
Equity and Family Engagement Newsletter

December 2024



Inclusive Holiday Practices

Before coming to Lake Washington, I spent six wonderful years as a first-grade teacher in Shoreline School District. For those who might not know, first graders are all about celebrations—whether it's their birthday, a holiday, or a special school day (ie. The 100th Day of School, PJs and Stuffies Day, etc). And, for those who might not know, so am I. So, teaching first grade should have been the perfect way to channel my love for all things festive. However, like many educators, I found myself in a bit of a dilemma when it came to holidays.

In my personal life, I am one of those people who plays Christmas music at exactly 12:00 AM on November 1st. But as a teacher, I had to carefully consider my role when it came to holidays. To do so, I would ask myself these questions:

1. Who am I including in this celebration?
Who might I be leaving out, and are those being excluded part of an already marginalized group?
2. Will my students learn about this holiday even if I don't cover it in class?
3. Am I celebrating this holiday in class because it's important for my students, or because it's important to me?

Using these questions as a guide helped me evaluate the holidays we covered and how I discussed them. During the beginning-of-year conferences, I spoke with families to learn if they celebrated holidays, which ones they celebrated, and which ones their children were excited about. I also invited them to teach us about their celebrations.

I also asked my students questions about holidays, such as: What is your favorite holiday? What signs can we see outside that indicate it's time for that holiday? If we didn't celebrate that holiday, would there still be signs outside showing it was being celebrated? These conversations helped emphasize that some holidays are widely recognized through public celebrations, while others are only known to those who celebrate them. I then excitedly shared that we would get a sneak peek into holidays and traditions we might not have ever known about, highlighting how special that opportunity was!

During my time as a classroom teacher, the holiday season could be tricky. However, I found that it was all about how I framed it for myself and for my students.

Below are some resources to help you think about holidays in your school. Please feel free to reach out to me or the Equity and Family Engagement Department if you need additional support.

Thank you!

Dr. Xandra Peter (she/hers)
Equity and Strategic Engagement Manager

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THE FLOWER SHOP

Support for students, families, and staff after the windstorm

We want to extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the amazing teams who worked tirelessly in the aftermath of the windstorm. Special thanks to Maintenance, Risk and Safety, Communications, Nutrition, Transportation, Technology, and everyone else who contributed their incredible efforts in any way, big or small. Your dedication ensured our campuses were cleaned up, powered up, and ready for students and staff to return. Thank you for your unwavering commitment! You all are the heart and soul of our district, going above and beyond to care for our families and students. Your hard work is seen and much appreciated. Thank you!

Upcoming Community Events

LWSW Winter Toy Drive

We're excited about our annual toy drive and would love your support. Your donation can bring joy and smiles to many children this holiday season. Any contribution, big or small, will make a significant difference. Please share broadly and help spread the word.

November 1-December 10

Various toy drop off locations across the district

Monetary Donations through [Lake Washington Schools Foundation](https://www.lwsf.org/)

WINTER TOY DRIVE
NOV 1- DEC 10

Help spread holiday cheer in our community by donating new, unwrapped toys this season. Your generosity will benefit children throughout Lake Washington School District. Gifts are needed for ages 5-18.

Amazon Wish List

Drop Off Locations:

- LWSD Resource Center**
16250 NE 74th St., Redmond
- Kirkland City Hall**
123 5th Avenue, Kirkland
- North Kirkland Community Center**
12421 103rd Ave NE, Kirkland
- Peter Kirk Community Center**
352 Kirkland Ave, Kirkland

Monetary donations can be made through our partnership with Lake Washington Schools Foundation
www.lwsf.org/lp/winter-toy-drive/

THANK YOU!
QUESTIONS? EMAIL:
FAMILIESHELPINGFAMILIES@LWSD.ORG

Resources

[Holidays and Anti-bias Education](#)

This article by Julie Bisson and Louise Derman-Sparks discusses the questions:

- “If we use an anti-bias approach, are we allowed to do holidays?”
- “If I celebrate one holiday, do I have to celebrate them all?”
- “How do we include holidays without offending anyone?”

[Holidays in a Diverse World: Applying Anti-Bias Thinking to Curriculum | NAEYC](#)

Louise Derman-Sparks and Julie Olsen Edwards, with Catherine M. Goins, offer considerations about how programs and teachers can think about and take an anti-bias approach to holidays in their settings.

[Anti-Bias Education and Holidays: Making Thoughtful Decisions | NAEYC](#)

The authors lay out some principles about how programs and teachers can think about holidays in their classrooms.

[Holidays | Learning for Justice](#)

Articles, lessons and other resources from the Learning for Justice catalogue surrounding holidays and holiday celebrations in schools.

[Constructive Conversations over Hard Topics](#)

We've received requests for support and resources on facilitating conversations with students about challenging topics that can evoke diverse opinions and emotions. Below, you'll find some helpful resources available on our PULSE site. These resources are specific to the election but have salient practices that can be applied broadly as well.

