

## DRAFT Holiday Performances and Santa Visit Decision

Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Thu 12/8/2022 9:46 AM

To: Terry Williamson <TerryWilliamson@burbankusd.org>

Hi All,

The stage risers will be moved from the stage to the Primary Playground next week where our Holiday Performances will be held. Upstairs teachers may need to adjust your line up spots accordingly if they are in your normal spot. I'll have two sound systems handy to test which one works best while you're rehearsing next week.

You probably noticed that the Auditorium is decorated for a holiday performance. This is for the Band/Orchestra performance on Tues, Dec 20 at 6pm. They're able to perform inside because the concert is outside of school hours and the rules for requiring and checking vaccination apply to events held during school hours, but not after school.

It's been a few years since we've hosted a Santa Claus visit and after much thought, I've decided to cancel this schoowide practice based on a few factors:

- **Balancing Christmas with Other Winter Holidays**-You all do a great job of incorporating stories, art, lessons, and activities highlighting customs from Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Las Posadas, Winter Solstice, etc as part of your instruction to teach about traditions from diverse cultures and people of different backgrounds. Teaching about Christmas traditions should be included in this, however a visit from Santa Claus disproportionately celebrates Christmas compared to other holidays.
- **Consideration for What Students Already Know and Experience**-I am confident that the majority, if not all, our students already know about Santa, have experiences visiting with Santa outside of school, and do not rely on a school-provided Santa visit. If families wish to have a Santa visit, there are many opportunities to do so outside of school.
- **Many Other Ways to Teach About Traditions**-As you talk about and do activities to teach about diverse holiday experiences, there are many ways to include Christmas traditions in a similar manner to how you teach about other holidays. A visit from Santa, while joyful, does not teach students anything new about holiday traditions.

If you disagree with my decision and feel strongly about hosting a visit in your class, you need to arrange a visit from someone (community member, parent/family member, etc) who can speak about traditions of other holidays to balance a visit with Santa. If you need help with this, let me know. If you plan to do this, please notify me before next Fri, Dec 16.

Thanks,

Matt Osmond  
Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School  
(818) 729-3150 x11491  
[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)  
IG: @teddyrooselem  
(he/him/his)

## Holiday Performances and Santa Visit Discontinued

Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Thu 12/8/2022 10:15 AM

Bcc: Candace Cobery <CandaceCobery@burbankusd.org>;Melody Lopez <MelodyLopez@burbankusd.org>;Rachelle Shipstad <RachelleShipstad@burbankusd.org>;Kathy Wills <KathyWills@burbankusd.org>;Chez Mohler <ChezMohler@burbankusd.org>;Dawn Ignatian <DawnIgnatian@burbankusd.org>;Monica Coughlin <MonicaCoughlin@burbankusd.org>;Julie Skujins <JulieSkujins@burbankusd.org>;Bridgett Murphy <BridgettMurphy@burbankusd.org>;Christine Cecchini <ChristineCecchini@burbankusd.org>;Kerie Stein <KerieStein@burbankusd.org>;Rhonda Wright <RhondaWright@burbankusd.org>;Amber Moore Myers <AmberMooreMyers@burbankusd.org>;Roxanne Hunt <RoxanneHunt@burbankusd.org>;Ellen Craig <EllenCraig@burbankusd.org>;Carol Walcoff <CarolWalcoff@burbankusd.org>;John Pike <JohnPike@burbankusd.org>;Aileen Ermino <AileenErmino@burbankusd.org>;Carmella Jaramillo <CarmellaJaramillo@burbankusd.org>;Amy Jensen <AmyJensen@burbankusd.org>

Hi All,

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- **Consideration for What Students Already Know and Experience**-I am confident that the majority, if not all, our students already know about Santa, have experiences visiting with Santa outside of school, and do not rely on a school-provided Santa visit. If families wish to have a Santa visit, there are many opportunities to do so outside of school.
- **Many Other Ways to Teach About Traditions**-As you talk about and do activities to teach about diverse holiday experiences, there are many ways to include Christmas traditions in a similar manner to how you teach about other holidays. A visit from Santa, while joyful, does not teach students anything new about holiday traditions.

If you feel strongly about hosting a Santa visit in your class, you need to arrange a visit from someone (community member, parent/family member, etc) who can speak about traditions of other holidays to balance a visit with Santa. If you need help with this, let me know.

If you plan to do this, please notify me before next Fri, Dec 16 so that we can count your class in a Santa visit schedule.

Thanks,

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Matt Osmond  
Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School  
(818) 729-3150 x11491  
[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)  
IG: @teddyrooselem  
(he/him/his)

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**Re: Santa**

Beth Gmail <lovebeth@gmail.com>

Thu 12/8/2022 10:47 PM

To: Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Caution! This message was sent from outside of Burbank Unified School District.

Thank you for the info. Would it be possible to survey parents? How much of our community celebrates? Would those who don't celebrate be okay with Santa visiting? I feel that parents should hear from you about this decision.

Schools reflect the they are in community, and the majority of our school celebrates Christmas (I think?). I am thrilled when my kids get to hear about Diwali and see a display to celebrate it. I am so happy when they come home beaming about a chocolate coin from the Chinese New Year and tell me about the beautiful decorations. All of the culture exposure they get at school has been amazing. I never expect to see two traditions put next to each other so one isn't more important. They all get to live in their own space. I don't think having Santa stand next to a Rabbi is necessary. Santa is just exposure to another tradition and any child who doesn't celebrate gets to be exposed the excitement of Christmas.

A Santa visit isn't going to make or break the season for our family, but, it is a simple childhood pleasure that is being removed and it makes me sad. These kids only get to be kids for so long, and the magically moments will be harder to come by!

Thanks for taking the time to consider our point of view.

Beth

On Dec 8, 2022, at 9:03 PM, Matthew Osmond <matthewosmond@burbankusd.org> wrote:

Hi Bethany,

Thanks for reaching out about this. It's correct that I have discontinued the practice of a schoolwide Santa visit but there's a bit more context that is important to know.

Teachers are still encouraged to teach about holiday for traditions for Christmas, Hanukkah, Las Posadas, Kwanzaa, etc and all winter holidays. The change of not bringing Santa from class to class is to create balance so that we are not highlighting Christmas over other winter holidays. However, teachers can still talk about, read stories about, do activities/art, etc about Santa similarly to what they do for other holidays.

Additionally, teachers who feel strongly about hosting a Santa visit can still do so, they just need to also host someone else (parent, community member, etc) who can talk about another holiday tradition.

This ensures that we are teaching about holiday traditions without elevating one holiday over any others. If you have any questions about this, let me know and I'm

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happy to speak with you and Will further.

Thanks,

Matt Osmond  
Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School  
(818) 729-3150 x11491  
[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)  
IG: @teddyrooselem  
(he/him/his)

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**From:** Bethany Froelich <lovebeth@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 8, 2022 4:30 PM  
**To:** Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>  
**Subject:** Santa

Hi!

I just wanted to say we heard that Santa isn't going to be allowed to come to Roosevelt this year and we are confused. So much effort is being made to include everyone, but here we stand on the outside being told our holiday isn't valid. DEI is about inclusion, with a substantial amount of kids at Roosevelt who celebrate Christmas, religious or not, it feels odd to exclude it. Let's add instead of subtracting. I hope you won't exclude our holiday because it's mainstream.

I really hope you will reconsider, and please reach out if you want to chat with Will and I about this.

Beth & Will Froelich

**RE: Santa**

Kimberly Campos <KimberlyCampos@burbankusd.org>

Mon 12/12/2022 3:09 PM

To: Nida Ballesteros <NidaBallesteros@burbankusd.org>; Jenny Bailey <jndga@mac.com>; Amanda Niles Conti <amandanilesconti@gmail.com>; Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Hi Jenny,

Thank you for your email. As you know this is my first year at Roosevelt and not familiar with the Santa experience you are referring to. I will inquiry about this process and consider your suggestion.

Thank you for your understanding,

Mrs. Campos

Sent from Mail for Windows

**From:** Nida Ballesteros

**Sent:** Monday, December 12, 2022 1:39 PM

**To:** Jenny Bailey; Kimberly Campos; Amanda Niles Conti; Matthew Osmond

**Subject:** Re: Santa

Hi Jenny,

I actually did not know anything about the Santa visit until earlier today when I received a Dojo Message from Amanda. My first answer was "No", but after consideration, I texted back "Yes". I don't think Mrs. Campos had/has any idea that a Santa visit was even an option, and never said

yes or no. We will discuss it after school today. 😊

Thank you,

Ms. Nida Ballesteros

5th Grade Teacher-Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School, BUSD

**From:** Jenny Bailey <jndga@mac.com>

**Sent:** Monday, December 12, 2022 11:26 AM

**To:** Nida Ballesteros <NidaBallesteros@burbankusd.org>

**Subject:** Fwd: Santa

Caution! This message was sent from outside of Burbank Unified School District.

I sent the following message to Mrs. Campos. Can we try to get Santa for both classrooms? I know Amanda is arranging it for yours.

I also am sending a message to Mr. Osmond which I will CC you and Mrs. Campos as well.

Thank you!

Jenny

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Jenny Bailey <jndga@mac.com>

**Subject:** Santa

**Date:** December 11, 2022 at 9:11:05 AM PST

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To: Kimberly Campos <kimberlycampos@burbankusd.org>  
Cc: Kevin Bailey <kevin@lakesidegolfclub.com>, Amanda Conti  
<amandanilesconti@gmail.com>

Dear Mrs. Campos,

I am writing to you to ask you to please have Santa Claus visit our class. I know that Amanda Conti has arranged for Santa to visit Ms. Ballesteros's class and would love to have you get on board with her as well. It is the LAST year for our children to be elementary school students. The magic of the holidays only lasts for so long in a child's life. Please do not take away from the magic of childhood. They have the rest of their lives for the magic to disappear and deal with all the political and personal agendas of adults. Let them have some magic for the season. I am positive that if you poll the parents of the class, no one would be offended to have Santa, but ALL of them could experience a little more magic before middle school. It breaks my heart that childhood joys have to be taken away for adult agendas when, if you truly look at it, no one will be offended by a little magic and happiness in their lives. I am happy to help coordinate this if needed.

As a parent, I am sure you can also understand how short the magic of childhood can be and how no child should be able to feel that Santa picked certain classes to attend and then left others out. It is heartbreaking when that happens and someone feels that they were not good enough for the magic and fun that their friends got to experience. If one 5th grade class is doing it, please can ours do it too?

Sincerely,

Jenny Bailey  
818-601-4258

## Re: Holiday Performances and Santa Visit Discontinued

Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Mon 12/12/2022 3:46 PM

To: Rhonda Wright <RhondaWright@burbankusd.org>

Thanks. I'll add your class to the list for a Santa visit.

Matt Osmond

Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School

(818) 729-3150 x11491

[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)

IG: @teddyrooselem

(he/him/his)

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**From:** Rhonda Wright <RhondaWright@burbankusd.org>

**Sent:** Monday, December 12, 2022 3:46 PM

**To:** Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

**Subject:** RE: Holiday Performances and Santa Visit Discontinued

To balance having Santa visit my class, I'll be having someone come talk about Channukah. I think I have someone who will be coming to talk about Las Posadas as well. As part of second grade we take our students on a trip around the world to learn about numerous countries and how they celebrate their Winter Holidays.

😊 Rhonda Wright

**From:** Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

**Sent:** Thursday, December 8, 2022 10:16 AM

**Subject:** Holiday Performances and Santa Visit Discontinued

Hi All,

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If you plan to do this, please notify me before next Fri, Dec 16 so that we can count your class in a Santa visit schedule.

Thanks,

**Matt Osmond**  
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**Re: Santa**

Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Tue 12/13/2022 9:17 PM

To: Kevin Bailey <Kevin@lakesidegolfclub.com>; Jenny Bailey <jndga@mac.com>

Cc: Nida Ballesteros <NidaBallesteros@burbankusd.org>; Kimberly Campos <KimberlyCampos@burbankusd.org>

Hi Kevin,

Thanks for sharing your thoughts. Although we disagree, I appreciate you taking the time to write and send them.

Sincerely,

Matt Osmond  
Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School  
(818) 729-3150 x11491  
[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)  
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**From:** Kevin Bailey <Kevin@lakesidegolfclub.com>

**Sent:** Tuesday, December 13, 2022 11:42 AM

**To:** Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>; Jenny Bailey <jndga@mac.com>

**Cc:** Nida Ballesteros <NidaBallesteros@burbankusd.org>; Kimberly Campos <KimberlyCampos@burbankusd.org>

**Subject:** RE: Santa

Caution! This message was sent from outside of Burbank Unified School District.

