

DECEMBER 2021

Dennis-Yarmouth Regional School District

OFFICE OF INSTRUCTION
NEWSLETTER

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December (17 days)						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

Important Dates

December 3- Trimester 1 ends for K-7

December 10 – Human Rights Day

December 15- K-7 Report Cards

December 21- Winter Solstice begins @ 10:58am

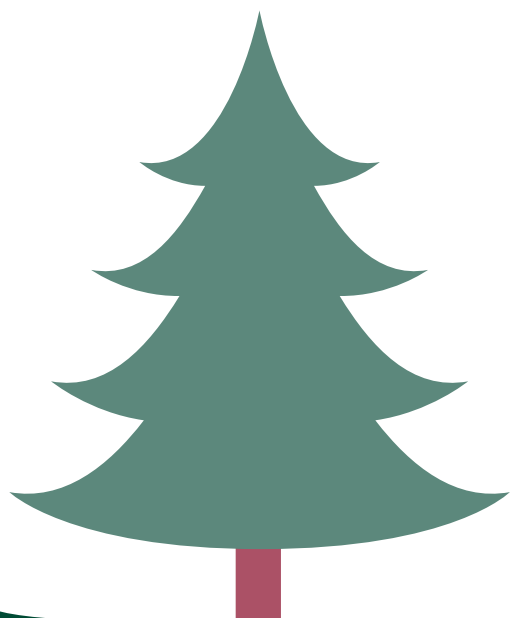
December 24-January 2 - Holiday Vacation

December 24 – Christmas Eve

December 25- Christmas

December 26- Kwanzaa begins

December 31- New Year's Eve



How to Support Students During the Holiday Season



While the holiday season is a time of joy and excitement for most, it can be a stressful and overwhelming period for students that have experienced trauma. Similarly, for those students whose families don't celebrate any of the winter holidays, whether for religious or financial reasons, this time can be filled with feelings of shame and sadness. Without taking away from the excitement of those eagerly awaiting this special time of year, there are still many ways that we can make sure to take care of those students that are suffering.

Look For The Warning Signs

Make sure that you are constantly taking a "mental temperature check" of your class by openly talking about their feelings and experiences. You can do this by either showing one of your Move This World opening rituals, or by doing a quick exercise where you ask all of the students to show you how they are feeling with a simple movement (whether that's arms in the air "excited" or head down "sad"). Take a look around the room and identify those students that are embodying negative emotions- these are the students you should be checking in with more regularly.

Prepare Students For a Change in Routine

We know that all students, and especially students that have experienced trauma, rely heavily on and find comfort in their routines. Even a small change in routine can have a major emotional impact. While holiday parties in your classroom are more than welcome, make sure you prepare students in advance and clearly outline how that day is going to be different from a normal school day.

Do a Thoughtful Arts & Crafts Activity

When you know that some students may not receive gifts, you can have your entire class do a fun craft or activity which encourages them to create an object or "gift" that they can keep with them and use throughout the year. Avoid things that are specific to particular traditions or that ask students to identify their favorite part about the holidays. Rather, have them create something that will be meaningful to them. Similarly, some students might be upset that they don't have the money or resources to purchase gifts for parents, family and friends. Try to find time to create a card or easy craft that students can [give to someone important to them](#).

How to Support Students During the Holiday Season (Cont.)



ACTIVITY IDEA -> Happiness Box

Have students make their own special box where they can keep their favorite things. Inside the box, have students choose a “growth mindset mantra” that they can write on the inside flap. Students can look at their box any time they’re feeling down to read their mantra and look at their favorite possession.

Instill a Practice of Giving

Check out [our recent article](#) that talks about how you can get your students involved in service. Having students participate in these kinds of activities around the holidays allows them to develop an understanding of different family situations and build empathy.

Use Your Resources

Work with your guidance department and administrative team to figure out which families may need support over the holidays. Leverage your staff and parent communities to collect food and gifts. Connect families to other resources in your communities that may be hosting holiday parties and drives.

Keep an eye out for your students during this time of year- everyone handles the holidays differently and we can do many things to create a safe and supportive environment for our students to ensure that they feel valued, loved, and appreciated.

<https://childmind.org/article/how-to-take-the-stress-out-of-the-holidays/>

**Flexing Your
Generosity Muscle**

**How To Get
Students Excited
About Service**

7 Tips for Supporting Students During the Holiday Season



For many students, the holiday season brings lots of joy, and the next couple of months will be filled with anticipation of the family time and celebration ahead.

For other students, the prospect of being home for Thanksgiving or for two whole weeks of winter break can be daunting. If you've developed strong relationships with your students, they may feel a mix of emotions about being apart from their daily classes and routine with you.

Special school events—such as assemblies, plays, and shortened days—can bring fun and excitement into the day, but they may also disrupt schedules and procedures that students have come to expect and rely on.

Additionally, the holiday season can be stressful or overwhelming for students' families. As a result, some of your parent conferences or phone calls might take on a different tenor during this season.

In short, the holiday season can evoke many feelings for students, both positive and negative. These varying reactions to the holiday season may bring about some changes in the behavior or mood of your students and their families as the holidays approach. You may see increased energy, fidgeting, inattention, moodiness, misbehavior, stress, or any combination of the above in your classroom!

Here are seven tips on how to support your students during the next few weeks:

1. **Be consistent.** Your students count on you to create a warm, safe, productive, and inclusive space for them in the classroom (to learn more about how to do this, explore BetterLesson's [How to Create an Inclusive Learning Environment strategy](#)). Although it may feel tempting to "do something different" right before break, students will benefit from consistency and familiarity in your teaching.