[Constructive Dialogue and Elections](#)

[Election Resources](#)

[Resources for Students and Families Around Immigration](#)

Our department has had requests for resources around immigration. Below you will find helpful organizations that can provide information or support.

- **4 Tomorrow:** <https://www.4tomorrow.today/>
 - **Washington Immigrant Solidarity Network:** <https://waisn.org/>
 - **Northwest Immigrant Rights Project:** <https://www.nwirp.org/>
 - **Consejo Counseling:** <https://www.consejocounseling.org/>
 - **Eastside Legal Assistance Program:** <https://elap.org/>
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Book and Media Recommendations

Please be mindful that while these media sources can offer valuable insights into rich perspectives, they may not fully capture the diverse experiences of all people within a particular identity group. It is important to recognize that each student's and family's journey is unique and cannot be wholly represented by a single narrative.



Children

[Seven Candles for Kwanzaa by Andrea Davis Pinkney](#)

Kwanzaa is a unique African-American holiday celebrated by millions of families every year between December 26 and January 1. The word *kwanzaa* comes from the African language Swahili, and means “first fruits of the harvest.”

[The Night Before Hanukkah by Natasha Wing](#)

It's the night before the eight-day celebration of Hanukkah begins, and everyone is excited! Each evening, the family gathers to light the candles and share holiday traditions such as playing dreidel, eating latkes, and exchanging gifts. The seventeenth title in Natasha Wing's bestselling series, *The Night Before Hanukkah* captures all the joy and love in one of the most wonderful times of the year!

[May Your Life Be Deliciosa by Michael Genhart](#)

A delicious and fortifying picture book inspired by the author's family, featuring the Mexican tradition of holiday tamale-making.

[Winter Solstice Wish by Kate Allen Fox](#)

Winter Solstice Wish is an ode to the winter solstice, human connectedness, and the hope of renewal. Inspired by winter solstice bonfires built on a San Diego beach near the author's home, *Winter Solstice Wish* combines scientific concepts with the intangible longing for connection and togetherness that people all over the world reach for on the shortest day.

[Together for Kwanzaa by Juwanda G. Ford](#)

Kwanzaa is Kayla's favorite time of year. But this year, it looks as if a heavy snowstorm will keep her big brother, Khari, from getting home in time for the festivities! Will Khari miss the celebration completely? Or will Kayla and her brother somehow find a way to be together for Kwanzaa? A perfect introduction to Kwanzaa, this book will teach children all about the traditions and practices that make it a special winter holiday.

[The Hanukkah Magic of Nate Gadol by Arthur A. Levine](#)

From an imaginative team come a new larger-than-life holiday hero who brings Hanukkah wonder and generosity to anyone in need!

[Tree of Cranes by Allen Say](#)

As a young Japanese boy recovers from a bad chill, his mother busily folds origami paper into delicate silver cranes in preparation for the boy's very first Christmas.

[Winter: A Solstice Story by Kelsey E. Gross](#)

From debut author Kelsey Gross and New York Times bestselling artist Renata Liwska comes a gentle and lulling picture book celebrating the magic of the Winter Solstice with a group of animal friends in a quiet forest.

[The People Remember by Ibi Zoboi](#)

From author Ibi Zoboi comes her debut picture book that uses the principles of Kwanzaa to talk about the history of African Americans.

[Red and Green and Blue and White by Lee Wind](#)

It's a holiday season that both Isaac, whose family is Jewish, and Teresa, whose family is Christian, have looked forward to for months! They've been counting the days, playing in the snow, making cookies, drawing (Teresa) and writing poems (Isaac). They enjoy all the things they share, as well as the things that make them different. But when Isaac's window is smashed in the middle of the night, it seems like maybe not everyone appreciates "difference."

[Native American Night Before Christmas by Gary Robinson](#)

An innovative retelling of the classic Christmas tale, *Native American Night Before Christmas* presents a whimsical look at a Native American Christmas Eve, when Old Red Shirt (the Indian Santa Claus) comes a-calling on his wooden sleigh pulled by a team of flying white buffalo. Jesse Hummingbird's inspired illustration transform the author's playful adaptation into a fresh and modern work of art. A delight for people of all ages and cultures. Winner of the 2010 Moonbeam Award for Holiday Books.

Adults

Arizona K12 Center Podcast: [S1 Episode 5: Holidays in the Classroom](#)

Holidays in the classroom can look and feel different for everyone. What might be a jolly season for some, may leave others feeling confused, excluded, and undervalued. Listen, as we discuss the importance of inclusive and thoughtful classroom planning.

Celebrate!: An Anti-Bias Guide to Including Holidays in Early Childhood Programs by Julie Bisson

Though specific to Early Childhood, this book can give strategies and activities to celebrate, rather than exclude, diversity, traditions, and holidays.

