



The Halloween Holiday: A Time for Community Celebration

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As the glorious season of autumn unfolds before us, communities, schools, families and most importantly, children begin to prepare for the arrival of Halloween. It is interesting to examine the various ways that school philosophy and policy differ as districts prepare for this holiday. Many school districts decided to regard this holiday as just another traditional school day due to high stakes testing and accountability. However, for nearly 40 years, a school district in Western New York has used this holiday to highlight their students in a celebration shared with the entire school and town community.

All classroom teachers recognize the many challenges confronting them during any holiday time. It is difficult to help students focus on curriculum when their thoughts turn to costumes, parties, and “trick or treating”. But instead of turning Halloween into a “tug of war” between curriculum and holiday activities, Akron Central School, approximately 575 students (K – 5), uses this day to connect with their “school family” and involves the entire community in these activities.

The day begins with a “Home-grown” assembly wherein K-5 classes volunteer to perform on stage for the student body, parents and community members. These performances include songs, skits, and poetry. This type of assembly is presented four times each year and plays to a full house of students and families.

After the morning performances, children enjoy lunch with classmates. Then, students and teachers don their costumes and prepare for their annual Halloween parade into downtown Akron. As students parade, the sidewalks are lined with enthusiastic parents and community members. Local police monitor traffic and parents and teachers make sure everyone is having fun and walking safely. On this special day, and entire town comes out to support its elementary school and its children.

The administrators, faculty, and staff of Akron Elementary School fully understand the important relationship between the school and the community. This day provides an extraordinary opportunity to integrate the curriculum and highlight the role of multiple intelligences in quite unique ways. In addition to their annual parade, teachers regularly incorporate walking field trips to local businesses and invite guest speakers from these businesses to speak to their classes. Each grade level has a business partner from the town that they keep in regular contact. Akron Elementary School maintains an open door practice with parents. The faculty acknowledges their students learn in different ways and require many types of learning experiences to fully develop and be successful.

Akron Elementary School places 70th out of 242 public schools in Western New York. This ranking clearly evidences that students can learn and still be children.

For our international readers, the following link provides a history of this holiday.

<http://www.history.com/topics/halloween/history-of-halloween>