
Pittsford Schools

Protocol for Curriculum Related “Special Events” Planning

To be used when planning for assemblies, grade level activities, or other school- or department-wide events

Special events, whether they be assemblies, grade level curricular celebrations, or other school- or department-wide events can be some of the most memorable learning experiences we offer our students. The chance to break out of the daily routine, engage with students from other classrooms, and/or hear from speakers, artists, and musicians from the community often creates experiences that students will remember for years to come.

Some of these same opportunities, however, if not carefully planned to consider all intended and unintended consequences, can cause harm to individuals or groups of students.

For all curriculum inspired special events, the following steps should be taken as part of the planning process:

1. Discuss all aspects of the event with the building principal to garner their support.
2. Identify funding sources (building funds, PTSA Cultural Arts funds) for speakers, materials, etc.
3. Complete any necessary building use forms; remember it is important for building custodial and main office staff to be aware of the event so that they can prepare spaces appropriately and be prepared for visitors and/or volunteers coming to the building for the event.
4. Prepare communication to be shared with families; have the building principal review and approve all communications before they are sent to families.
5. Prepare communication to be shared with staff members who are not directly involved in planning the event. Even if they are not expected to participate directly in the event, it is important that all building staff are aware of special events taking place in the building.

Simulation or role-playing experiences that could cause harm to students are not permitted.

This would include any experiences that ask children to take on the role of enslaved people or their enslavers; experiences involving holocaust death camps or the treatment of disenfranchised groups including but not limited to Jewish people, by the Nazis during and leading up to World War II; experiences of illegal immigration/asylum seekers; and experiences involving the integration of schools in the United States in the mid-20th century. While these types of experiences might be intended to build understanding and empathy, the risk of causing unintended trauma to participating students is too great and therefore these types of activities have no place in our classrooms or schools.

Please refer to the questions on page 2 of this document to assist you in planning for a meaningful, educational experience for your students.

The following policies must be adhered to in planning for any type of special event in our schools:

[Policy 3422: Educational Excellence and Equity](#)

[Policy 7552: Student Gender Identity](#)

[Policy 7510: District Wellness Policy](#)

[Policy 8360: Religious Expression in the Instructional Program](#)

Questions to Consider:

- What is the curricular connection to the activity?
 - o How will participating in this event contribute in a meaningful way to student learning?
- If the event involves speakers or presenters who are not part of the immediate school community, how are you screening for the quality of the speaker and their presentation?
 - o Will you have the opportunity to review their presentation materials ahead of time to make sure that they match the goals and objectives of the event and aligned with PCSD values? (refer to the [Diversity and Representation in Instructional Materials Quick Guide](#) as appropriate.)
- How are you involving students in the planning?
 - o Where are there opportunities to include student voice and choice in the planning and execution of the event?
 - o What feedback will you seek from students after the event takes place?
- How are you involving the community in the planning?
 - o To what degree are parents, community leaders, or other outside experts involved in the planning of the event?
- Will there be any cost to families to have their child participate in the event?
 - o Are there special materials students will need from home that might require families to contribute unanticipated resources (time, money)?
 - o If so, what arrangements will be made to make sure all students, regardless of family resources, are able to fully participate?
- If the event is centered around an historical time period, what steps are you taking to ensure that you are portraying that time period accurately and inclusively and not just through the lens of the dominant culture?
 - o How are you ensuring that no student feels disenfranchised or singled out in front of their peers?
- If the event is centered around the celebration of a culture, or cultural diversity, what steps are you taking to ensure that you are portraying all cultures accurately, respectfully, and with dignity?
 - o What measures have been taken to involve “own voices” from the celebrated cultures in the planning and execution of the event so that false assumptions and stereotypes are not inadvertently portrayed?
- What follow-up to the event is being planned?
 - o How will students be expected to share/demonstrate and/or reflect on their learning?
 - o Are students expected to follow-up with any kind of action after the event to better their school or community?
 - o How are you preparing staff to engage students in follow-up discussions?
 - o Have plans been made to address any individual student concerns that might arise following the event?