Mr. Osmond-

As a principal nobody can understand the strain the last couple of years have been on a person in your leadership position. I thank you for all the things you and the teachers and the entire staff have done in such a difficult time in this world.

Considering all of this I honestly can't understand the reasoning behind your recent decision with Santa. Has any thought been giving to those in DEI that over-the-top decisions such as these are only creating division? Forcing agendas on people never work. You say it was your decision, but I find it hard to believe that the before mentioned committee didn't have a heavy hand in this. Politics should not be a part of decisions with children, but unfortunately, it's only getting worse.

I agree with you that matters such as this should be discussed in person, but I also value your time. You made your decision. As a parent of a child who is affected, I am expressing my disappointment over this extreme and unnecessary decision.

Kevin Bailey PGA  
Head Golf Professional  
(818) 985-3335  
4500 Lakeside Drive, Burbank CA 91505  
P.O. Box 2386, Toluca Lake CA 91610

**RE: Santa**

Kevin Bailey <Kevin@lakesidegolfclub.com>

Tue 12/13/2022 11:43 AM

To: Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>; Jenny Bailey <jndga@mac.com>

Cc: Nida Ballesteros <NidaBallesteros@burbankusd.org>; Kimberly Campos <KimberlyCampos@burbankusd.org>

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Kevin Bailey PGA

Head Golf Professional

(818) 985-3335

4500 Lakeside Drive, Burbank CA 91505

P.O. Box 2386, Toluca Lake CA 91610



From: Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Sent: Monday, December 12, 2022 5:24 PM

To: Jenny Bailey <jndga@mac.com>

Cc: Kevin Bailey <Kevin@lakesidegolfclub.com>; Nida Ballesteros <NidaBallesteros@burbankusd.org>; Kimberly Campos <KimberlyCampos@burbankusd.org>

Subject: Re: Santa

Hi Jenny,

Thanks for sharing your thoughts. I know my decision has frustrated some individuals and although that wasn't my intention, traditions, both family and school, are very personal to us.

I put a lot of thought into my decision and don't plan to change it, but I can share more about how I made it and hopefully answer your questions. I'll also share that things like this are often best addressed by speaking in person, so I'm happy to meet with you and Kevin to talk more, if you'd like.

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We do lots of great things in classrooms to highlight a variety of cultures and holiday traditions around this time of year ranging from stories and art to lessons and discussions. However, bringing Santa to each class elevates Christmas above other holidays that are also happening at this time of year. I agree that Santa is generally accepted as a cultural figure and not a religious one, but he specifically represents Christmas, not Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, etc. We still teach about Christmas traditions including Santa with stories, activities, art, writing, etc, but it must be done in a way that balances other holiday traditions from this time of year.

This is also why teachers who feel strongly about Santa visiting their classrooms can still do so, there just needs to be someone else representing another holiday who can come and talk about those traditions. That creates the balance we are aiming for. This doesn't need to occur on the same day/time and it doesn't need to be an official representative of another religion. A community member, student, sibling, parent, etc who can talk about traditions from Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Winter Solstice, Las Posadas, Boxing Day, etc meets this criteria. However, this is each teacher's decision, not a decision made by parents from the class. We trust our teachers to know what their students need every day and to supplement curriculum with activities and lessons as needed and this is no different.

I also took into consideration students' existing knowledge of and experience with Santa compared to other cultural celebrations we've highlighted during the year such as Lunar New Year and Diwali. Most of our students first learn about Lunar New Year, Diwali, etc because of the lessons our teachers deliver and the celebrations we discuss at school. Most, if not all students already know who Santa is, what he does, and what he represents without us teaching anything about him. Even without Santa visiting, he and other Christmas traditions are absolutely present in class activities. We are not disregarding Santa as an important tradition or removing Christmas from the celebrations we highlight. We are balancing it with other celebrations by not highlighting Santa and Christmas above the others.

I agree with you that Santa and all the holidays that are celebrated in the Winter are joyful and fun, but I don't think an in-person Santa visit is the only or even the best way to spread that joy. Many of the children in our community do not celebrate Christmas and I don't believe their holiday is any less joyful. None of the other ten elementary schools in BUSD have a Santa visit and I don't believe the students who attend those schools are any less joyful than ours (though I DO think Roosevelt is the best...just not because of a Santa visit 😊).

For those who celebrate Christmas and for anyone who wants to learn more about or experience Christmas traditions, Santa visits are available in Burbank and throughout the region...some are free and some require payment, but anyone can access them.

I don't think the classes who aren't visited by Santa will feel unworthy or not-as-good-as-others and I know the teachers who make that decision are highlighting a range of holiday traditions in lots of other ways.

I understand that my reasons may not change your point-of-view anymore than your reasons have changed my mind, but I want you to know that I really thought about this a lot and although I keep coming back to the same decision, I'm sorry for the frustration, anger, and hurt feelings it has caused during an otherwise joyful season.

Again, I'm happy to meet to talk more.

Sincerely,

Matt Osmond

---

Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School

(818) 729-3150 x11491

[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)

IG: @teddyrooselem

(he/him/his)

---

**From:** Jenny Bailey <[jndga@mac.com](mailto:jndga@mac.com)>

**Sent:** Monday, December 12, 2022 1:19 PM

**To:** Matthew Osmond <[MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org](mailto:MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org)>

**Cc:** Kimberly Campos <[KimberlyCampos@burbankusd.org](mailto:KimberlyCampos@burbankusd.org)>; Nida Ballesteros <[NidaBallesteros@burbankusd.org](mailto:NidaBallesteros@burbankusd.org)>; Kevin Bailey <[kevin@lakesidegolfclub.com](mailto:kevin@lakesidegolfclub.com)>

**Subject:** Santa

Dear Mr. Osmond,

I have waited a few days since I heard about your decision about Santa to write so I could process it all in the best way possible.

I understand that your decision is under what you feel is best, but I disagree. I feel like adult agendas are getting in the way of the magic and joy of childhood and we all need to take a step back and learn to celebrate the goodness that can happen during the holidays.

First, by not allowing Santa at all because of a few kids who do not celebrate, I think it would be a good way for them to get to experience the tradition. Learning about different traditions is good for everyone.

Our kids are given the opportunities to experience Native American traditions, Hispanic traditions, and others with assemblies throughout the year. What is the difference with Santa as a tradition? Santa is not religious (although I do agree it follows the tradition of giving gifts as the wise men do in Christianity, but Santa does not have any affiliation with the Baby Jesus or the Christmas story). It should not bother anyone of a different tradition as in that it does not come from the Bible or mention anything from the Bible. I know plenty of other families of different religions that incorporate Santa even though they are not Christian.

It can be a learning experience as the Kwanza assembly was several years ago for our kids that do not celebrate Kwanza. I wasn't upset by that celebration and I do not think anyone else would be upset by Santa either. If our kids get the opportunity to experience different traditions, can't those that do not celebrate have the same experiences with Santa being the "new" tradition to learn about?

Take, for instance, the Ofrenda. It is a wonderful celebration for Day of the Dead. However, it is a RELIGIOUS tradition of Aztecs that celebrates the afterlife. Although it is very different because Santa is not religious, how is that okay but Santa is not? They are both celebrations where people can learn about different traditions. You cannot use Santa as a religious excuse when you have the Ofrenda, or Kwanza celebrations, or a Menorah in the front office. Having Santa is very different than having a priest or Rabbi talking about their religion. I think it is wonderful for our kids to celebrate all traditions, but that means ALL and not just those that are in the minority. EVERYONE should have the chance to learn something new....so why can't Santa be used at the "something new" for those children?

I understand that you have given the teachers the opportunity to have Santa on their own if they choose. I feel like Santa "picking and choosing" which kids are good or which classrooms to visit is going to cause a lot more childhood heartache when one class gets Santa and the other class does not. You might have 2 or 3 that do not think Santa is a good idea but think about the masses of kids who are heartbroken when some classes get Santa and others do not. (I take this from a similar childhood experience of my own when I was broken because Santa came to see a friend and not me in a similar situation when I was in elementary school.) Think about the magic this takes away from some children. Or the magic it can give ALL children. It also puts the teachers in a really bad situation on having to choose between what they know you want and what their kids want. In addition, on a logistical note, you could end up with multiple Santas coming to the

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school at the same time for different classes - which is not only confusing but when ONE Santa could visit everyone, isn't it better to have less visitors in the school?

These are just my thoughts. It is my understanding that Santa is being arranged for some classrooms. I desperately hope they can all be Included. It will be terrible for some of the kids (especially the 5th graders) to get Santa on their last magical elementary year and the others are left out. Can't they ALL have some magic in their lives? Haven't they lost enough over the last few years? Can we please have some childhood JOY?

We all need to step back and celebrate the joy of childhood and quit finding reasons why innocent, wonderful, celebrations are offensive and therefore not allowed. I honestly believe that there is not a single person who wants to stop the magic of the holiday season regardless of what they celebrate or not. I honestly believe all parents want their children to have magic and joy in their lives. We need to stop these personal adult agendas trying to prove something and just let joy in instead. We need to celebrate EVERYONE! (And that includes SANTA!)

Sincerely,

Jenny Bailey

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**Re: Santa**

Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Tue 12/13/2022 8:48 AM

To: Monica Coughlin <MonicaCoughlin@burbankusd.org>

Thanks...those both sound great.

Matt Osmond

Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School

(818) 729-3150 x11491

[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)

IG: @teddyrooselem

(he/him/his)

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**From:** Monica Coughlin <MonicaCoughlin@burbankusd.org>

**Sent:** Tuesday, December 13, 2022 8:22 AM

**To:** Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

**Subject:** Santa

My class is participating in Barry coming and the Catholic Deacon to talk about Las Posadas. So we would like a Santa to visit as well. Thanks, Monica

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**Re: Santa**

Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Tue 12/13/2022 1:34 PM

To: Monica King <zeria33@yahoo.com>

Hi Monica,

Thanks for sharing your thoughts. I can clarify a few things to be sure the information you have is accurate, however if you'd like to speak about this, just let me know and I can give you a call or set up time to meet.

I made the decision to discontinue a schoolwide Santa visit because this practice elevated Christmas above other winter holidays. To be clear, we are still teaching about Christmas traditions, including Santa, as well as Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, etc. Using similar activities like stories, art activities, etc ensures we balance all of these without favoring one over others.

When I explained my decision to our teachers, I let them know that if they feel strongly about including a visit with Santa, there should also be someone else who can speak about another holiday tradition to create the same balance. This doesn't need to occur on the same day/time because we're not comparing two holidays (for example some classes are doing something this week and have a visit with Santa next Fri). It also doesn't need to be an official representative of another religion because we are not teaching religion, we are teaching about traditions and customs. Some classes have a family member or a parent from the class coming in to speak about another tradition, such as making latkes or playing with dreidel. We are not equating Santa with any religious figures. We are working to balance holiday celebrations.

Similarly, when we teach about Dia de los Muertos or Diwali, we are not spreading religion but are instead teaching about customs and traditions. The issue isn't really about creating further separation between church and school because we already create that separation by teaching about traditions, not spreading or promoting religions. My decision is about not favoring one religion's traditions over others and recognizing different holidays that occur at the same time in a similar manner.

While you may still disagree with my decision, I hope this helps to explain how I came to it and clarifies some of the misinformation you may have heard.

Sincerely,

Matt Osmond  
Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School  
(818) 729-3150 x11491  
[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)  
IG: @teddyrooselem  
(he/him/his)

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**From:** Monica King <zeria33@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 13, 2022 10:47 AM  
**To:** Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>  
**Subject:** Santa



---

Good morning!

My name is Monica King. I have a daughter in 3rd grade. I just wanted to voice my opinion about the Santa situation. My understanding is that he is being cancelled this year for not being inclusive, HOWEVER may go to some classes based on the teachers. How is this inclusive? This is going to confuse children and make them wonder why some of their peers were good enough for Santa, but others were not. That seems to be the complete opposite of inclusion. This seems to be worse than cancelling him all together!

I heard from others that there is an option of Santa coming if a Rabbi can also be included. Now forgive me, but a Rabbi seems to conflict with church and state. A rabbi is a religious leader. Equating him to Santa seems like a stretch. If a rabbi were to come in I would assume then that would open the door for pastors and priests and other religious leaders to come discuss their beliefs. Santa is not talking about religion. He is an icon of the season who creates a magic that cannot be explained. If a poll were given to parents, I believe you would find that majority do not mind having their child (whether they believe or not) get a visit from Santa. Again, this is also not inclusive.

