



## **Montessori Cultural Awareness**

### **Celebrating Traditions, Holidays, & Culture in the Classroom**

***The Montessori approach to celebrating special days in the classroom is beneficial to children as it expands their minds, their hearts, and their connection to the world.***

#### **Why Celebrate Holidays?**

- help mark the changing seasons
- provide an opportunity to study history and geography
- honor the birthdays of special people who have contributed to the world, such as Maria Montessori
- encourage understanding and acceptance of diverse cultures
- create a sense of community that welcomes families
- give opportunities to introduce holiday art projects and food preparation, like tamales for Christmas and latkes for Hanukkah
- bring light and joyfulness to the long, dark winter months by honoring the many winter holidays

#### **How to Celebrate Without Disrupting the Routine**

Gently and gradually introducing the seasons and holidays is the best way to maintain the stability and routine of the classroom. In the days/weeks before an approaching holiday, begin to add books about the holiday to the classroom reading areas. During circle/group time, tell stories, sing songs, recite poems, and play games honoring the coming season or holiday. Classroom activities can reflect the colors and smells of the new season and provide a hands-on approach to highlight the holidays and cultural traditions.

#### **Upcoming Halloween Holiday**

Many people in our culture celebrate Halloween in various ways. As we head into Halloween next week, consider the multi-age and stage of development of our children at Sunrise. Maria Montessori found that children up to the age of 6 need a very strong foundation in reality. They absorb their environment as a way to understand the world, and when fantasy and fairy tales are introduced too early, children can become confused about what is “real”. In the Montessori classroom, it is important to be mindful of the sensitive stages of development.



Halloween at Sunrise embraces the Montessori philosophy and respects the multi-ages of development of the children. Your children can experience the holiday through fun activities such as; pumpkin scrubbing, gourd washing, push pin pumpkins/jack-o-lanterns, stories, crafts, songs, etc.

Some families have asked about costumes at school/in the classroom. Ideally, costumes are meant for the trick or treating portion of Halloween night. It is your decision whether to have your child wear something special to school or not.

If you choose to have your child dress up in something special, please remember the following:

- Costume clothing encourages a peaceful, real life, or non-aggressive character
- No accessories such as wands, faces masks, noisy or disruptive pieces/parts should be brought to school – accessories often get lost, broken, and may be a safety hazard.
- Child should be able to sit comfortably, walk safely, and use the bathroom without adult support in their costume.

As with every cultural celebration, the teachers often take pictures throughout the classroom and/or at circle group times. These pictures are then shared in your child's classroom newsletter. The teacher's newsletters will provide you with information on all special presentations and lessons that may have been highlighted during the month.

If anyone has any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Andrea Rossick