

Let's think about...



Celebrating Festivals

A 1 hour staff meeting template to use within your setting.

Festival celebrations are widely used in early years settings to promote inclusion and cultural awareness. While these experiences can contribute positively to children's sense of belonging, their impact depends on how thoughtfully they are planned and experienced. This session supports teams to reflect on existing practice and explore how festival celebrations can move beyond surface-level activities towards more authentic, meaningful experiences for children and families.

'Practitioners need to recognise and value the uniqueness of each child's family background, culture and experiences.'

Birth to 5 Matters

Before the meeting:

- Reflect on how you are going to present the information. Can you provide visuals? Things to hold? Practical activities?
- Ask staff to familiarise themselves with relevant policies linked to celebrating festivals
- Create a shared list that all staff can add to, showing the festivals celebrated in the setting over the last year.

You can find out more about planning continual professional development [here](#).

Meeting Plan

Activity 1 (10 minutes) Personal Celebration Reflection. Ask staff to reflect in pairs on one celebration that is meaningful to them.

Prompts for reflection: What is the celebration?
Who is involved? How does it feel? What preparation is involved?
Key question: What key things would someone need to understand to celebrate this meaningfully with you?



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In the feedback share these brief definitions with staff. Invite them to hold these in mind and notice where they resonate as the session unfolds. You may wish to write them down or display them visibly so staff can refer to them.

Tokenism

When a celebration or culture is included briefly or superficially, without meaningful connection to children's lived experiences.

Authenticity

Taking time to understand meaning, context, and relationships, and allowing practice to be informed by genuine knowledge and connection.

Activity 2 (15 minutes) Festival Reflection

As a whole group, use the shared list of festivals celebrated in the setting over the last year you prepared before the meeting to reflect on your current approach to celebrating festivals as a whole.

Discussion prompts:

- How do you build in time and space to learn what matters about a celebration?
- When do preparations begin? Is there enough time for depth and understanding?
- How do you include families without placing pressure on them?
- How do you prepare? Who do you talk to and what research do you do?

'Engagement with parents plays an important role in supporting children's learning.'

Education Endowment Foundation, Parental Engagement

When celebrating festivals, this means working in partnership with parents and carers to understand the meaning, traditions, and values behind them. Families can offer insight that supports authentic and respectful practice, helping settings avoid assumptions or tokenistic approaches.

However, engagement must be careful and ethical. Parents should not feel pressured to educate others, speak on behalf of a whole culture, or share personal experiences unless they choose to. True partnership is based on choice, respect, and trust, not expectation. This requires listening, sensitivity, and collaboration, so that festival celebrations honour children's identities without placing responsibility or emotional labour onto families.



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Activity 3 (15 minutes) Reflecting on Practice

Ask staff to discuss the following in pairs:

- Choose one celebration that worked well. What supported this success?
- Choose one celebration that felt less meaningful. What might have limited its authenticity?



Share key points as a whole group and capture reflections on sticky notes.

Activity 4 (10 minutes) Commitment

Ask staff to spend a few minutes reflecting by themselves on the following question:

- How will you commit to one small, achievable action that supports more meaningful and authentic celebrations in your setting?

Follow up with a round robin, asking each staff member to share their thoughts with the team.

Activity 5 (10 minutes) Policy Reflection

This final activity is a starting point, not a finished task. The aim is to start thinking about whether your current policies support the intentions discussed today and to identify areas for future exploration.

As a group, reflect on:

- Do your policies underpin your intentions in practice?
- Are there any policies that may need reviewing or strengthening?
- How are policies currently shared with, and understood by, parents?



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Conclusion and final thoughts - Celebrating festivals can be a valuable part of inclusive practice, but it should not sit in isolation. The reflections and discussions in this session link to wider work around equality, diversity and inclusion including how children experience belonging, representation and respect in everyday practice.



‘A focus on celebrations, heroes, and discrete cultural events is not sufficient for meaningful anti-bias education.’

Louise Derman-Sparks

Follow up prompts and activities for after the staff meeting:

- Share [Birth to 5 Matters Guidance about inclusive practice and equalities](#) (you might want to print a copy for the staff room or share it on your Whatsapp group)
- Check out the [Early Years Help for Providers Understanding the World](#) website
- Put A3 pieces of paper up and ask team members to note down when they are noticing celebrating festivals in practice following the staff meeting
- Watch this webinar: [A Reflective Approach to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion in EYs Settings With Dr Sharon Colilles](#)
- Look at our upcoming events in our [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Network](#)

Would you like a staff meeting template like this one about a specific topic?

Get in touch to let us know what you would find helpful at your setting by emailing us on sph@beyth.co.uk



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