

Holiday Philosophy Guidance

Labor Day: The concept of this day is difficult for most preschoolers to understand. Therefore, September is a great month to celebrate making new friends!

What We Can Do...

- Create activities that promote team work such as group collages or block building games.
- Take opportunities to learn about each child and give them opportunities to share information about themselves.
- Pair children up with “buddies” to learn about the new classroom.
- Promote families and encourage them to share pictures and collages.



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Halloween: While we do not celebrate Halloween in the classrooms, October is a great time to have discussions and activities around related topics such as safety and fears, real vs. imaginary. Some children may not understand that a person does not change when they put on a mask or costume.

What We Can Do...

- Emphasize the seasonal changes.
- Activities with pumpkins and gourds are appropriate.
- Include themes on safety and/or healthy foods and dental care
- Discuss fears, real vs. imaginary, and include activities on how masks and costumes do not change the person wearing them by using dress up clothing, animal masks, etc.
- Provide families with safety information and lists of events in the community.

What to Avoid...

- Themes that promote fear and or violence (i.e. ghosts, goblins, witches, devils, etc.)





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Thanksgiving: Thanksgiving is often celebrated in a way that can be considered stereotypical and/or disrespectful to certain cultural groups. The theme of the “First Thanksgiving” can also be difficult for young children to grasp as they do not have a concept of time and/or history.

What We Can Do...

- Emphasize themes of family/people you love, sharing, giving, harvest, gratitude.
- Discussions and activities around healthy eating, table manners, family-style meals, etc.
- Themes related to farms, food, health, nutrition, etc.
- Dispel myths or misconceptions children may have about certain groups of people

What to Avoid...

- Celebrations that include inappropriate representation of the Native American culture
The “Tourist Approach” to any cultural group of people

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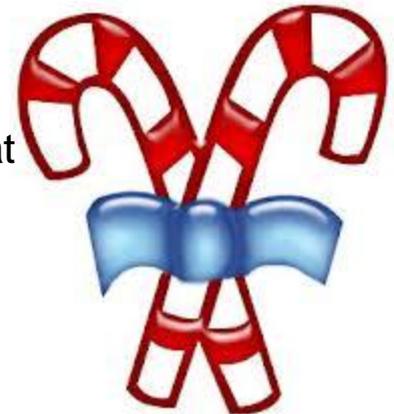
Christmas: Winter holidays tend to derive from strong religious beliefs and therefore are not celebrated in the classroom. However, it is always appropriate to acknowledge and validate children when they bring up their special holiday.

What We Can Do...

- Emphasize seasonal changes and include outdoor activities
- Emphasize other themes such as families, giving, sharing, etc.
- Respond with open-ended questions when children bring up holidays and extend their thinking as you would with any other conversation
- Plan an alternative to gift giving such as a class community service project

What to Avoid...

- Keep holiday stress out of the classroom
- Santa Clause focused curriculum
- Gift giving- remember that many families do not have great financial resources



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Martin Luther King Jr. Day: Preschoolers are concrete thinkers and therefore are not familiar with or understand the role that Martin Luther King Jr. played in American History. However, the messages that he stood for are appropriate for young children to understand.

What We Can Do...

- Discuss race and ethnicity in the classroom
- Talk about similarities and differences between people and how both are okay
- Continue to add cultural materials and activities to your classroom environment

What to Avoid...

- Activities that stereotype any race or ethnicity
- The “tourist approach” to any ethnic group of people



Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

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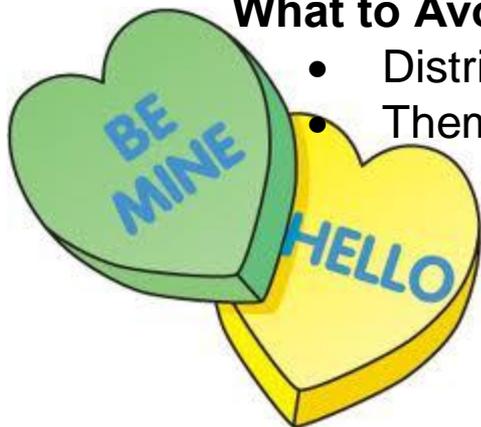
Valentines Day: The romantic love theme of Valentines Day is inappropriate for preschoolers. Valentines Day for young children tends to be more of a friendship based theme.

What We Can Do...

- Emphasize themes of friendship, family, and giving
- Writing letters and notes to friends should be a part of the curriculum all year long
- For families that want to contribute a card, encourage writing skills at home & encourage them to help their child put the cards in their friends cubbies or mailboxes themselves
- Have the children write themselves or their family a letter and mail it home. Discuss postal workers and their role in the process.

What to Avoid...

- Distribution of candy in the classroom
- Themes that promote romantic love between children



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St. Patrick's Day: The concept of this day is too abstract for most preschoolers to understand and is often connected to activities that are only appropriate for adults. The idea of leprechauns can also be frightening to young children.

What We Can Do....

- Support families who value this holiday and have them share traditions
- If Irish culture is what is important to the family, then it can be shared with the class at any point in the year
- Discuss/explore related concepts such as rainbows or shamrocks. This time of year some can even be found outside.
- Discuss the change in season

What to Avoid...

- Activities that stereotype any cultural group
- Activities that may frighten the children- i.e. leprechauns visiting the classroom



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Easter: To many families, Easter has a religious meaning and origin and therefore is not celebrated in the classroom. However, as with any other holiday, it is important to acknowledge the children's questions and discussions.



What We Can Do...

- Celebrate spring- have a spring cleaning day in the classroom
- Discover and study the animals outside: birds, chicks, bugs, etc.
- Discussion of eggs and chickens and the cycle of life.
- If children have an interest in bunnies, then it is okay to study the life of rabbits.
- Plan activities for families that support spring and being outside

What to Avoid...

- Themes related to religion or Easter Bunnies (which may not actually visit every child)

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Mother's Day: While this may seem as if it is a generalized holiday, be sure that you are being sensitive to a variety of family structures.

What We Can Do...

- Recognize any important caregiver in the child's life
- Celebrate families
- Talk about appreciation for those in your family who help and care for you
- Encourage families to recognize the other adults that are important to them and their child

What to Avoid...

- Excluding children from activities who may not have a mother or mother figure in their lives
- Excluding other members of the family who are important to the child



Holiday Philosophy Guidance

Father's Day: While this may seem as if it is a generalized holiday, be sure that you are being sensitive to a variety of family structures.

What We Can Do...

- Encourage male involvement in classrooms on a regular basis
- Use this opportunity to discuss with families the importance of the role of a positive male role model
- Celebrate all family members

What to Avoid...

- Excluding children from activities who may not have a father or father figure in their lives
- Excluding other members of the family who are important to the child



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Independence Day: This holiday represents the birth of our country, which is an abstract thought for children. An aspect of the holiday that is relevant is community, so try taking that approach with children.

What We Can Do...

- Discuss the children's community- Who is in it? What is in it? What is special about it?
- Celebrate summer!
- Give information to families on firework safety, food safety, local family day trips, etc.

What to Avoid...

- Concepts that children do not understand
- Cookie cutter art projects representing this holiday



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Birthdays: Birthdays are typically celebrated by all children and are a day that children get to feel special about themselves individually. However, be aware that not all families have the same celebration traditions and few religions do not celebrate birthdays at all.

What We Can Do...

- Acknowledge each child's birthday
- Make a class card for each child for their birthday- however, be aware that if you do this for one child you must do it for all children

What to Avoid...

- Staff may not attend birthday parties
- Staff may not hand out invitations, names, addresses, or phone numbers of children