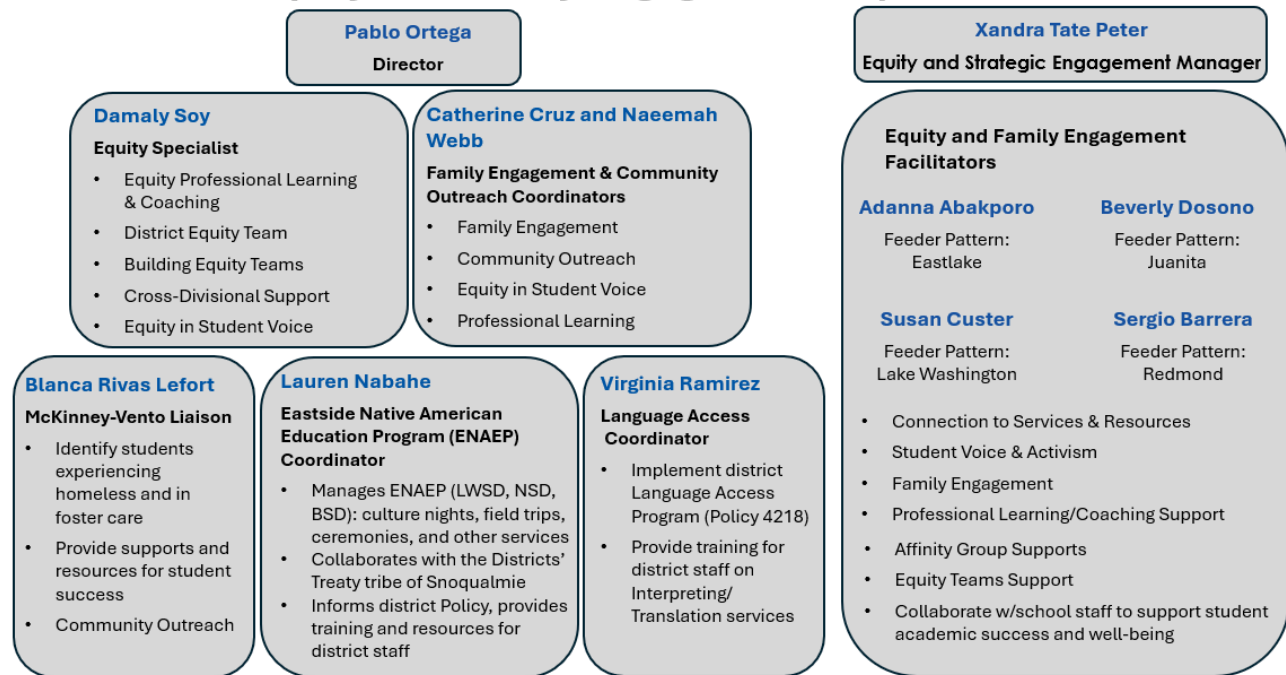
Holidays and Observances

This is not a complete list. As always, check in with students and families to ensure that their cultural celebrations are included.

12/1	Rosa Parks Day	Commemorates the day Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a bus for a white passenger on a Montgomery, AL bus.
12/2-12/6	Inclusive Schools Week	Create a welcoming, inclusive and respectful environment for every student every day.
12/9-12/15	Computer Science Education Week	Encourage K-12 students to learn computer science, advocate for equity and celebrate contributions.
12/9-12/15	Hour of Code	Introduce students to global computer science through fun and computer activities and games.
12/8	Bodhi Day	Commemorates the day Siddhartha Gautama/Buddha experienced enlightenment (China, Korea, Japan, Vietnam and the Philippines)
12/10	Emily Dickinson's Birthday	American poet.
12/10	Human Rights Day	UN adopted this day to proclaim rights that everyone is entitled to as a human being.
12/13	Ella Baker's Birthday	Ella Josephine Baker was an African-American civil rights and human rights activist in the United States.
12/16	Margaret Mead's Birthday	American cultural anthropologist.
12/21	First day of winter	First day of winter.
12/23	Winter Break reminder / Happy Holidays	Reminder to families and students.
12/24	Christmas Eve	Christian observance
12/25	Clara Barton's Birthday	Clarissa "Clara" Harlowe Barton was a pioneering nurse who founded the American Red Cross.
12/25-1/2	Hanukkah (Begins at sunset on 12/25)	Judaism holiday known as Festival of Lights.
12/25	Christmas	Christian celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ.
12/26-1/1	Kwanzaa	African American holiday celebrating a 7-day festival to recognize the seven principles.
12/31	New Year's Eve	Last day of the year

Contacts

Equity and Family Engagement Department



[Links to bios](#)

The Equity and Family Engagement Department is here to serve families and schools throughout the district. Below you'll find our roles and individual email addresses. Please reach out if we can be of assistance.

Pablo Ortega, Director portega@lwsd.org

Xandra Tate Peter, Equity and Strategic Engagement Manager xpeter@lwsd.org

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Susan Custer, Equity & Family Engagement Facilitator, Lake Washington scuster@lwsd.org

Lauren Nabahe, Eastside Native American Education Program Coordinator lnabahe@lwsd.org

Virginia Ramirez, Language Access Coordinator vramirezromero@lwsd.org

The department also has four Cultural and Language Liaisons to support LWSD families.

Isabelly Benites, Brazilian Portuguese-speaking, c-ibenites@lwsd.org

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