

## **Holidays and Birthdays**

In the United States, school children celebrate many holidays in the classroom. Children also celebrate their birthdays in the classroom. The following is a list of the major holidays and procedures for each one.

### Celebrating Birthdays in the Classroom

Teachers at Mitchell are very willing to celebrate a student's birthday in the classroom during an appropriate time of the school day. On or near a child's special birthday date, parents are invited to bring or send with their child an appropriate amount of treats to share with classmates and the teacher. Examples of treats may include cupcakes, cookies, or a special dish that is typical of a child's cultural background.

Mitchell also likes to recognize teachers' birthdays. If they wish, parents can work together and offer their children's teacher a joint card and/or present (such as a gift certificate to a local bookstore) to show their appreciation of the teachers' hard work during the school year. This is not obligatory but is a nice gesture and is somewhat customary in the United States. Sometimes a classroom mother will send out a letter to parents and organize the gift giving.

### Halloween (October 31)

Halloween is a time for children to dress up in costumes and, in the evening (usually between 4 and 8 p.m.), walk around their neighborhoods to collect candy and treats. Children knock on their neighbors' doors and say "trick-or-treat" when the person answers the door. The person at the door gives them candy in the bucket the children are carrying. Children have fun sharing how they created or chose their costumes (scary or funny costumes, such as a cat, a ghost, or a witch) as well as comparing what they received in their buckets upon returning home (such as chocolates, sour or sweet candies, toys).

In school, children will have a parade and a Halloween party, usually at the end of the school day during the week of Halloween. For the parade, children dress up in their costumes and then walk through the school hallways to show other children their disguises. Each classroom has its own party that follows the parade. During the party, children will continue wearing their costumes, eat wonderful treats and healthy foods, and play games. Parents of each classroom volunteer to organize the party and make the food and treats. You can ask your child's teacher how you can help.

### Thanksgiving (November 26)

Thanksgiving is a harvest festival and a holiday for saying thank you for the good things in one's life. On Thanksgiving Day, Americans have a special meal with their families to celebrate the fall fruits, vegetables, and meats and spend time appreciating one another. The festive meal typically includes turkey, cranberries, baked carrots or green beans, potatoes, rolls, and pumpkin pie.

In school, children may learn about the history of the United States and Thanksgiving. A special Thanksgiving meal is served in the lunch room, usually a few days before Thanksgiving

(students have no school on Thanksgiving Day). Parents are invited to eat with their child on this day.

### Christmas (December 25)

In the United States, Christmas is both a secular and religious holiday. In school, children will participate in nonreligious Christmas activities. They may make Christmas ornaments for their Christmas tree or sing Christmas songs. Before the holiday break, children and their parents sometimes take the opportunity to thank their teachers for their hard work throughout the year. Although not required, you can offer your teacher a small thank you gift or join other parents in offering a joint gift for the teacher.

Classes will hold a winter party before Christmas break, for which classroom parents volunteer to organize games and activities as well as make special foods. You can ask your teacher how you can participate.

### Martin Luther King Day, a Day of Giving Back (January 15)

Martin Luther King was a famous civil rights leader in the United States. He is famous for helping African Americans gain equal rights. No school is held on Martin Luther King (MLK) day, which is the Monday closest to Martin Luther King's actual birthday on January 15. On that Monday, the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) runs a special event called the "Day of Giving Back." Children and their families come to the school's gymnasium and participate in activities for charity. Each grade (kindergarten through sixth grade) is responsible for a certain charity (such as homeless shelters, animal shelters, veteran associations), and classes organize a method for donations a few weeks beforehand. You will receive information on this activity in the Friday folder.

### Valentine's Day (February 14)

On Valentine's Day, Americans express their love for one another by giving each other cards, candy, and small gifts. As a homework assignment or in the classroom, children will make Valentine's cards for their classmates, one for each child. Valentine's cards can be handmade, or they can be bought at stores like King Soopers or Target. Students can attach candy or toys to their cards if they wish. Some teachers have their students bring a Valentine's Box to school in which they can store their Valentine cards. Your teacher will inform you of what is typically done in his or her classroom.

### St. Patrick's Day (March 17)

St. Patrick's Day is an Irish holiday that is sometimes celebrated in the United States. On this day, most people will wear green to avoid being "pinched by a leprechaun." A leprechaun is an imaginary little person that is said to steal gold and keep it under a rainbow. The symbol for St. Patrick's Day is the shamrock or clover.