I would like to point out that the Ofrenda and Diwali celebrations are both based on religion. Those were events put on by the school. Those events did not cause any backlash or controversy, so I guess my confusion is why those are allowed, but Santa is an issue. This is about the littles. This about the magic of Christmas, which the majority of the school participates and believes in!

Thank you. I hope this email and others like it give you pause to reconsider your decision.

Monica King

## Re: Room parent email

Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Tue 12/13/2022 5:44 PM

To: Mary Zehnpfennig <MaryZehnpfennig@burbankusd.org>

Looks good. Here's my only suggestion:

-Change the food sentence to this: Due to district requirements on food handling and packaging, we are not serving any pizza or hot chocolate.

Sent from my iPhone

On Dec 13, 2022, at 5:28 PM, Mary Zehnpfennig <MaryZehnpfennig@burbankusd.org> wrote:

Dear Volunteers of Rooms 20, 21 & 22,

Thank you so much for your support of our classrooms. The fifth-grade team has met to clarify some expectations for next week's activities. For equity we have decided to make them the same across the grade level. Please note we will not be holding a holiday party. We will not be giving out goodie bags or gifts or facilitating any sort of gift exchange.

Here's what we'll need your assistance with.

1. Santa Visits- we'd like to schedule visits on Wednesday after recess (10:30) for all classes. If possible, could we get the same Santa to visit rooms 20 and 22? The individual must be vaccinated and cleared by the office in advance.
2. Holiday Presentations- for any parents wanting to guide a lesson about their holiday traditions outside of Christmas, please contact your homeroom teacher to arrange a time.
3. Movie- We'll be watching a movie in our respective classrooms on Thursday. This is not a party, but we are permitting room parents to provide ONE snack for the group. It cannot be homemade and must be sealed. Individually wrapped skinny pop is a great option because it's allergy friendly. (We'll need donations for snack)

Due to district requirements on food handling and packaging, we are not serving any pizza or hot chocolate.

All other activities will be managed by the teachers. We'd appreciate help coordinating Santa and getting snack donations.

Thanks again!

Get [Outlook for IOS](#)

## Re: Santa-gate

Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Thu 12/16/2022 1:58 PM

To: Monica Pa Moya <monicapa4@gmail.com>; Angie Pop <angiepopsorokin08@gmail.com>; Jamie Kiffel-Alchek <editorpublishing@gmail.com>; Joanna Chau <jchau2005@sbcglobal.net>

Hi All,

I'm prepping for a meeting that starts in about an hour and a half and probably can't meet today, but I've been very clear with everyone who has expressed disappointment or had questions that this was absolutely a principal decision and not something that our DEI committee did or should be blamed for. Angie has been great about telling parents who disagree or who have questions to contact me. Here are a few other bulleted talking points as well as an email I sent that explains my decision process:

- I told teachers that we are discontinuing the schoolwide Santa visit, but that if they'd like to have a Santa visit in their class, they need to have someone (parent, family, community member, student, etc) come to speak about another holiday tradition other than Christmas. It doesn't need to be on the same day, just someone who can talk about something else. Kathy Wills' husband, Barry, did two presentations today for about 7 different classes about Hanukkah that was fantastic.
- We are not "cancelling Christmas". We are still doing lots and lots of activities about Christmas as well as other holidays. My decision is to ensure we are balancing all of them and not elevating Christmas above others.
- None of the other 10 elementary schools in Burbank have a Santa visit.

You are welcome to respond with your personal views about this decision, but I am also concerned about backlash onto DEI committee and encourage you to also make sure people know this was my decision, not DEI committees and that they should reach out to me if they'd like to know more.

Here's an email I sent with a bit more info:

*Hi XXXXX,*

*Thanks for sharing your thoughts. I know my decision has frustrated some individuals and although that wasn't my intention, traditions, both family and school, are very personal to us.*

*I put a lot of thought into my decision and don't plan to change it, but I can share more about how I made it and hopefully answer your questions. I'll also share that things like this are often best addressed by speaking in person, so I'm happy to meet with you and XXXXXX to talk more, if you'd like.*

*We do lots of great things in classrooms to highlight a variety of cultures and holiday traditions around this time of year ranging from stories and art to lessons and discussions. However, bringing Santa to each class elevates Christmas above other holidays that are also happening at this time of year. I agree that Santa is generally accepted as a cultural figure and not a religious one, but he specifically represents Christmas, not Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, etc. We still teach about Christmas traditions including Santa with stories, activities, art, writing, etc, but it must be done in a way that balances other holiday traditions from this time of year.*

*This is also why teachers who feel strongly about Santa visiting their classrooms can still do so, there just needs to be someone else representing another holiday who can come and talk about*

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*those traditions. That creates the balance we are aiming for. This doesn't need to occur on the same day/time and it doesn't need to be an official representative of another religion. A community member, student, sibling, parent, etc who can talk about traditions from Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Winter Solstice, Las Posadas, Boxing Day, etc meets this criteria. However, this is each teacher's decision, not a decision made by parents from the class. We trust our teachers to know what their students need every day and to supplement curriculum with activities and lessons as needed and this is no different.*

*I also took into consideration students' existing knowledge of and experience with Santa compared to other cultural celebrations we've highlighted during the year such as Lunar New Year and Diwali. Most of our students first learn about Lunar New Year, Diwali, etc because of the lessons our teachers deliver and the celebrations we discuss at school. Most, if not all students already know who Santa is, what he does, and what he represents without us teaching anything about him. Even without Santa visiting, he and other Christmas traditions are absolutely present in class activities. We are not disregarding Santa as an important tradition or removing Christmas from the celebrations we highlight. We are balancing it with other celebrations by not highlighting Santa and Christmas above the others.*

*I agree with you that Santa and all the holidays that are celebrated in the Winter are joyful and fun, but I don't think an in-person Santa visit is the only or even the best way to spread that joy. Many of the children in our community do not celebrate Christmas and I don't believe their holiday is any less joyful. None of the other ten elementary schools in BUSD have a Santa visit and I don't believe the students who attend those schools are any less joyful than ours (though I DO think Roosevelt is the best...just not because of a Santa visit 😊).*

*For those who celebrate Christmas and for anyone who wants to learn more about or experience Christmas traditions, Santa visits are available in Burbank and throughout the region...some are free and some require payment, but anyone can access them.*

*I don't think the classes who aren't visited by Santa will feel unworthy or not-as-good-as-others and I know the teachers who make that decision are highlighting a range of holiday traditions in lots of other ways.*

*I understand that my reasons may not change you point-of-view any more than your reasons have changed my mind, but I want you to know that I really thought about this a lot and although I keep coming back to the same decision, I'm sorry for the frustration, anger, and hurt feelings it has caused during an otherwise joyful season.*

*Again, I'm happy to meet to talk more.*

Matt Osmond  
Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School  
(818) 729-3150 x11491  
[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)  
IG: @teddyrooselem  
(he/him/his)

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**From:** Monica Pa Moya <monicapa4@gmail.com>

**Sent:** Thursday, December 15, 2022 1:45 PM

**To:** Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>; Angie Pop <angiepopsorokin08@gmail.com>; Jamie Kiffel-Alchek <editorpublishing@gmail.com>; Joanna Chau <jchau2005@sbcglobal.net>

**Subject:** Santa-gate

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Caution! This message was sent from outside of Burbank Unified School District.

Hi all!

I'm receiving some pretty annoyed text messages from families upset that Santa won't be at school this year.

I don't want DEI blamed, but I am also 1000% supportive of this decision. Could we have a quick meeting to discuss whether, if at all, to respond? I know we are all busy so it is OK for our response to be no response, but I'm worried that some of the stronger supporters of DEI are not on board with this initiative. I'm pretty sure that LA Unified is not allowed to have a Santa come to school, or maybe there are no other BUSD school that has this "tradition" - Matt, if you know, that would be helpful.

Thanks!

Monica

## Re: Santa-gate

Jamie Kiffel-Alcheh <editorpublishing@gmail.com>

Thu 12/15/2022 6:07 PM

To: Joanna Chau <jchau2005@sbcglobal.net>

Cc: Monica Pa Moyer <monicapa4@gmail.com>; Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>; Angie Pop <angiepopsookin08@gmail.com>

Caution! This message was sent from outside of Burbank Unified School District.

Hi, Joanna!

Here is a blog post that gives a fascinating explanation of why celebrating (vs. recognizing) Christmas in public schools may not be appropriate. Consider that we recognize many holidays at school, including Christmas, but when we bring in Santa, we're celebrating Christmas--and we don't celebrate any other religious holidays at school.

<https://teachhungrymovement.com/stop-celebrating-christmas-in-public-schools/>

On Thu, Dec 15, 2022 at 4:28 PM Joanna Chau <jchau2005@sbcglobal.net> wrote:

I believe families that don't believe in Santa can opt out, and have their kids in the library or auditorium.

Best,

Joanna.

On Dec 15, 2022, at 3:57 PM, Monica Pa Moyer <monicapa4@gmail.com> wrote:

- One thought is that, if a Santa is coming to a class, could that Santa also recognize the other traditions and say something about how not every family celebrates Xmas but it doesn't mean that they were "naughty" or otherwise excluded ... I don't know, it all seems somewhat fraught and other-ing, but those are my two cents.

On Thu, Dec 15, 2022 at 3:51 PM Monica Pa Moyer <monicapa4@gmail.com> wrote:  
Thanks Matt for navigating this tricky issue.

Should this issue be a topic of discussion on the agenda for January's DEI meeting?

On Thu, Dec 15, 2022 at 2:25 PM Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org> wrote:

That's very generous, however there's no need to pay for anything. We already have a Santa coming who will be working with the classes that are participating. There are a couple of 5<sup>th</sup> grade classes that preferred a different day and Angie has helped arrange for another Santa to come on those days.

There is a lot of discussion and opinions about this, but it is fully managed and teachers are doing a great job working with parents if they need any additional support.

Thanks,

Matt Osmond  
Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School  
(818) 729-3150 x11491  
[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)  
IG: @teddyrooselem  
(he/him/his)

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**From:** Joanna Chau <[jchau2005@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jchau2005@sbcglobal.net)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 15, 2022 2:17 PM  
**To:** Matthew Osmond <[MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org](mailto:MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org)>  
**Cc:** Monica Pa Moyer <[monicapa4@gmail.com](mailto:monicapa4@gmail.com)>; Angie Pop <[angiepopsorokin08@gmail.com](mailto:angiepopsorokin08@gmail.com)>; Jamie Kiffel-Alchek <[editorpublishing@gmail.com](mailto:editorpublishing@gmail.com)>  
**Subject:** Re: Santa-gate

So will be up to the teacher if they want to have Santa in their classroom? I willing to pay to have Santa stop by the Classroom for a quick meet and greet.

Best,

Joanna.

On Dec 15, 2022, at 2:04 PM, Matthew Osmond <[matthewosmond@burbankusd.org](mailto:matthewosmond@burbankusd.org)> wrote:

I appreciate the thought, but no thank you. As I mentioned, I've put quite a bit of thought and energy into my decision and I do not plan to change it. Again, we are absolutely celebrating Santa as a tradition in classrooms, however we are not doing it with any schoolwide Santa visitations or presence.

Thanks to everyone for your input and thoughts. We'll definitely have something to talk about at our Jan meeting! 🤝

Matt Osmond  
Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School  
(818) 729-3150 x11491  
[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)  
IG: @teddyrooselem  
(he/him/his)

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**From:** Joanna Chau <[jchau2005@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jchau2005@sbcglobal.net)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 15, 2022 2:00 PM  
**To:** Monica Pa Moyer <[monicapa4@gmail.com](mailto:monicapa4@gmail.com)>

**Cc:** Matthew Osmond <[MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org](mailto:MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org)>; Angie Pop <[anglepopsorokin08@gmail.com](mailto:anglepopsorokin08@gmail.com)>; Jamie Kiffel-Alcheh <[editorpublishing@gmail.com](mailto:editorpublishing@gmail.com)>

**Subject:** Re: Santa-gate

As we all are to share traditions Santa is a big part of Latinos and anglo, I will like to propose if Santa can't visit classrooms we can have Santa at both gates and will be optional for families to stop to meet and greet Santa.

Best,

Joanna.

> On Dec 15, 2022, at 1:45 PM, Monica Pa Moya <[monicapa4@gmail.com](mailto:monicapa4@gmail.com)> wrote:

>

>

> Hi all!

