Bringing *Oy, Santa!* to the Classroom

Reinforce student learning about acknowledging feelings, positive communication, and respecting different beliefs, behaviors, and ways we belong to communality. **Pair Joyce Schriebman's picture book *Oy, Santa!* with free-to-download Tanenbaum curricula that engage students in meaningful learning about respecting difference.** After reading *Oy, Santa!*, ask questions like "What did Ollie feel strongly about?" and "How did Santa respond?" Connect student reflections to one or more lessons in this curated collection of classroom-ready resources, including the complete *Religions in My Neighborhood* curriculum, and "Informed Civic Action" experiences that offer meaningful ways to apply the book's social and emotional learning themes in and beyond the classroom.

Social-Emotional Themes

1. **Self-Management**: *"I can share pride in who I am in ways that invite conversation and build positive interactions."*

   Text Connections Ollie explains that people should not "smush" Hanukkah with Christmas, and he helps Santa understand why this distinction matters to him. Through Santa's curious questions and Ollie's respect for Santa's interest in learning—despite some frustrating moments of miscommunication—Ollie and Santa show how we can share the responsibility of good communication and take pride in the different beliefs, experiences, and communities that shape our identity.

   Lesson Links
   - → Valuing Diverse Identities
   - → Picture This
   - → Religions in My Neighborhood, Unit II, Lesson 4, Page 79

   Informed Civic Action Students interview a family member, neighbor, or caregiver about a religious or non-religious tradition or celebration that is meaningful to them. Students might report on what they learned with the class via a spoken, written, or other creative project.

2. **Social Awareness**: *"I can explain about holidays I like to celebrate with kindness by remembering that not everyone knows about everyone else's important dates or times of year. "I can be curious and respectful when someone tells me about their holiday traditions."*

   Text Connections As Ollie shares his pride in his Jewish identity he grows frustrated when he realizes Santa doesn't understand Jewish holidays. Ollie takes responsibility for showing his frustration, apologizes to Santa, and acknowledges that families can celebrate the same holiday in different ways—which, to an outsider, can make understanding customs confusing. By valuing his own traditions while also respecting Santa's learning curve, Ollie helps Santa appreciate something new.

Lesson Links

- → Understanding Feelings
- → Who's In the Room?
- → *Religions in My Neighborhood,* Unit III, Lesson 2, Page 97

Informed Civic Action Send an email to Ollie here: Ollie@IntergalacticAfikoman.com to share something about yourself or what is important to you about how or why your family marks a holiday. Writers will receive a response!

3. **Responsible Decision-Making**: "*I can help make our class welcoming for everyone when others share what is important to them."*

Text Connections Santa explains that his workshop has rules to accommodate elves with many different identities, reminding Ollie that differences are part of every community. Through their emails, Ollie and Santa show how exploring differences with respect can foster meaningful understandings of others' beliefs, behaviors, and ways of belonging.

Lesson Links

- → Learning Where Other People Come From
- → Learning from Differences, Celebrating Our Cultures
- → *Religions in My Neighborhood,* Unit III, Lesson 1, Page 94

Informed Civic Action Design posters with slogans and art that communicate why it's important to respect differences, even while finding similarities, across different traditions (e.g., not "smushing" holidays together). Display posters first with a "gallery walk" activity. Then move them to common spaces.

4. **Relationship Skills**: *"I can show respect when I learn about identities and customs that are not like mine."*

Text Connections Ollie explains meanings and traditions connected to different Jewish holidays, while Santa shares some of the holidays his elves need time off for. Their differences stand out, while both notice similarities. Santa models allyship by honoring his elves' holiday customs and promising to remind others that Hanukkah and Christmas are different. Together, they show that learning about different beliefs and ways we celebrate builds inclusive and respectful spaces - even over email!

Lesson Links

- → "I" Statements
- → Opening, Informing, and Uniting Behaviors
- → *Religions in My Neighborhood*, Unit IV, Lesson 1, Page 134

Informed Civic Action Role-play scenarios in small groups. Give one, or more, participating students an incorrect assumption to incorporate into the scene. Ask students watching to identify assumptions (correct and incorrect). Ask role play participants to discuss different communication styles, or rework the scene to demonstrate curiosity, patience, active listening and/or other developmentally appropriate communication skills.