new literacy program, Amplify, has integrated the teaching of different cultural celebrations in their units of study in kindergarten through fifth grade.

Below, we have given recommendations and guidance to adapt any planned activities and celebrations to increase access for all students. These activities incorporate elements of trauma-informed instruction and connect to all members' diverse heritage and community traditions.

Recommendations and guidance to adapt planned activities for this school year:

- Learning activities -
 - Cast a wide net to ensure that students have the opportunity to learn about the full range of holidays
 - Continue the focus on learning about diverse holiday and cultural traditions throughout the school year
 - [Learning for Justice](#) provides a range of ideas and resources that teachers can leverage in both instances.
- Decorating -
 - Decorations in public areas, including classrooms, should connect to the planned learning activities and celebrations. All holidays and traditions should be represented in an equitable manner.
- Celebrations and traditions -
 - Re-envision the gift exchange, which highlights and exacerbates poverty and other inequalities, to a more inclusive celebration such as those listed below.
 - Gratitude card exchange – students write cards expressing messages of gratitude to other students in their class. Teachers provide a mix of free choice and student assignments to ensure every child gets a card (i.e. every student is assigned two people to write cards to and then can choose 2-4 additional people of their own choice).

- Secret compliment notes - similar to the above activity, students write short compliment notes to others in their class.
- Make a craft or a drawing for a peer in the classroom.
- Outdoor activities “festival” - structured time outside to engage in activities like sledding/hiking/snowshoeing.
- End of year celebration - students celebrate the end of the calendar year by bringing 2-3 written school-related “memories” for each category (best memories, funniest memories, memories I’d like to forget, and other) to a class or team “open mic night.” The mix of refreshments, music, time to socialize, and students sharing some of their memories is fun for all.
- Game exchange - students pick a name from a hat (in advance) and then teach that person how to play their favorite card or board game, or engage in another activity that brings them joy and relaxation, such as a dance party or movie afternoon.
- Ask your students - share the dilemma with your students and ask them to partner with you in the creation of inclusive traditions and celebrations.

Additional reading if you are interested:

- [Returning to holiday chaos: Preventing anxiety in kids](#) - Boston Children’s Hospital
- [Teaching About the Holidays in Public Schools](#) - Edutopia
- [Recognizing the Holiday Triggers of Trauma](#) - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
- [Helping Traumatized Children Learn](#) - Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative
- [Widespread Student Trauma](#) - Education Week
- [Anxiety in Children during the Holidays](#) - Each Mind Matters
- [Gratitude is a Gateway to Positive Emotions](#) - Psychology Today
- [Gratitude Is Good: Why It’s Important And How To Cultivate It](#) - Forbes
- [Giving thanks can make you happier](#) - Harvard Medical School
- [Anti-Bias Education and Holidays](#) - NAEYC
- [US Department of Education Guidance on Religious Expression](#) - US DOE

Thank you for your continued commitment to all the Maple Run students.