> I'm receiving some pretty annoyed text messages from families upset that Santa won't be at school this year.

> I don't want DEI blamed, but I am also 1000% supportive of this decision. Could we have a quick meeting to discuss whether, if at all, to respond? I know we are all busy so it is OK for our response to be no response, but I'm worried that some of the stronger supporters of DEI are not on board with this initiative. I'm pretty sure that LA Unified is not allowed to have a Santa come to school, or maybe there are no other BUSD school that has this "tradition" - Matt, if you know, that would be helpful.

>

> Thanks!

> Monica

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Jamie Kiffel-Alcheh, Author, Editor, Lyricist  
<http://www.jamiekiffelalcheh.com>  
Books ~ [Twitter](#) ~ [LinkedIn](#) ~ [Instagram](#)



## Fwd: Holiday Performances and Santa Visit Discontinued

Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Thu 12/15/2022 6:32 PM

To: Peter Knapik <PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org>

Hi Peter-If it helps, here's the email I sent to staff last wk about Santa.

Hi All,

The stage risers will be moved from the stage to the Primary Playground next week where our Holiday Performances will be held. Upstairs teachers may need to adjust your line up spots accordingly if they are in your normal spot. I'll have two sound systems handy to test which one works best while you're rehearsing next week.

You probably noticed that the Auditorium is decorated for a holiday performance. This is for the Band/Orchestra performance on Tues, Dec 20 at 6pm. They're able to perform inside because the concert is outside of school hours and the rules for requiring and checking vaccination apply to events held during school hours, but not after school.

It's been a few years since we've hosted a Santa Claus visit and after much thought, I've decided to discontinue this schoowide practice based on a few factors:

- **Balancing Christmas with Other Winter Holidays**-You all do a great job of incorporating stories, art, lessons, and activities highlighting customs from Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Las Posadas, Winter Solstice, etc as part of your instruction to teach about traditions from diverse cultures and people of different backgrounds. Teaching about Christmas traditions should be included in this, however a visit from Santa Claus disproportionately celebrates Christmas compared to other holidays.
- **Consideration for What Students Already Know and Experience**-I am confident that the majority, if not all, our students already know about Santa, have experiences visiting with Santa outside of school, and do not rely on a school-provided Santa visit. If families wish to have a Santa visit, there are many opportunities to do so outside of school.
- **Many Other Ways to Teach About Traditions**-As you talk about and do activities to teach about diverse holiday experiences, there are many ways to include Christmas traditions in a similar manner to how you teach about other holidays. A visit from Santa, while joyful, does not teach students anything new about holiday traditions.

If you feel strongly about hosting a Santa visit in your class, you need to arrange a visit from someone (community member, parent/family member, etc) who can speak about traditions of other holidays to balance a visit with Santa. If you need help with this, let me know.

---

If you plan to do this, please notify me before next Fri, Dec 16 so that we can count your class in a Santa visit schedule.

Thanks,

Matt Osmond  
Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School  
(818) 729-3150 x11491  
[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)  
IG: @teddyrooselem  
(he/him/his)

**Fwd: Santa visiting Roosevelt Elementary School during school hours**

Monica Pa Moya <monicapa4@gmail.com>

Thu 12/15/2022 9:17 PM

To: Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Caution! This message was sent from outside of Burbank Unified School District.

Hi Matt,

I did reach out to Emily Weisberg about this issue and wanted to give you a heads up. Here is our email string. I apologize if this complicates the situation for you.

Thanks again for navigating this tricky issue.

Monica

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Monica Pa Moya** <[monicapa4@gmail.com](mailto:monicapa4@gmail.com)>

Date: Thu, Dec 15, 2022 at 9:11 PM

Subject: Re: Santa visiting Roosevelt Elementary School during school hours

To: Emily Weisberg <[EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org](mailto:EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org)>

Cc: Jessica Stamen <[jessicastamen1@gmail.com](mailto:jessicastamen1@gmail.com)>

Hi Emily,

Thanks so much for looking into this! Our principal, Matt Osmond, has been handling the many parent complaints very well and I don't envy his position. He is doing the best he can. This tradition pre-dates him by many years, and there is a lot of parent pressure (and unfortunately blow back onto DEI). No other BUSD elementary school has a Santa visit.

In addition to just being the right thing to do from an inclusion perspective, I found a helpful article on the scope of the Establishment clause: [Legal Issues Surrounding Christmas in Public Schools \(udayton.edu\)](http://udayton.edu)

Here is link about a lawsuit by a Jewish woman who sued the Carmel River School district, superintendent and the principal over the PTA's Christmas tree lighting event and failure to include a large menorah. The case was dismissed, so I'm not saying this claim is meritorious, but a Santa visit seems to be active as opposed to a passive tree display. [Parent sues after Carmel school bans menorah at 'holiday tree' event - J. \(jweekly.com\)](http://jweekly.com)

Best,  
Monica

On Thu, Dec 15, 2022 at 5:55 PM Emily Weisberg <[EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org](mailto:EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org)> wrote:

Hi Monica,

I don't believe it's appropriate for Santa to be visiting any of our campuses, for all the reasons you outlined below. I am going to forward this to Dr. Hill and Dr. Knapik immediately and will get back to you asap!

Thank you so much for bringing this to my attention,

Emily

---

**From:** Monica Pa Moya <[monicapa4@gmail.com](mailto:monicapa4@gmail.com)>  
**Date:** Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 4:27 PM  
**To:** Emily Weisberg <[EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org](mailto:EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org)>  
**Cc:** Jessica Stamen <[jessicastamen1@gmail.com](mailto:jessicastamen1@gmail.com)>  
**Subject:** Santa visiting Roosevelt Elementary School during school hours

Hi Emily,

I hope you are doing well! We met at Jessica Stamen's house, and a few other times. I was texting with Jessica about this situation brewing at Roosevelt and wanted to get your views.

I'm a co-chair of Roosevelt's DEI committee and, this year, the principal decided to end the tradition of Santa visiting the classrooms. There was a discussion at the DEI meeting where the group seemed on board with this. But then the blowback came, and now Santa can visit some classes if the teacher agrees.

I find this to be very problematic for a secular public school, and also because it is other-ing and not inclusive. Here is my question - are there any BUSD rules against religious activities at school and would this count? Can instruction hours be used for this kind of religious activity? I'm researching CA education code on this, but thought I'd go to the source! Any suggestions would be appreciated.

Best,

Monica Pa Moya

## RE: Santa visiting Roosevelt Elementary School during school hours

Peter Knapik <PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org>

Fri 12/16/2022 7:30 AM

To: Matt Hill <MattHill@burbankusd.org>

Cc: Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>; Sharon Cuseo <SharonCuseo@burbankusd.org>; Sarah Niemann <SarahNiemann@burbankusd.org>

Good morning Matt,

Matt Osmond shared the following email that went to the Roosevelt staff.

"It's been a few years since we've hosted a Santa Claus visit and after much thought, I've decided to discontinue this schoowide practice based on a few factors:

- **Balancing Christmas with Other Winter Holidays**-You all do a great job of incorporating stories, art, lessons, and activities highlighting customs from Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Las Posadas, Winter Solstice, etc as part of your instruction to teach about traditions from diverse cultures and people of different backgrounds. Teaching about Christmas traditions should be included in this, however a visit from Santa Claus disproportionately celebrates Christmas compared to other holidays.
- **Consideration for What Students Already Know and Experience**-I am confident that the majority, if not all, our students already know about Santa, have experiences visiting with Santa outside of school, and do not rely on a school-provided Santa visit. If families wish to have a Santa visit, there are many opportunities to do so outside of school.
- **Many Other Ways to Teach About Traditions**-As you talk about and do activities to teach about diverse holiday experiences, there are many ways to include Christmas traditions in a similar manner to how you teach about other holidays. A visit from Santa, while joyful, does not teach students anything new about holiday traditions.

If you feel strongly about hosting a Santa visit in your class, you need to arrange a visit from someone (community member, parent/family member, etc) who can speak about traditions of other holidays to balance a visit with Santa. If you need help with this, let me know. "

Peter Knapik, Ed.D.  
Burbank Unified School District  
Director of Elementary Education  
1900 W. Olive Avenue  
Burbank, CA 91506-2460  
Office Number 818-729-4482

**From:** Matt Hill <MattHill@burbankusd.org>

**Sent:** Friday, December 16, 2022 7:11 AM

**To:** Peter Knapik <PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org>; Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>; Sharon Cuseo <SharonCuseo@burbankusd.org>; Sarah Niemann <SarahNiemann@burbankusd.org>

**Subject:** Re: Santa visiting Roosevelt Elementary School during school hours

Hi Matt,

What is the instructional lesson connected to the Santa visit? What are the lessons connected with the other holidays?

Sent from my iPhone

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On Dec 15, 2022, at 6:04 PM, Peter Knapik <PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org> wrote:

Matt,

I talked to Osmond and he shared that a Santa visit needs to be balanced with another holiday to be observed in eth classroom.

Peter Knapik, Ed.D.  
Burbank Unified School District  
Director of Elementary Education  
1900 W. Olive Avenue  
Burbank, CA 91506-2460  
Office Number 818-729-4482

**From:** Emily Weisberg <EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 15, 2022 5:56 PM  
**To:** Matt Hill <MattHill@burbankusd.org>; Peter Knapik <PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org>  
**Subject:** FW: Santa visiting Roosevelt Elementary School during school hours

Please advise 😊

Emily

Emily Weisberg, Ed.D. (*she/her/hers*)  
[EmilyWeisberg@Burbankusd.org](mailto:EmilyWeisberg@Burbankusd.org)  
Boardmember, Burbank Unified School District  
*Black Lives Matter*



I acknowledge the traditional, ancestral, unceded territory of the Chumash, Tongva, Fernandefio Tataviam and First Nations on which we are learning, educating, and living. "It is important to understand the longstanding history that has brought us to reside on the land, and to seek to understand our place within that history."

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**From:** Monica Pa Moya <monicapa4@gmail.com>  
**Date:** Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 4:27 PM  
**To:** Emily Weisberg <EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org>  
**Cc:** Jessica Stamen <jessicastamen1@gmail.com>  
**Subject:** Santa visiting Roosevelt Elementary School during school hours

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Hi Emily,  
I hope you are doing well! We met at Jessica Stamen's house, and a few other times. I was texting with Jessica about this situation brewing at Roosevelt and wanted to get your

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views.

I'm a co-chair of Roosevelt's DEI committee and, this year, the principal decided to end the tradition of Santa visiting the classrooms. There was a discussion at the DEI meeting where the group seemed on board with this. But then the blowback came, and now Santa can visit some classes if the teacher agrees.

I find this to be very problematic for a secular public school, and also because it is other-ing and not inclusive. Here is my question - are there any BUSD rules against religious activities at school and would this count? Can instruction hours be used for this kind of religious activity? I'm researching CA education code on this, but thought I'd go to the source! Any suggestions would be appreciated.

Best,  
Monica Pa Moyer

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## Re: Santa visiting Roosevelt Elementary School during school hours

Matt Hill <MattHill@burbankusd.org>

Fri 12/16/2022 8:27 AM

To: Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Cc: Peter Knapik <PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org>; Sharon Cuseo <SharonCuseo@burbankusd.org>; Sarah Niemann <SarahNiemann@burbankusd.org>

Thank you!

Sent from my iPhone

On Dec 16, 2022, at 7:43 AM, Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org> wrote:

Hi Bosses and Happy Fri,

The parent who emailed Emily had some misinformation and if you'd like I can address it with Emily, if that's appropriate.

In the past, it was really just a visit they did for fun. We haven't done it since Dec 2019 and I discontinued it this year because it elevated Christmas above other Winter Holidays. I explained to teachers that if they felt strongly about a visit, they needed to balance that by having someone (student, community member, family member, parent, etc) come talk about traditions from a non-Christmas celebration.

We've been careful to ensure neither the Santa visit nor the other presentations teach religion and instead teach customs and traditions. The Santa visits also discuss the tradition and often accompany readings of stories like The Grinch, The Polar Express, etc.

Out of 23 classroom teachers, there are 11 who have opted into a Santa visit. 8 of them coordinated an assembly yesterday where someone came and presented about traditions connected with Hanukkah (latkes, menorah, dreidel) and have a planned visit with Santa next Fri. The other 3 are doing so next week and have a planned visit with Santa next Wed.

I had pushback from two teachers who felt I was either ruining Christmas or favoring non-Christian traditions over Christian. I've had either conversations or emails with 7 parents who also disagree for the same reasons.

