

## Activity: Who's in the Room?

### **Objectives: Students will be able to –**

- Identify holidays or other special days their families celebrate
- Share the meaning of the holidays they celebrate with their classmates
- Understand how holidays stem from religious and non-religious traditions
- Recognize similarities and differences between the different special days members of their class celebrate, as well as the traditions on which they are based

**Suggested time:** 20-30 minutes

### **Instructions:**

1. Introduction (5 min) –

Have students sit in a circle so that they are all facing each other. Stand on the outside of the circle and ask students to name holidays people they know are celebrating this month. Get at least five answers. Once you have received some examples, ask students to describe the meaning of the holidays they named and why they are celebrated.

Ask students why it is important to understand the meaning of holidays people celebrate. Get two or three responses. Once you have accepted their answers, state: *Holidays teach us about the histories, values, and communities that make people who they are. They celebrate events or beliefs that are important to people. Learning about the holidays people celebrate allows us to understand the things we share and the things that make us different.*

2. Main activity (10-15 min)

Tell students that you are going to take some time to learn about the holidays people in this class celebrate so that you will better understand what things people in the class share and what makes them different.

To help introduce each other's holidays, say to students that you are going to read out loud a number of statements. Ask students to stand up or raise their hands if the statement is true for themselves. Tell them to make sure to look around the room to see who is standing and who is sitting after each prompt.

Ask students if they have understood the directions. Once all directions are clarified, read the following statements:

**Community-Building Resources**

1. I celebrate a holiday with my family.
2. The holiday I celebrate with my family takes place in the fall or winter.
3. The holiday I celebrate with my family takes place in spring or summer.
4. The holiday I celebrate with my family is part of a religion we practice.
5. The holiday I celebrate with my family is a national holiday.
6. The holiday I celebrate with my family remembers a historical event.
7. The holiday I celebrate with my family is happy and fun.
8. The holiday I celebrate with my family is serious and solemn.
9. The holiday I celebrate with my family involves a shared meal.
10. The holiday I celebrate with my family involves fasting.
11. The holiday I celebrate with my family upholds the value of all human life.

Thank the students for taking part in the exercise and tell them that they can sit down.

3. Discussion & Conclusion (5-10 min)

Ask students if one of them would be willing to share the holiday they celebrate with their family. When a student answers, ask them what they do to celebrate that holiday and why. Ask the student what the holiday means to them.

Once a student has shared, ask the group if anyone else celebrates the holiday that was just mentioned. If a student says yes, then ask them if they celebrate that holiday in the same way as the first student or in a different way. If no students celebrate the same holiday, ask students if they celebrate a different holiday that shares a feature with the holiday the first student celebrates (e.g., sharing a meal, remembering a historical event, taking place in winter, etc.). Repeat until everyone in the class has shared.

Call on two or three students to share one thing they learned about their classmates they didn't know before.

Ask students why they think that people from different backgrounds, traditions, religious and non-religious beliefs observe special days? What do we get from these celebrations that make us want to be a part of them every year? Why are they important to us and to our families?

Finally, ask students to share some ways other people can show respect for their and their family's holidays.