



December 6, 2024

Celebrating Diversity During the Winter Season

Schools play a vital role in fostering an inclusive environment where all students, staff, and families feel seen, valued, and respected. December is commonly a time when school communities recognize and celebrate a variety of cultural and ethno-religious holidays. As school leaders, Principals and Vice-Principals have a unique responsibility to ensure celebrations reflect the diversity and inclusivity expected in public education.

The historic practice of focusing on a single holiday has unintentionally excluded members of the school community, highlighting the need for more inclusive practices that celebrate diversity. Culturally responsive leadership involves actively engaging with your school community to recognize and celebrate its unique composition and contributions. When discussing holidays, center the conversation on factual elements - who, what, where, when, and why. This approach provides opportunities to understand, recognize, and celebrate the rich identities, traditions, and cultural practices of the diverse communities represented by students, staff, and families in the school. Aligning celebrations and practices with your district's equity, inclusion, and anti-racism policies or procedures ensures a respectful and consistent approach to supporting inclusive practices.

Inviting students, staff, families, and community members to share their traditions can enrich the school experience; however, it is essential to avoid placing students in positions where they feel compelled to act as cultural representatives. Rather, provide voluntary opportunities for students, staff, and families to share their traditions in ways that support them in feeling safe, empowered, and celebrated. It is important to be mindful that traditions and celebrations can vary significantly amongst similar cultural and/or religious groups. Consulting with your district's anti-racism or diversity lead is an option to support you in your role.

In Support of Inclusive Practices

Broaden the scope and frame of December activities around themes that resonate across cultures, such as "Winter Celebrations" or "Celebration of Light." When planning activities, focus on diverse cultural, and ethno-religious traditions. Select decorations and themes that are neutral or inclusive, such as exploring seasonal changes or global New Year customs. Be mindful of traditions that carry cultural assumptions. Use books and materials that reflect the diverse holidays celebrated in your community and emphasize shared values like family, kindness, and gratitude to foster a sense of belonging. Create space for your staff to seek understanding and share inclusive practices in classrooms, and school-wide.

By embedding inclusivity into celebrations and all holiday practices, Principals and Vice-Principals can create a welcoming environment that respects the rich diversity of their school communities while promoting equity and understanding. It is an important reminder that students, staff, and families observe many other significant cultural holidays throughout the year, and the holidays most relevant to your school community should be emphasized throughout the school calendar year. By embedding inclusive practices throughout the year, you create a school culture where all students, staff, and families feel seen, welcomed, and respected, enriching the learning environment for everyone.

Ministry of Education and Child Care Resources

[**Inclusion Calendar Guide**](#)

[**Diversity in BC Schools**](#)