Happy to fill you in more if you need additional info.

Here's the email I sent to staff about it (first two paragraphs are unrelated):

*Hi All,*

*The stage risers will be moved from the stage to the Primary Playground next week where our Holiday Performances will be held. Upstairs*



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teachers may need to adjust your line up spots accordingly if they are in your normal spot. I'll have two sound systems handy to test which one works best while you're rehearsing next week.

You probably noticed that the Auditorium is decorated for a holiday performance. This is for the Band/Orchestra performance on Tues, Dec 20 at 6pm. They're able to perform inside because the concert is outside of school hours and the rules for requiring and checking vaccination apply to events held during school hours, but not after school.

It's been a few years since we've hosted a Santa Claus visit and after much thought, I've decided to discontinue this schoowide practice based on a few factors:

- **Balancing Christmas with Other Winter Holidays**-You all do a great job of incorporating stories, art, lessons, and activities highlighting customs from Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Las Posadas, Winter Solstice, etc as part of your instruction to teach about traditions from diverse cultures and people of different backgrounds. Teaching about Christmas traditions should be included in this, however a visit from Santa Claus disproportionately celebrates Christmas compared to other holidays.
- **Consideration for What Students Already Know and Experience**-I am confident that the majority, if not all, our students already know about Santa, have experiences visiting with Santa outside of school, and do not rely on a school-provided Santa visit. If families wish to have a Santa visit, there are many opportunities to do so outside of school.
- **Many Other Ways to Teach About Traditions**-As you talk about and do activities to teach about diverse holiday experiences, there are many ways to include Christmas traditions in a similar manner to how you teach about other holidays. A visit from Santa, while joyful, does not teach students anything new about holiday traditions.

If you feel strongly about hosting a Santa visit in your class, you need to arrange a visit from someone (community member, parent/family member, etc) who can speak about traditions of other holidays to balance a visit with Santa. If you need help with this, let me know.

If you plan to do this, please notify me before next Fri, Dec 16 so that we can count your class in a Santa visit schedule.

Matt Osmond  
Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School  
(818) 729-3150 x11491  
[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)  
IG: @teddyrooselem  
(he/him/his)

---

From: Matt Hill <MattHill@burbankusd.org>  
Sent: Friday, December 16, 2022 7:11 AM

**To:** Peter Knapik <PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org>; Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>; Sharon Cuseo SharonCuseo@burbankusd.org>; Sarah Niemann <SarahNiemann@burbankusd.org>  
**Subject:** Re: Santa visiting Roosevelt Elementary School during school hours

Hi Matt,

What is the instructional lesson connected to the Santa visit? What are the lessons connected with the other holidays?

Sent from my iPhone

On Dec 15, 2022, at 6:04 PM, Peter Knapik <PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org> wrote:

Matt,

I talked to Osmond and he shared that a Santa visit needs to be balanced with another holiday to be observed in eth classroom.

Peter Knapik, Ed.D.  
Burbank Unified School District  
Director of Elementary Education  
1900 W. Olive Avenue  
Burbank, CA 91506-2460  
Office Number 818-729-4482

**From:** Emily Weisberg <EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 15, 2022 5:56 PM  
**To:** Matt Hill <MattHill@burbankusd.org>; Peter Knapik <PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org>  
**Subject:** FW: Santa visiting Roosevelt Elementary School during school hours

Please advise 😊

Emily

Emily Weisberg, Ed.D. (*she/her/hers*)  
[EmilyWeisberg@Burbankusd.org](mailto:EmilyWeisberg@Burbankusd.org)  
Boardmember, Burbank Unified School District  
*Black Lives Matter*

<image003.jpg>

I acknowledge the traditional, ancestral, unceded territory of the Chumash, Tongva, Fernandeño Tataviam and First Nations on which we are learning, educating, and living. "It is important to understand the longstanding history that has brought us to reside on the land, and to seek to understand our place within that history."

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**From:** Monica Pa Moya <[monicapa4@gmail.com](mailto:monicapa4@gmail.com)>  
**Date:** Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 4:27 PM  
**To:** Emily Weisberg <[EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org](mailto:EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org)>  
**Cc:** Jessica Stamen <[jessicastamen1@gmail.com](mailto:jessicastamen1@gmail.com)>  
**Subject:** Santa visiting Roosevelt Elementary School during school hours

Caution! This message was sent from outside of Burbank Unified School District.

Hi Emily,

I hope you are doing well! We met at Jessica Stamen's house, and a few other times. I was texting with Jessica about this situation brewing at Roosevelt and wanted to get your views.

I'm a co-chair of Roosevelt's DEI committee and, this year, the principal decided to end the tradition of Santa visiting the classrooms. There was a discussion at the DEI meeting where the group seemed on board with this. But then the blowback came, and now Santa can visit some classes if the teacher agrees.

I find this to be very problematic for a secular public school, and also because it is other-ing and not inclusive. Here is my question - are there any BUSD rules against religious activities at school and would this count? Can instruction hours be used for this kind of religious activity? I'm researching CA education code on this, but thought I'd go to the source! Any suggestions would be appreciated.

Best,  
Monica Pa Moya

---

**Re: Worried for the future of our school**

Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Fri 12/16/2022 12:43 PM

To: Alexa Brodsky <alexa.brodsky@gmail.com>; Jacob Brodsky <jakepbrodsky@gmail.com>

Hi Alexa,

Thanks for sharing your thoughts, prayers, and wishes for a Merry Christmas and restful weekend. They're all very much appreciated.

I'm very much looking forward to next week's festivities...and to working with your family for years to come.

Merry Christmas!

Matt Osmond

Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School

(818) 729-3150 x11491

[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)

IG: @teddyrooselem

(he/him/his)

---

**From:** Alexa Brodsky <alexa.brodsky@gmail.com>

**Sent:** Friday, December 16, 2022 9:48 AM

**To:** Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>; Jacob Brodsky <jakepbrodsky@gmail.com>

**Subject:** Worried for the future of our school

Caution! This message was sent from outside of Burbank Unified School District.

Mr. Osmond,

I know Jake already spoke to you and you already know where we stand on this Santa issue. While I would have loved to see Santa not be politicized and seen this be a unifying experience, that's simply not going to happen. That's not why I'm writing this letter to you today. I am writing to share with you the survey I have had the opportunity to hear from the people in the school that you serve. This Santa issue is a symptom of a bigger problem we have, and if we don't treat it soon, our school is in danger.

Your teachers are hurt, angry and upset. just you making this decision alone has caused a divide amongst friends and coworkers. Rather than bringing them together on this and asking them, you told them. Leadership should never look like this. This decision has made teachers that feel the opposite of your opinion have to jump through hoops to uphold a tradition we have had at this school since long before you were even a Burbank employee. I'm sure you already know teachers everywhere are dissatisfied in the workplace, and Roosevelt teachers are not immune to this. They are tired, they don't feel their opinions matter or are heard, and they don't feel valued. As a parent, this frightens me. I have felt for a long time that the Burbank schools are failing us and our teachers deserve better. You must do better. So much of their job can't change. Behavior issues, funding, Covid even... but how their boss treats them can.

The other people I have had the opportunity to hear from are other parents. Many of them have different core beliefs than myself. Some parents confess they aren't surprised at all that you would

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over complicate this matter and instead of surveying the families you serve, you did what you wanted. Most parents are dumbfounded that the obvious choice to allow all children the opportunity to see Santa was made. "It doesn't make sense." That is what most parents are saying. And I think the saddest part of all, is that majority of parents don't even have the chance to form an opinion, which is what I know you are hiding behind. You don't want all the parents to know that their class won't have Santa because then you would have to answer to so many more upset parents. See, the problem with this is, you are taking away personal choice from families. That is not leadership. It is not public service. It's totalitarianism.

The last group of people I have had the chance to observe is the children that you oversee. These kids don't need adult opinions jading their view on life. Simple childhood memories don't need to be clouded with thoughts of exclusion. And sadly, the playground next week will be full of sad children wondering why Santa didn't come to their classroom. And the answer is because their principal made a rash decision and instead of reversing it made teachers decide between being in the right standing with their boss or jumping through hoops by getting more volunteers and collecting funds the PTA could have done.

All of this said, thank you for continuing to answer emails, thank you even, for overthinking decisions, because I still like to think you care so much. But while we are all human and make mistakes, I pray that you will learn from this one. I pray that you find a way to honor all teachers' opinions and help them feel safe and valued in their workplace. I have been a parent at Roosevelt for 7 years and have 6 more ahead of me. I pray that the years ahead are not filled with teachers giving up hope and slipping into this being just a job. I pray we don't lose the experienced ones to retiring early or others leaving for a district that values them.

I don't need a response, because I am not asking any questions that need direct answers. I'm just asking you to reflect on some of the points I am bringing up. Merry Christmas and I hope you have a restful weekend before next week's festivities.

-Alexa Brodsky

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**Just one more thing I need to point out to you**

Jake Brodsky <jakebrodsky@gmail.com>

Fri 12/16/2022 6:15 PM

To: Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

I just want you to know that I'm standing in my kitchen trying to calm my son down while he sobs as he explains that some classes at Roosevelt are having Santa come to class and holiday parties while other classes are not.

You've done this. Thank you.

Please know that we are all watching what you do next and we will no longer sit back and allow you to tell us one thing and do another.

- Jake

---

**Re: scheduling**

Kathy Wills <KathyWills@burbankusd.org>

Mon 12/19/2022 6:49 AM

To: Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

good to know, K

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**From:** Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

**Sent:** Sunday, December 18, 2022 3:52 PM

**To:** Kathy Wills <KathyWills@burbankusd.org>

**Subject:** Re: scheduling

For Jackie's husband's Fri visit, I have the following classes:

- Murphy
- Wills
- Shipstad
- Wright
- Coughlin
- Walcoff
- Skujins
- Ignatian

Thx!

Sent from my iPhone

On Dec 18, 2022, at 2:54 PM, Kathy Wills <KathyWills@burbankusd.org> wrote:

I would like to send the schedule of santa visit times to teachers on Monday. Can you confirm the classes . Last time we spoke it was 4 first grade classes, Rhonda wright 's 2<sup>nd</sup> graders and shlpstad and Wills. so 7 classes total. Can you please Let me know if anything changed . Thank you.

Jackie will be in the auditorium for the day taking photos and Tina Lay who is a cleared BUSD volunteer will be coming to help .

K

I understand the upper grades ( who attended narry's assembly ) are having a different Santa on Wed .

**Re: Santa visiting Roosevelt Elementary School during school hours**

Emily Weisberg <EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org>

Mon 12/19/2022 4:31 PM

To: Matt Hill <MattHill@burbankusd.org>

Cc: Peter Knapik <PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org>; Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Thank you, Matt (and Matt),

I'd like to learn a bit more about what's being done in regard to someone speaking about other non-Christmas celebrations. While I think it's a good step, having a Santa visit inherently others some students for whom Santa is not a normal part of their holiday experience, as you outlined in your email to staff.

I have no doubt you've dealt with some rough parent emails, and I also have no doubt you've handled them with grace and care.

Could you share a bit more about how the visits are being explained to the classes who do not have Santa visiting? I'd also love to continue the conversation with you, and Dr. Hill, about the tradition moving forward, especially as I do trust your judgment and know that your insight into the school community runs far deeper than mine.

Thank you and Happy Holidays,  
Emily

Emily Weisberg, Ed.D. (*she/her/hers*)

[EmilyWeisberg@Burbankusd.org](mailto:EmilyWeisberg@Burbankusd.org)

Boardmember, Burbank Unified School District

*Black Lives Matter*



I acknowledge the traditional, ancestral, unceded territory of the Chumash, Tongva, Fernandeño Tataviam and First Nations on which we are learning, educating, and living. "It is important to understand the longstanding history that has brought us to

reside on the land, and to seek to understand our place within that history."

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**From:** Matt Hill <MattHill@burbankusd.org>

**Date:** Friday, December 16, 2022 at 8:26 AM

**To:** Emily Weisberg <EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org>

**Cc:** Peter Knapik <PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org>, Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

**Subject:** Re: Santa visiting Roosevelt Elementary School during school hours

Hi Emily,

I've copied Matt if you would like more info. Here is a summary from him.



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In the past, it was really just a visit they did for fun. We haven't done it since Dec 2019 and I discontinued it this year because it elevated Christmas above other Winter Holidays. I explained to teachers that if they felt strongly about a visit, they needed to balance that by having someone (student, community member, family member, parent, etc) come talk about traditions from a non-Christmas celebration.

