As we get into full-swing of the new school year, some of you have asked about planning holiday themes or celebrating traditions in your classrooms. Below are some things to think about:

**NAEYC** believes that decisions about what holidays to celebrate and how to celebrate them are best made together by teachers, parents and children. The important thing for all to remember is that when planning holiday activities, the rules of good practice apply: *are the activities meaningful to the children; are their needs and interests being met; and is the activity a valuable use of children's time?*

**Questions** to ask when planning a holiday theme; why should children learn about this holiday; is it developmentally appropriate for them; and why is it important to some children and families?

**Activities** should be connected to specific families and children, which helps the children understand the holiday activity in the context of their daily lives, and they should have the opportunity to explore the meaning and significance of the holiday. Activities demonstrate that not everyone in the same ethnic group celebrates holidays the same way.

Allow children to share feelings and information; work to have all children represented; and do not treat holidays that a few children celebrate as 'unusual' - everyone’s holidays are significant and meaningful.

Are there satisfactory alternatives for the child within the classroom that does not participate in certain celebrations? And be sure to focus on meaningful ways to celebrate holidays without spending money.

**Creative Curriculum** focuses on the need to recognize the difference between celebrations and traditions associated with religious practices and not make a religious ritual into a classroom activity.

A carefully planned multicultural curriculum allows for holidays to be a vehicle for learning about the traditions of your families and exposing traditions of others to the children. Think about your current holiday practice and reflect on what is meaningful and appropriate for the children you teach and their families.
In the excitement even the most experienced teachers can lose sight of developmentally appropriate objectives and practice; and yet you have to figure out how to make holiday celebrations meaningful to the children you teach. The child's everyday life is what drives a Creative Curriculum classroom and you need to be responsive to children's needs. Including holidays can be done in a way that is respectful, sensitive and developmentally appropriate.

What Can Children Learn from Holiday Activities, Discussions and Celebrations?
Families celebrate holidays in different ways; different families celebrate different holidays; not everyone celebrates every holiday; what my family does is valued at my preschool; we can all learn about different holidays and how they are celebrated; and there are special feelings associated with holidays - they are more than costumes, food and parties.

Learn about different observances and traditions; survey your parents; remember that holidays don't only happen in December; make sure holiday activities don't become the whole curriculum; involve the families; preserve your regular classroom routines; keep holiday activities simple and low-key; give the children choices; remember that less is more and listen to your children. And remember that if you focus on how families in the classroom celebrate you are celebrating their lives and the lives of their families.

Each classroom is free to make their own decisions in regard to celebrating holidays and traditions. However, the expectation is that the teaching team will involve the parents; and be able to show how curriculum plans are developmentally appropriate for the children and are a valuable use of their time. Putting 'holiday party' or holiday art activity on your activity sheets is not acceptable.

Celebrating birthdays in the classroom is acceptable please work to limit this to a monthly celebration for the birthdays of the ‘month’ – this is the children’s school and primary social circle – let them celebrate their day!!! Keep in mind the above comments regarding keeping things simple; that less is more; and that you need to preserve your daily routines.

If you have any questions, please feel free to speak with myself or Tena.