

# Pre Boston

Family Newsletter - December 2021

Monthly News from Boston Universal Pre-K for Parents and Caregivers

Dear Boston UPK Parents & Caregivers,

We hope that you had a great time with family and friends during the Thanksgiving weekend. Although a reminiscence of unhappy times for some, I hope you were able to take a pause and reflect on everything you are grateful for, share with those who lack, and enjoy some rest and time with family and friends.

The pace may vary from one UPK program site to another, however, [Unit 2](#) of the curriculum is being covered around this time in December and the children will be reading “A Letter to Amy” by Ezra Jack Keats. While reading this book, our scholars will be introduced to the concept of communicating via letters. Why not, as an activity, assist your child in writing holiday notes/cards to friends and relatives? Scholars will also learn to make pizza with the book “The Little Red Hen Makes A Pizza” by Philemon Sturges and illustrator Amy Walrod. Homemade pizza sounds fun as a family activity. Yes? Please continue to refer to the Home Links on our [website](#) for additional activities to support the curriculum at home.

We are excited to provide an update on the Early Childhood Family Council which held its first meeting of the year. You can find introductions on two steering committee members in this newsletter: Ymaris Medina Matias (Hattie B. Cooper) and Scott Votel (YMCA West Roxbury).



You will also find in this month’s issue Site Spotlights on VietAID and Ellis Early Learning, an article from our partner Families First, and information on BPS kindergarten (K2) information sessions.

Please don’t hesitate to reach out to me, the Family Engagement Coordinator (FEC) at your program, or the Family Council with questions. As the calendar year is closing, we invite you to seize every opportunity to include your child in end-of-the-year family activities and to stay safe! Best wishes for the holiday season!

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## Events and Announcements

### BPS Kindergarten Registration Information Sessions

Virtual kindergarten registration information sessions for parents and caregivers of 2022 incoming kindergarten (K2) students are planned:

- Tuesday, Dec. 7, 6-7:30 PM
- Wednesday, Dec. 8, 11 AM-12:30 PM
- Tuesday, Dec. 14, 8:30-10 AM
- Wednesday, Dec. 15, 6-7:30 PM

The session will cover details caregivers need to know such as documents needed to complete the registration process and how to make school selections. (Each session is the same. A parent/caregiver only needs to attend one session).

Participants can sign up using [this form](#). Translation services are available by request.

Direct any questions to Josette Williams, Interim Director, Countdown to Kindergarten, at 617-635-9288 or [jwilliams8@bostonpublicschools.org](mailto:jwilliams8@bostonpublicschools.org).

Event flyers with details are available in 10 languages [here](#).

# Sharing Cultural Traditions with your Preschooler this Holiday Season

By: Molly DuBuc, Families First



The holiday season brings excitement for many children and cultural traditions for many families. Sharing those traditions with your preschooler is a great way to connect and give them the knowledge to share with others. Whether you celebrate the winter solstice, Kwanzaa, Chanukah, Christmas, or any other holiday - sharing cultural traditions with your preschooler in simple ways can be fun for all!

Here are a few ways to incorporate your families' traditions this holiday season:

**Share stories** from your childhood and the traditions you remember. Your children will love hearing about you when you were a child! You can also share historical stories that represent your cultural traditions or the holiday that you celebrate—this helps give a deeper meaning to holidays.

**Cook or bake together.** Kids love to be part of the action in the kitchen. Embrace the mess of the 3–5-year-old chef and enjoy teaching your child how to cook your traditional holiday foods. \*This is also a great time to tell those stories from above!\*

**Read children's books** about your holiday. This is a great way to spend time together while learning about the holidays you celebrate. Enjoy the pictures and involve your child in discussing what they are learning. Try this website for books to get you started: [www.diversebookfinder.org](http://www.diversebookfinder.org).

**Attend community celebrations.** Showing your preschooler that other people celebrate the same holiday creates a wider sense of community connection. Look into your local community center for holiday events or activities to join as a family.

**Explore holidays from other cultures** to broaden your child's worldview. Through exposure to other cultural beliefs, your child may recognize and embrace new traditions at school or in your neighborhood.

In general, most holidays are about connection with your cultural group, sharing experiences and activities with others, and showing love and support for friends and family. These simple traditions of connection, sharing, and love are a simple way to talk with your preschooler about holiday traditions from all cultures.

The earlier we talk with our children about their holidays and cultural traditions, the more pride they will feel. This, in turn will encourage them to share with their classmates and teachers. Sharing holiday traditions creates more curiosity and excitement during this season. And how wonderful it is to share your own memories, while seeing joyful children this time of year!

What holiday traditions can you imagine sharing with your young ones?

## Site Spotlight: Ellis Early Learning



Students at Ellis Early Learning participated in the bath time & dressing activity and made their own masks. As part of the mask-making activity, children have been learning how sometimes we look like we are using a mask depending on our mood. Children were able to research how different people use a mask to describe feelings or pretend to be something else. Children had conversations about why they chose their mask design and how that relates to the Bombaloo story.



## Site Spotlight: VietAID Thanksgiving Celebration

VietAID Âu Cơ Preschool had a Thanksgiving celebration on November 22. The preschool discussed with the children about being thankful for what they have and that giving and sharing is a nice way to make friends and be good children. Each family was asked to bring in one item of food or drink. Food included egg rolls, fried rice, lo mein, chicken wings, apple juice, McDonald's, cookies, and doughnuts. Turkeys and school supplies were also given to families. The families loved and appreciated it very much! It was a fun celebration for all 3 UPK classrooms at VietAID Âu Cơ Preschool!



## Meet the Early Childhood Family Council Steering Committee

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Throughout the year, we will introduce you to members of the Steering Committee of the Early Childhood Family Council. You can reach the Early Childhood Family Council at [ecfcsteeringcommittee@gmail.com](mailto:ecfcsteeringcommittee@gmail.com).

### **Ymaris Medina Matias, Co-chair**



My name is Ymaris Matias. I'm a mother of two kids. The institution I'm representing is where my daughter goes - Hattie B. Copper Community Center in the South End. One of the things I like about UPK is to get me to be involved in what is happening in my daughter's education. I'm a mother who likes to be involved in the school system to help find solutions and discuss what is best for the children. I'm here to look up for every child and fight for what is right. I'm a professional chef but I work in the St. Stephen Youth Program as a parent organizer coordinator. I educate parents about becoming leaders and advocate for their kids' education. My hobbies are spending time with my kids, cooking, watching movies and dancing.

### **Scott Votel, Secretary**

I'm Scott Votel, and I'm serving as Secretary of the ECFC this year. I live with my wife, Moira, and two children, Penny and Jack, in Roslindale. My daughter attends the UPK program at the Parkway YMCA in West Roxbury. We are thrilled with the UPK program. Penny is so proud of herself, and she is eager to come home every day to tell us about something she's done in school. She loves showing off her latest artwork, sharing her favorite games and song, and telling us about a new book they've been reading. We have really found a warm and stimulating place for her in UPK. My hope for the year is to build on the work of the inaugural ECFC by making it a valuable resource both for parents and for the UPK administration. Both my wife and I have careers in education. I am currently a professor at Suffolk University, focusing on teaching composition and rhetoric, while my wife, Moira, serves as the Director of Cooperative Education at the Bouvé College of Health Sciences at Northeastern University.