We've been careful to ensure neither the Santa visit nor the other presentations teach religion and instead teach customs and traditions. The Santa visits also discuss the tradition and often accompany readings of stories like The Grinch, The Polar Express, etc.

Out of 23 classroom teachers, there are 11 who have opted into a Santa visit. 8 of them coordinated an assembly yesterday where someone came and presented about traditions connected with Hanukkah (latkes, menorah, dreidel) and have a planned visit with Santa next Fri. The other 3 are doing so next week and have a planned visit with Santa next Wed.

I had pushback from two teachers who felt I was either ruining Christmas or favoring non-Christian traditions over Christian. I've had either conversations or emails with 7 parents who also disagree for the same reasons.

Happy to fill you in more if you need additional info.

Here's the email I sent to staff about it (first two paragraphs are unrelated):

*Hi All,*

*The stage risers will be moved from the stage to the Primary Playground next week where our Holiday Performances will be held. Upstairs teachers may need to adjust your line up spots accordingly if they are in your normal spot. I'll have two sound systems handy to test which one works best while you're rehearsing next week.*

*You probably noticed that the Auditorium is decorated for a holiday performance. This is for the Band/Orchestra performance on Tues, Dec 20 at 6pm. They're able to perform inside because the concert is outside of school hours and the rules for requiring and checking vaccination apply to events held during school hours, but not after school.*

*It's been a few years since we've hosted a Santa Claus visit and after much thought, I've decided to discontinue this schoowide practice based on a few factors:*

- **Balancing Christmas with Other Winter Holidays**-You all do a great job of incorporating stories, art, lessons, and activities highlighting customs from Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Las Posadas, Winter Solstice, etc as part of your instruction to teach about traditions from diverse cultures and people of different backgrounds. Teaching about Christmas traditions should be included in this, however a visit from Santa Claus disproportionately celebrates Christmas compared to other holidays.*
- **Consideration for What Students Already Know and Experience**-I am confident that the majority, if not all, our students already know about Santa, have experiences visiting with Santa outside of school, and do not rely on a school-provided Santa visit. If families wish to have a Santa visit, there are many opportunities to do so outside of school.*
- **Many Other Ways to Teach About Traditions**-As you talk about and do activities to teach about diverse holiday experiences, there are many ways to include Christmas traditions in a similar manner to how you teach about other*

*holidays. A visit from Santa, while joyful, does not teach students anything new about holiday traditions.*

*If you feel strongly about hosting a Santa visit in your class, you need to arrange a visit from someone (community member, parent/family member, etc) who can speak about traditions of other holidays to balance a visit with Santa. If you need help with this, let me know.*

*If you plan to do this, please notify me before next Fri, Dec 16 so that we can count your class in a Santa visit schedule.*

Matt Osmond  
Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School  
 [\(818\) 729-3150 x11491](tel:(818)729-3150)  
[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)  
IG: @teddyrooselem  
(he/him/his)

Sent from my iPhone

On Dec 15, 2022, at 5:56 PM, Emily Weisberg <EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org> wrote:

Please advise 😊

Emily

Emily Weisberg, Ed.D. (*she/her/hers*)  
[EmilyWeisberg@Burbankusd.org](mailto:EmilyWeisberg@Burbankusd.org)  
Boardmember, Burbank Unified School District  
*Black Lives Matter*



I acknowledge the traditional, ancestral, unceded territory of the Chumash, Tongva, Fernandeño Tataviam and First Nations on which we are learning, educating, and living. "It is important to understand the longstanding history that has brought us to reside on the land, and to seek to understand our place within that history."

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**From:** Monica Pa Moye <monicapa4@gmail.com>  
**Date:** Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 4:27 PM  
**To:** Emily Weisberg <EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org>  
**Cc:** Jessica Stamen <jessicastamen1@gmail.com>  
**Subject:** Santa visiting Roosevelt Elementary School during school hours

Caution! This message was sent from outside of Burbank Unified School District.

Hi Emily,

I hope you are doing well! We met at Jessica Stamen's house, and a few other times. I was texting with Jessica about this situation brewing at Roosevelt and wanted to get your views.

I'm a co-chair of Roosevelt's DEI committee and, this year, the principal decided to end the tradition of Santa visiting the classrooms. There was a discussion at the DEI meeting where the group seemed on board with this. But then the blowback came, and now Santa can visit some classes if the teacher agrees.

I find this to be very problematic for a secular public school, and also because it is other-ing and not inclusive. Here is my question - are there any BUSD rules against religious activities at school and would this count? Can instruction hours be used for this kind of religious activity? I'm researching CA education code on this, but thought I'd go to the source! Any suggestions would be appreciated.

Best,  
Monica Pa Moye

## Santa Visit Update

Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Tue 12/20/2022 8:08 AM

Bcc: Candace Cobery <CandaceCobery@burbankusd.org>;Melody Lopez <MelodyLopez@burbankusd.org>;Rachelle Shipstad <RachelleShipstad@burbankusd.org>;Kathy Wills <KathyWills@burbankusd.org>;Chez Mohler <ChezMohler@burbankusd.org>;Dawn Ignatlan <DawnIgnatlan@burbankusd.org>;Monica Coughlin <MonicaCoughlin@burbankusd.org>;Julie Skujins <JulieSkujins@burbankusd.org>;Bridgett Murphy <BridgettMurphy@burbankusd.org>;Christine Cecchini <ChristineCecchini@burbankusd.org>;Kerie Stein <KerieStein@burbankusd.org>;Rhonda Wright <RhondaWright@burbankusd.org>;Amber Moore Myers <AmberMooreMyers@burbankusd.org>;Roxanne Hunt <RoxanneHunt@burbankusd.org>;Ellen Craig <EllenCraig@burbankusd.org>;Carol Walcoff <CarolWalcoff@burbankusd.org>;John Pike <JohnPike@burbankusd.org>;Aileen Ermino <AileenErmino@burbankusd.org>;Carmella Jaramillo <CarmellaJaramillo@burbankusd.org>;Amy Jensen <AmyJensen@burbankusd.org>

Hi All,

Our Santa visit tradition and my decision about it have been discussed passionately by staff and parents for the past two weeks. As discussions continued, our school board and district leadership inquired about this tradition and how my decision this year changed it.

After much discussion and consultation with district leadership, we are altogether cancelling Santa visits this year and for future years. (5<sup>th</sup> Grade Team-I'll be in touch with the parents who scheduled your Wed Santa visit).

I'm sending an email to parents informing them of this cancellation later this morning. It's important that they hear this message from me, so please do not share this information with non-staff members.

Part of my message to parents will include a note that any donations already made toward a Santa visit can either be refunded by contacting teachers or that it can remain a donation which teachers will use for classroom expenses.

I know some of you feel strongly about this practice and although you may disagree with this decision, I'm sorry for any frustration this causes.

Thanks,

Matt Osmond  
Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School  
(818) 729-3150 x11491  
[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)  
IG: @teddyrooselem  
(he/him/his)

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**RE: Santa Visit Update**

Amber Moore Myers <AmberMooreMyers@burbankusd.org>

Tue 12/20/2022 8:12 AM

To: Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

I agree with you and support your decision.

-Amber

**From:** Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

**Sent:** Tuesday, December 20, 2022 8:09 AM

**Subject:** Santa Visit Update

Hi All,

Our Santa visit tradition and my decision about it have been discussed passionately by staff and parents for the past two weeks. As discussions continued, our school board and district leadership inquired about this tradition and how my decision this year changed it.

After much discussion and consultation with district leadership, we are altogether cancelling Santa visits this year and for future years. (5<sup>th</sup> Grade Team-I'll be in touch with the parents who scheduled your Wed Santa visit).

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I know some of you feel strongly about this practice and although you may disagree with this decision, I'm sorry for any frustration this causes.

Thanks,

Matt Osmond

Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School

(818) 729-3150 x11491

[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)

IG: @teddyrooselem

(he/him/his)

## Re: Santa Visit Update

Melody Lopez <MelodyLopez@burbankusd.org>

Tue 12/20/2022 8:19 AM

To: Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Matt,

I am so glad that you and the district leadership made this decision.

Melody

Get Outlook for iOS

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**From:** Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

**Sent:** Tuesday, December 20, 2022 8:08:32 AM

**Subject:** Santa Visit Update

Hi All,

Our Santa visit tradition and my decision about it have been discussed passionately by staff and parents for the past two weeks. As discussions continued, our school board and district leadership inquired about this tradition and how my decision this year changed it.

After much discussion and consultation with district leadership, we are altogether cancelling Santa visits this year and for future years. (5<sup>th</sup> Grade Team-I'll be in touch with the parents who scheduled your Wed Santa visit).

I'm sending an email to parents informing them of this cancellation later this morning. It's important that they hear this message from me, so please do not share this information with non-staff members.

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I know some of you feel strongly about this practice and although you may disagree with this decision, I'm sorry for any frustration this causes.

Thanks,

Matt Osmond

Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School

(818) 729-3150 x11491

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IG: @teddyrooselem

(he/him/his)

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**Re: DRAFT Email to Families in 11 Classrooms Expecting a Santa Visit**

Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Tue 12/20/2022 9:53 AM

To: Peter Knapik <PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org>

Hi Peter,

Here's the full msg to parents with the \$ info highlighted. I'm hoping to send it before noon or as soon as you approve:

*Dear Roosevelt Families,*

*Over the past two weeks, I have received a number of inquiries about a visit by Santa. Complaints have been registered about Santa being a religious character and the lack of equal time to other religions and special observations during this holiday season. These concerns surround disproportionately celebrating Christmas in relation to other Winter holiday observations.*

*In consideration of these concerns, about half of the staff felt that the school should forego the practice of having a visit by Santa. I also checked with other Burbank elementary schools and no other school has this practice of hosting Santa visits. Additionally, I consulted with District leadership and they concurred with the decision to forego a visit by Santa. Therefore, we will not be hosting a visit from Santa.*

*If you contributed any money to your class for a Santa visit, you may either have the funds refunded by reaching out to your child's teacher or room parent (whomever collected the funds) or you may make the funds a donation to your child's class to cover future classroom expenses.*

*I know this decision may not be welcome for some and I'm sorry for this change. We will continue to provide educational information about holiday practices across the school that reflects multiple perspectives. This decision was not an easy one to make and I appreciate the various points of view you have shared with me.*

*I wish you and your family a happy holiday season.*

Matt Osmond  
Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School  
(818) 729-3150 x11491  
[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)  
IG: @teddyrooselem  
(he/him/his)

---

**From:** Peter Knapik <PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org>

**Sent:** Monday, December 19, 2022 4:41 PM

To: Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Subject: RE: DRAFT Email to Families in 11 Classrooms Expecting a Santa Visit

*Dear Roosevelt Families,*

*Over the past two weeks, I have received a number of inquiries about a visit by Santa. Complaints have been registered about Santa being a religious character and the lack of equal time to other religions and special observations during this holiday season. These concerns surround disproportionately celebrating Christmas in relation to other Winter holiday observations.*

***In consideration of these concerns, about half of the staff felt that the school should forego the practice of having a visit by Santa. I also checked with other Burbank elementary schools and no other school has this practice of hosting Santa visits. Additionally, I consulted with District leadership and they concurred with the decision to forego a visit by Santa.***

*I know this decision may not be welcome for some and I'm sorry for this change, but we will not be hosting a visit from Santa. We will continue to provide educational information about holiday practices across the school that reflects multiple perspectives. This decision was not an easy one to make and I appreciate the various points of view you have shared with me.*

*I sincerely wish you and your family a happy holiday season.*

*Matt Osmond*

*Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School*

Peter Knapik, Ed.D.  
Burbank Unified School District  
Director of Elementary Education  
1900 W. Olive Avenue  
Burbank, CA 91506-2460  
Office Number 818-729-4482

**From:** Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

**Sent:** Monday, December 19, 2022 4:20 PM

**To:** Peter Knapik <PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org>

**Subject:** Re: DRAFT Email to Families in 11 Classrooms Expecting a Santa Visit

Hi Peter-Everything in bold is revised (paragraph 2 and 3). Take a look and let me know if approved.

Thanks!

