



BUILDING BLOCKS

A Newsletter for Teachers Working with Preschool Educational Equity For All

December 2015

Planning for Holiday Activities and Celebrations

Educators often have questions and concerns about how to address holiday activities and celebrations in a way that is developmentally appropriate for preschoolers. It is important to take into account the many different perspectives on holidays and what they mean to the communities, families and children that we serve in our schools. These special occasions can have religious, cultural and historical significance, as well as personal meaning. It's also important to consider the perspective that some families in our communities may not celebrate any holidays during the year.

It can easily become common practice to automatically celebrate holidays in our classrooms throughout the year without giving careful thought as to what is best practice for the students.

There are some guiding questions that schools and teachers can use when considering the whole notion of how to approach holidays:

Does our practice make sense when thinking about the developmentally appropriate teaching practices that are aligned with our curriculum?

Are our practices age-appropriate?

Is what we do relevant to the individual children who are currently in our classrooms?

Are we inadvertently relying on store-bought activity books with content that focuses on holidays throughout the year?

In trying to be multicultural in our approach, are we

Some alternatives for approaching holiday activities and celebrations are:

Observe only holidays relevant to the cultures in the community with activities that accurately reflect what is celebrated at home and how it is celebrated at home. At the same time, check to find out if, within your adopted curriculum, teachers are stressing children's learning about the usual happenings and everyday routines of families based on the cultures represented in the local community. By valuing the cultural lives of children, teachers send a strong message to each child about his/her personal value as a member of the classroom group while simultaneously providing lessons about valuing cultural similarities and differences in the community.

Celebrate holidays with circle-time discussions, storybook reading and simple, traditional snacks relevant to the children in the class.

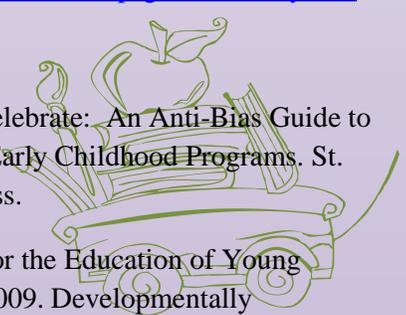
Omit all or part of holiday activities and celebrations from the curriculum. This can make sense if many families in a program are opposed to celebrations and/or activities for religious reasons. This type of policy can also make sense when used to eliminate activities and celebrations designed for older audiences that preschoolers cannot understand.

<http://www.nj.gov/education/ece/psguide/holiday.htm>

Further Reading:

Bisson, Julie. 1997. *Celebrate: An Anti-Bias Guide to Enjoying Holidays in Early Childhood Programs*. St. Paul MN. Redleaf Press.

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). 2009. *Developmentally Appropriate Practice*, 3d Edition. Washington, D.C.



FEATURED IDEA OF THE MONTH



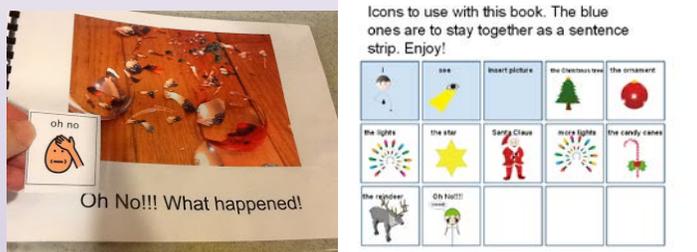
Magnetic bows and present play

Teach Preschool

Glue a small magnet onto the back of several Christmas bows. The "gift boxes" were wrapped metal cookie sheets.

<http://www.teachpreschool.org/2011/12/christmas-bow-magnetic-play-in-preschool/>

On the Christmas Tree--simple printable book with icons



<http://chapelhillsnippets.blogspot.com/2013/11/on-christmas-tree-simple-printable-book.html>



Sesame Street: Kwanzaa by Sesame Street on Youtube
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0kV-6qVp98Q>

WEBSITES AND RESOURCES

<http://www.mydeliciousambiguity.com/2011/12/montessori-christmas-activities-for.html?m=1>
<http://kidsactivitiesblog.com/22283/christmas-printables-2>
https://www.cceionline.edu/newsletters/December_08.html



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

<http://bookstore.dec-sp.ed.org/product-p/decpr.htm>



DEC Recommended Practices



Enhancing Services for Young Children With Disabilities and Their Families

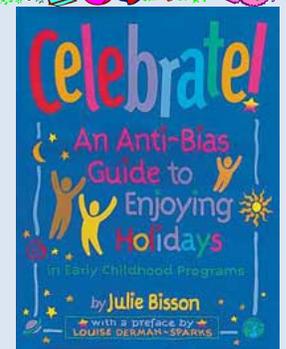
DEC Recommended Practices: Enhancing Services for Young Children With Disabilities and Their Families aims to help bridge the gap between research and practice by highlighting practices that have

been shown through research to result in better outcomes for young children with disabilities, their families, and the personnel who serve them.



Celebrate! An Anti-Bias Guide to Enjoying Holidays in Early Childhood Programs

Author: [Julie Bisson](#)



Paper Plate Menorah

<http://www.pleasantestthing.com/2012/11/paper-plate-menorah.html>