2. **Lend a listening ear when you can.** If you notice that a student seems stressed, withdrawn, or anything else unusual, take a few minutes outside of class to let the student know that you're happy to chat anytime. If you don't think your student will want to speak with you about what's going on, consider looping in another staff member with whom you think the student might be more comfortable.

7 Tips for Supporting Students During the Holiday Season (Cont.)



3. **Be mindful of making promises you don't have control over keeping.** Be careful not to tell your students "I'm sure your vacation will be amazing!," or anything else that may not, in the end, come true.

4. **Make an extra effort to use positive framing, especially in family communication.**

Remember to have a growth mindset about your students' performance, to emphasize action steps going forward, and to let parents, guardians, and peers know about positive news!

Consider exploring BetterLesson's [Positive News Board](#) strategy to learn more.

5. **Be careful of your own questions and assumptions around the holidays.** Some questions that seem straightforward enough—"Are you excited to eat turkey?" "What are you asking for for Christmas?"—can be more complicated for a student whose family may or may not have the means to cook a Thanksgiving feast or do a gift exchange, or for students whose families celebrate different holidays from what you celebrate.

Instead, try to ask questions that allow the student to guide the discussion, such as: "What's something you're looking forward to over break?," "Do you like to make New Year's resolutions?," or "What's your favorite thing about winter?" To learn more about your students, you can also consider having your students engage in an activity such as the ones in BetterLesson's [I Wish My Teacher Knew About Me strategy](#).

6. **Laugh & breathe.** Laughter is still one of the best ways to beat stress. Take time to incorporate humor into school activities and assignments, or build in a few minutes for deep breathing or other mindfulness activities from the [Mindfulness Techniques](#) BetterLesson strategy.

7. **Ask for support.** If you are particularly worried about a student or have a strong sense that your student will have a challenging holiday season or winter break, consider looping in a school social worker, counselor, or administrator who can offer additional support to the student or their family.

Remember that consistency, compassion and respect go a long way in helping your students to navigate their emotions any time of year. But during the holiday season, taking extra steps to show you care can be a special gift that makes a real difference in your students' well-being.

Productive Listening



"Robust teacher listening cultivates a space where students can engage in productive struggle and think critically about their own and each others' ideas"

— Hintz, Tyosn, and English



We all know that classroom dialogue is important. We encourage number talks, we post talk move posters in classrooms, and we spend a lot of time in classrooms thinking about how we generate productive discourse. I'd like to shift the focus to fostering productive listening.

Productive listening is that kind of listening that invites others to share more with you while furthering your understanding of their ideas.

This is the way in which all of us hope to be listened to when we are talking. We all seek to be understood and to feel value. The question that I would like us to think about is how well do we listen? And what might interfere with our listening productively? Lucy West tells us "Accountable talk among students requires accountable listening by teachers." How do we hold ourselves accountable for listening well? West presents a list of listening stumbling blocks that can help us to be reflective. Take a moment now to read through her handout where she explains these stumbling blocks such as Me too, distractor, nitpicker, sifter, peacekeeper, judge. Which of these stumbling blocks have gotten in your way of listening well? Can you recall a time when one of those stumbling blocks interfered with someone else's learning? Or your own learning? How might you have listened differently? The first step towards productive listening is to take an honest look at how well we listen. Reading this list is very humbling for me. I am guilty of almost everything on that list at one time or another. You can view West's talk on this subject by scrolling to the bottom of this link for her video. You can also learn more about changing culture in her latest book, *Agents of Change*, which I highly recommend.

<https://looneymathconsulting.com/blog-posts/2019/10/productive-listening>

Operating & Strategic Planning



For those invested in educational innovation across Massachusetts, MassCUE is a resource-rich, vibrant network of educators, who provide New England's premiere educational technology conference; provides ongoing, high-quality professional learning opportunities; fosters collaboration and builds community connection in physical and virtual spaces; recognizes innovation, excellence and courage through awards, grants, scholarships and publicity; advocates for strategic policies and programs; and partners with other organizations to further its shared objectives. MassCUE develops a Yearly Operating Plan, as well as a long-term Strategic Plan. (Strategic Plan coming soon)



MassCUE and M.A.S.S. will be bringing over 70 workshops presented by educators and ed tech companies, as well as optional meet ups and Keynote, Weston Kieschnick, live and on-demand directly to you this February 1-3, 2022! All sessions will be available on demand until April 30th, 2022.

Attendee Registration is available December 1, 2021

<https://www.masscue.org/event/virtual-conference-2022/>

CSEdWeek

COMPUTER SCIENCE EDUCATION WEEK IS AN ANNUAL CALL TO ACTION TO INSPIRE K-12 STUDENTS TO LEARN COMPUTER SCIENCE, ADVOCATE FOR EQUITY, AND CELEBRATE THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND PARTNERS TO THE FIELD.



Teach #CSEverywhere

The CSEdWeek theme this year highlights the impact that computer science is making everywhere & the relationship that computer science has to different subjects, industries, career paths, & our everyday lives.

CS has helped unlock mysteries in math and medicine, it's been used to create art. CS built your phone, the internet, your favorite games, movies, and tv shows. CS helped us eradicate diseases and enables us to explore the depth of space.



Click [HERE](#) to discover CSEd week events