*Dear Roosevelt Families,*

*Over the past two weeks, I have received a number of inquiries about a visit by Santa. Complaints have been registered about Santa being a religious character and the lack of equal time to other religions and special observations during this holiday season. These concerns surround disproportionately celebrating Christmas in relation to other Winter holiday observations.*



***In consideration of these concerns, some of our classes were interested in continuing with a Santa visit while hosting a presentation about other holiday celebrations. I also checked with other Burbank elementary schools and no other school has this practice of hosting Santa visits. Additionally, I consulted with District leadership and they concurred with the decision to forego a visit by Santa.***

***I know this decision may not be welcome for some and I'm sorry for this change, but we will not be hosting a visit from Santa. We will continue to provide educational information about holiday practices across the school that reflects multiple perspectives. This decision was not an easy one to make and I appreciate the various points-of-view you have shared with me even if we ultimately disagreed.***

*I sincerely wish you and your family a happy holiday season.*

Matt Osmond  
Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School  
(818) 729-3150 x11491  
[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)  
IG: @teddyrooselem  
(he/him/his)

---

**From:** Peter Knapik <[PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org](mailto:PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org)>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 19, 2022 3:56 PM  
**To:** Matthew Osmond <[MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org](mailto:MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org)>  
**Subject:** RE: DRAFT Email to Families in 11 Classrooms Expecting a Santa Visit

Hi Matt,

I rewrote using your foundational parts for my revision. Matt Hill and Sharon proofread my email. Please take a look and see what you think.

*Dear Roosevelt Families,*

*Over the past two weeks, I have received a number of inquiries about a visit by Santa. Complaints have been registered about Santa being a religious character and the lack of equal time to other religions and special observations during this holiday season. The concerns surround disproportionately celebrating Christmas in relation to other Winter holiday observations.*

*After consulting with Roosevelt's staff about half felt that the school should forego the practice of having a visit by Santa. I checked with other Burbank elementary schools and no other school has this practice. I also consulted with District leadership and they concurred with the decision to forego a visit by Santa.*

***I know this decision may not be welcome for some and I'm sorry for this change, but we will not be hosting a visit from Santa. We will continue to provide educational information about holiday practices across the school that reflects multiple perspectives. This decision was not an easy one to make.***

*I sincerely wish you and your family a happy holiday season.*

*Matt Osmond  
Principal, Roosevelt Elementary School*

Peter Knapik, Ed.D.  
Burbank Unified School District  
Director of Elementary Education  
1900 W. Olive Avenue  
Burbank, CA 91506-2460  
Office Number 818-729-4482

**From:** Matthew Osmond <[MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org](mailto:MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org)>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 19, 2022 11:34 AM  
**To:** Peter Knapik <[PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org](mailto:PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org)>  
**Subject:** DRAFT Email to Families in 11 Classrooms Expecting a Santa Visit

Hi Peter-Here's a draft I put together. Let me know what you think.

*Greetings Families,*

*In past years, Roosevelt hosted a visit with Santa in each classroom around this time of year, with the last visit occurring in Dec 2019. This year, I discontinued this schoolwide practice for the following reasons:*

- Hosting Santa disproportionately celebrates Christmas in relation to other Winter holidays.*
- The educational experience of discussing and learning about various holiday traditions, including Santa, can be done without experiencing a Santa visit.*

*Initially, I set a criteria allowing for a Santa visit if the class also had someone (parent, community member, etc) come to speak about another cultures holiday traditions so that there was balance between various celebrations. However, after consulting with our district leadership, we are not able to host any of these Santa visits.*

*This issue has been passionately discussed for the past two weeks. For those of you who have strong feelings either in favor of or opposed to a Santa visit at school, I appreciate the points-of-view you have shared.*

*I know this decision will be frustrating for some and I'm sorry for the frustration. Despite our agreement or disagreement with this decision, I sincerely wish you and your family a happy holiday season.*

Thanks,

Matt Osmond  
Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School  
(818) 729-3150 x11491  
[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)  
IG: @teddyrooselem  
(he/him/his)

## RE: Santa Visit Update

Kerie Stein <KerieStein@burbankusd.org>

Tue 12/20/2022 10:05 AM

To: Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

It makes perfect sense to me. I completely agree with your decision and the way you explained it at SSC was fair and equitable for all. I hope you don't take some people's opinions to heart. It's what's best for all students in the long run.

Take care,

Kerie

Sent from Mail for Windows

**From:** Matthew Osmond

**Sent:** Tuesday, December 20, 2022 8:08 AM

**Subject:** Santa Visit Update

Hi All,

Our Santa visit tradition and my decision about it have been discussed passionately by staff and parents for the past two weeks. As discussions continued, our school board and district leadership inquired about this tradition and how my decision this year changed it.

After much discussion and consultation with district leadership, we are altogether cancelling Santa visits this year and for future years. (5<sup>th</sup> Grade Team-I'll be in touch with the parents who scheduled your Wed Santa visit).

I'm sending an email to parents informing them of this cancellation later this morning. It's important that they hear this message from me, so please do not share this information with non-staff members.

Part of my message to parents will include a note that any donations already made toward a Santa visit can either be refunded by contacting teachers or that it can remain a donation which teachers will use for classroom expenses.

I know some of you feel strongly about this practice and although you may disagree with this decision, I'm sorry for any frustration this causes.

Thanks,

Matt Osmond

Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School

(818) 729-3150 x11491

[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)

IG: @teddyrooselem

(he/him/his)

## Santa Visits Discontinued

Matthew Osmond <matthewosmond@burbankusd.org>

Tue 12/20/2022 11:01 AM

To: Roosevelt Elementary Recipients <recipients@burbankusd.parentlink.net>

This sender is trusted.

*Greetings Roosevelt Families,*

*Over the past two weeks, I have received a number of inquiries about a visit by Santa. Complaints have been registered about Santa being a religious character and the lack of equal time to other religions and special observations during this holiday season. These concerns surround disproportionately celebrating Christmas in relation to other Winter holiday observations.*

*In consideration of these concerns, about half of the teachers felt that the school should forego the practice of having a visit by Santa. I also checked with other Burbank elementary schools and no other school has this practice of hosting Santa visits. Additionally, I consulted with District leadership and they concurred with the decision to forego a visit by Santa. Therefore, we will not be hosting a visit from Santa.*

*If you contributed any money to your class for a Santa visit, you may either have the funds refunded by reaching out to your child's teacher or room parent (whomever collected the funds) or you may make the funds a donation to your child's class to cover future classroom expenses.*

*I know this decision may not be welcome for some and I'm sorry for this change. We will continue to provide educational information about holiday practices across the school that reflects multiple perspectives. This decision was not an easy one to make and I appreciate the various points of view you have shared with me.*

*With Wishes for a Happy Holiday Season,*

*-Matt Osmond, Principal*

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**RE: DRAFT Email to Families in 11 Classrooms Expecting a Santa Visit**

Peter Knapik <PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org>

Tue 12/20/2022 10:26 AM

To: Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Looks good. Thank you.

Peter Knapik, Ed.D.  
Burbank Unified School District  
Director of Elementary Education  
1900 W. Olive Avenue  
Burbank, CA 91506-2460  
Office Number 818-729-4482

**From:** Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

**Sent:** Tuesday, December 20, 2022 9:53 AM

**To:** Peter Knapik <PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org>

**Subject:** Re: DRAFT Email to Families in 11 Classrooms Expecting a Santa Visit

Hi Peter,

Here's the full msg to parents with the \$ info highlighted. I'm hoping to send it before noon or as soon as you approve:

*Dear Roosevelt Families,*

*Over the past two weeks, I have received a number of inquiries about a visit by Santa. Complaints have been registered about Santa being a religious character and the lack of equal time to other religions and special observations during this holiday season. These concerns surround disproportionately celebrating Christmas in relation to other Winter holiday observations.*

*In consideration of these concerns, about half of the staff felt that the school should forego the practice of having a visit by Santa. I also checked with other Burbank elementary schools and no other school has this practice of hosting Santa visits. Additionally, I consulted with District leadership and they concurred with the decision to forego a visit by Santa. Therefore, we will not be hosting a visit from Santa.*

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*I wish you and your family a happy holiday season.*

Matt Osmond

Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School

(818) 729-3150 x11491

[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)

IG: @teddyrooselem

(he/him/his)

---

**From:** Peter Knapik <[PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org](mailto:PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org)>

**Sent:** Monday, December 19, 2022 4:41 PM

**To:** Matthew Osmond <[MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org](mailto:MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org)>

**Subject:** RE: DRAFT Email to Families in 11 Classrooms Expecting a Santa Visit

*Dear Roosevelt Families,*

*Over the past two weeks, I have received a number of inquiries about a visit by Santa. Complaints have been registered about Santa being a religious character and the lack of equal time to other religions and special observations during this holiday season. These concerns surround disproportionately celebrating Christmas in relation to other Winter holiday observations.*

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*I sincerely wish you and your family a happy holiday season.*

Matt Osmond

*Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School*

Peter Knapik, Ed.D.  
Burbank Unified School District  
Director of Elementary Education  
1900 W. Olive Avenue  
Burbank, CA 91506-2460  
Office Number 818-729-4482

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**Sent:** Monday, December 19, 2022 4:20 PM  
**To:** Peter Knapik <[PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org](mailto:PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org)>  
**Subject:** Re: DRAFT Email to Families in 11 Classrooms Expecting a Santa Visit

Hi Peter-Everything in bold is revised (paragraph 2 and 3). Take a look and let me know if approved.

Thanks!

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***In consideration of these concerns, some of our classes were interested in continuing with a Santa visit while hosting a presentation about other holiday celebrations. I also checked with other Burbank elementary schools and no other school has this practice of hosting Santa visits. Additionally, I consulted with District leadership and they concurred with the decision to forego a visit by Santa.***

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IG: @teddyrooselem

(he/him/his)

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**Sent:** Monday, December 19, 2022 3:56 PM  
**To:** Matthew Osmond <[MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org](mailto:MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org)>  
**Subject:** RE: DRAFT Email to Families in 11 Classrooms Expecting a Santa Visit

Hi Matt,

I rewrote using your foundational parts for my revision. Matt Hill and Sharon proofread my email. Please take a look and see what you think.

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*I sincerely wish you and your family a happy holiday season.*

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Principal, Roosevelt Elementary School*

Peter Knapik, Ed.D.  
Burbank Unified School District  
Director of Elementary Education  
1900 W. Olive Avenue  
Burbank, CA 91506-2460  
Office Number 818-729-4482

**From:** Matthew Osmond <[MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org](mailto:MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org)>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 19, 2022 11:34 AM  
**To:** Peter Knapik <[PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org](mailto:PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org)>  
**Subject:** DRAFT Email to Families in 11 Classrooms Expecting a Santa Visit

Hi Peter-Here's a draft I put together. Let me know what you think.

*Greetings Families,*



*In past years, Roosevelt hosted a visit with Santa in each classroom around this time of year, with the last visit occurring in Dec 2019. This year, I discontinued this schoolwide practice for the following reasons:*

- Hosting Santa disproportionately celebrates Christmas in relation to other Winter holidays.*
- The educational experience of discussing and learning about various holiday traditions, including Santa, can be done without experiencing a Santa visit.*

*Initially, I set a criteria allowing for a Santa visit if the class also had someone (parent, community member; etc) come to speak about another cultures holiday traditions so that there was balance between various celebrations. However, after consulting with our district leadership, we are not able to host any of these Santa visits.*

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*I know this decision will be frustrating for some and I'm sorry for the frustration. Despite our agreement or disagreement with this decision, I sincerely wish you and your family a happy holiday season.*

Thanks,

Matt Osmond

Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School

(818) 729-3150 x11491

[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)

IG: @teddyrooselem

(he/him/his)

## Re: Santa Visits Discontinued

Jenny Bailey <jndga@mac.com>

Tue 12/20/2022 11:05 AM

To: Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Cc: Roosevelt Elementary Recipients <recipients@burbankusd.parentlink.net>

Caution! This message was sent from outside of Burbank Unified School District.

But yet having a Hannukah assembly was permitted. Which religion are you favoring? It need to be fair to everyone and apparently all other holidays are okay but the one my family celebrates is not permitted. This is discrimination against my traditions and I am not happy about your unfair decision.

Sent from my iPhone

On Dec 20, 2022, at 11:01 AM, Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org> wrote:

*Greetings Roosevelt Families,*

*Over the past two weeks, I have received a number of inquiries about a visit by Santa. Complaints have been registered about Santa being a religious character and the lack of equal time to other religions and special observations during this holiday season. These concerns surround disproportionately celebrating Christmas in relation to other Winter holiday observations.*

*In consideration of these concerns, about half of the teachers felt that the school should forego the practice of having a visit by Santa. I also checked with other Burbank elementary schools and no other school has this practice of hosting Santa visits. Additionally, I consulted with District leadership and they concurred with the decision to forego a visit by Santa. Therefore, we will not be hosting a visit from Santa.*

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*I know this decision may not be welcome for some and I'm sorry for this change. We will continue to provide educational information about holiday practices across the school that reflects multiple perspectives. This decision was not an easy one to make and I appreciate the various points of view you have shared with me.*

*With Wishes for a Happy Holiday Season,*

*-Matt Osmond, Principal*

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## Re: Santa Visits Discontinued

Myles Meeden <myles.meeden@gmail.com>

Tue 12/20/2022 11:10 AM

To: Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Caution! This message was sent from outside of Burbank Unified School District.

What a shame.

Take Care,

Myles Meeden

Real Estate Broker BRE# 01428311

Belisle Realty, Inc.

(818) 402-5415

[www.BelisleRealty.com](http://www.BelisleRealty.com)

On Tue, Dec 20, 2022 at 11:01 AM Matthew Osmond <[matthewosmond@burbankusd.org](mailto:matthewosmond@burbankusd.org)> wrote:

*Greetings Roosevelt Families,*

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*With Wishes for a Happy Holiday Season,*

*-Matt Osmond, Principal*

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## Re: Santa Visits Discontinued

Sarah B <sarahtbrown@gmail.com>

Tue 12/20/2022 11:11 AM

To: Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Caution! This message was sent from outside of Burbank Unified School District.

Mr. Osmond-  
thanks for this note.

Please know that this came up with some moms this weekend- NONE of us were put out that Santa isn't coming to school. (and I believe all of us celebrated Christmas.)

Kids these days have PLENTY of opportunities to see Santa If it is a priority for their family.

Just wanted you to get some positive feedback in case this email sent a flurry of negativity into your inbox.

Happy holidays!

-Sarah Brown

On Tue, Dec 20, 2022 at 11:01 AM Matthew Osmond <[matthewosmond@burbankusd.org](mailto:matthewosmond@burbankusd.org)> wrote:

*Greetings Roosevelt Families,*

*Over the past two weeks, I have received a number of inquiries about a visit by Santa. Complaints have been registered about Santa being a religious character and the lack of equal time to other religions and special observations during this holiday season. These concerns surround disproportionately celebrating Christmas in relation to other Winter holiday observations.*

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*With Wishes for a Happy Holiday Season,*

*-Matt Osmond, Principal*

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## Santa visits

Jake Brodsky <jakebrodsky@gmail.com>

Tue 12/20/2022 11:17 AM

To: Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Cc: alexa.brodsky@gmail.com <alexa.brodsky@gmail.com>; Angie Pop <apop66@me.com>

I just received your email about discontinuing Santa visits and I have to say that I am more than a little upset. As I told you the other day, it's not about Santa, it's more about your removing things under the guise of being "inclusive."

This decision basically feels like a huge retaliatory gesture to everyone that raised an objection to your earlier decision and I can't believe how spiteful and vindictive you are being about this Santa thing. You said you made a decision to allow it on a class by class basis as long as teachers were willing to jump through all the ridiculous hoops you asked for.

You say you make decisions and stick to them. Clearly you do not. You make decisions and then go back on them when it suits you the most.

You make so many promises to so many people can't even keep them straight.

You have said that many people have complained about Santa visits being a problem but I just can't imagine that more people are complaining about him coming than the overwhelming amount of people who are upset that he is not.

I can't tell you how disappointed I am at your lack of concern for the people of your school and your apparent need to be right no matter who you alienate. It very much seems as if your decisions are based solely on your emotions and you don't care who you hurt along the way.

The kids are saying that you cancelled Christmas and I have to agree but unfortunately, you haven't just cancelled Christmas, you're destroying their fun, their hope, and their joy for something that they love so that you can push your agenda to inundate them with random facts about stuff they don't care about.

I really hope you've read this far and haven't given up because here's the important part: Santa is not a religious figure but your insistence that he is and your using that as an excuse to remove him means that you can no longer have menorahs, ofrendas, or anything else that remotely touches religion. Please be prepared for this.

To echo your sentiments from your hurtful and somewhat sarcastic email closure...

"Merry Christmas!"

- Jake Brodsky



## Re: Santa Visits Discontinued

Rebecca Perez <rebeccaperez@gmail.com>

Tue 12/20/2022 11:44 AM

To: Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Caution! This message was sent from outside of Burbank Unified School District.

Thank you Matt. I wholeheartedly support your decision. It is important to include ALL holiday celebrations equally.

Sincerely,  
Rebecca Perez Stodolny

On Tue, Dec 20, 2022 at 11:02 AM Matthew Osmond <[matthewosmond@burbankusd.org](mailto:matthewosmond@burbankusd.org)> wrote:

*Greetings Roosevelt Families,*

*Over the past two weeks, I have received a number of inquiries about a visit by Santa. Complaints have been registered about Santa being a religious character and the lack of equal time to other religions and special observations during this holiday season. These concerns surround disproportionately celebrating Christmas in relation to other Winter holiday observations.*

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*With Wishes for a Happy Holiday Season,*

*-Matt Osmond, Principal*

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**Re: Santa visiting Roosevelt Elementary School during school hours**

Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Tue 12/20/2022 12:02 PM

To: Emily Weisberg <EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org>; Matt Hill <MattHill@burbankusd.org>

Cc: Peter Knapik <PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org>

Hi Emily,

Ultimately and with guidance, support, and advice from Matt, Peter, and Sharon, we discontinued the practice altogether and are no longer hosting any Santa visits whatsoever. I notified staff first thing this morning and parents about an hour ago. So far, I've received about equal amounts of supportive and disappointed emails from parents and slightly more supportive emails from staff than disappointed.

If you're still interested to learn what we had planned before cancelling the Santa visits, I'm happy to share that with you.

The conversations I had with staff and families definitely led to passionate debate about how we recognize and celebrate diversity inclusively without families who celebrate traditional holidays feeling left out. There's an expected level of disagreement to have about this and I was prepared for some of it, but I'll be honest that this issue has definitely surpassed the amount of time I thought it would require to manage

Looking forward to continuing to work toward these efforts...and to our upcoming 2-week break.

Please let me know if you have any other questions and Happy Holidays!

Matt Osmond

Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School

(818) 729-3150 x11491

[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)

IG: @teddyrooselem

(he/him/his)

---

**From:** Emily Weisberg <EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org>

**Sent:** Monday, December 19, 2022 4:31 PM

**To:** Matt Hill <MattHill@burbankusd.org>

**Cc:** Peter Knapik <PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org>; Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

**Subject:** Re: Santa visiting Roosevelt Elementary School during school hours

Thank you, Matt (and Matt),

I'd like to learn a bit more about what's being done in regard to someone speaking about other non-Christmas celebrations. While I think it's a good step, having a Santa visit inherently others some students for whom Santa is not a normal part of their holiday experience, as you outlined in your email to staff.

I have no doubt you've dealt with some rough parent emails, and I also have no doubt you've handled them with grace and care.

Could you share a bit more about how the visits are being explained to the classes who do not have Santa visiting? I'd also love to continue the conversation with you, and Dr. Hill, about the tradition moving

forward, especially as I do trust your judgment and know that your insight into the school community runs far deeper than mine.

Thank you and Happy Holidays,  
Emily

Emily Weisberg, Ed.D. (*she/her/hers*)  
[EmilyWeisberg@Burbankusd.org](mailto:EmilyWeisberg@Burbankusd.org)  
Boardmember, Burbank Unified School District  
*Black Lives Matter*



I acknowledge the traditional, ancestral, unceded territory of the Chumash, Tongva, Fernandeño Tataviam and First Nations on which we are learning, educating, and living. "It is important to understand the longstanding history that has brought us to reside on the land, and to seek to understand our place within that history."

---

**From:** Matt Hill <[MattHill@burbankusd.org](mailto:MattHill@burbankusd.org)>  
**Date:** Friday, December 16, 2022 at 8:26 AM  
**To:** Emily Weisberg <[EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org](mailto:EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org)>  
**Cc:** Peter Knapik <[PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org](mailto:PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org)>, Matthew Osmond <[MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org](mailto:MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org)>  
**Subject:** Re: Santa visiting Roosevelt Elementary School during school hours

Hi Emily,

I've copied Matt if you would like more info. Here is a summary from him.

In the past, it was really just a visit they did for fun. We haven't done it since Dec 2019 and I discontinued it this year because it elevated Christmas above other Winter Holidays. I explained to teachers that if they felt strongly about a visit, they needed to balance that by having someone (student, community member, family member, parent, etc) come talk about traditions from a non-Christmas celebration.

We've been careful to ensure neither the Santa visit nor the other presentations teach religion and instead teach customs and traditions. The Santa visits also discuss the tradition and often accompany readings of stories like The Grinch, The Polar Express, etc.

Out of 23 classroom teachers, there are 11 who have opted into a Santa visit. 8 of them coordinated an assembly yesterday where someone came and presented about traditions connected with Hanukkah (latkes, menorah, dreidel) and have a planned visit with Santa next Fri. The other 3 are doing so next week and have a planned visit with Santa next Wed.

I had pushback from two teachers who felt I was either ruining Christmas or favoring non-Christian traditions over Christian. I've had either conversations or emails with 7 parents who also disagree for the same reasons.

Happy to fill you in more if you need additional info.

Here's the email I sent to staff about it (first two paragraphs are unrelated):

*Hi All,*

*The stage risers will be moved from the stage to the Primary Playground next week where our Holiday Performances will be held. Upstairs teachers may need to adjust your line up spots accordingly if they are in your normal spot. I'll have two sound systems handy to test which one works best while you're rehearsing next week.*

*You probably noticed that the Auditorium is decorated for a holiday performance. This is for the Band/Orchestra performance on Tues, Dec 20 at 6pm. They're able to perform inside because the concert is outside of school hours and the rules for requiring and checking vaccination apply to events held during school hours, but not after school.*

*It's been a few years since we've hosted a Santa Claus visit and after much thought, I've decided to discontinue this schoowide practice based on a few factors:*

- ***Balancing Christmas with Other Winter Holidays***-You all do a great job of incorporating stories, art, lessons, and activities highlighting customs from Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Las Posadas, Winter Solstice, etc as part of your instruction to teach about traditions from diverse cultures and people of different backgrounds. Teaching about Christmas traditions should be included in this, however a visit from Santa Claus disproportionately celebrates Christmas compared to other holidays.
- ***Consideration for What Students Already Know and Experience***-I am confident that the majority, if not all, our students already know about Santa, have experiences visiting with Santa outside of school, and do not rely on a school-provided Santa visit. If families wish to have a Santa visit, there are many opportunities to do so outside of school.
- ***Many Other Ways to Teach About Traditions***-As you talk about and do activities to teach about diverse holiday experiences, there are many ways to include Christmas traditions in a similar manner to how you teach about other holidays. A visit from Santa, while joyful, does not teach students anything new about holiday traditions.

*If you feel strongly about hosting a Santa visit in your class, you need to arrange a visit from someone (community member, parent/family member, etc) who can speak about traditions of other holidays to balance a visit with Santa. If you need help with this, let me know.*

*If you plan to do this, please notify me before next Fri, Dec 16 so that we can count your class in a Santa visit schedule.*

Matt Osmond  
Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School  
(818) 729-3150 x11491  
[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)  
IG: @teddyrooselem  
(he/him/his)

Sent from my iPhone

On Dec 15, 2022, at 5:56 PM, Emily Weisberg <EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org> wrote:

Please advise 😊

Emily

Emily Weisberg, Ed.D. (*she/her/hers*)  
[EmilyWeisberg@Burbankusd.org](mailto:EmilyWeisberg@Burbankusd.org)  
Boardmember, Burbank Unified School District  
*Black Lives Matter*



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**From:** Monica Pa Moyer <monicapa4@gmail.com>  
**Date:** Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 4:27 PM  
**To:** Emily Weisberg <EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org>  
**Cc:** Jessica Stamen <jessicastamen1@gmail.com>  
**Subject:** Santa visiting Roosevelt Elementary School during school hours

Caution! This message was sent from outside of Burbank Unified School District.

Hi Emily,

I hope you are doing well! We met at Jessica Stamen's house, and a few other times. I was texting with Jessica about this situation brewing at Roosevelt and wanted to get your views.

I'm a co-chair of Roosevelt's DEI committee and, this year, the principal decided to end the tradition of Santa visiting the classrooms. There was a discussion at the DEI meeting where the group seemed on board with this. But then the blowback came, and now Santa can visit some classes if the teacher agrees.

I find this to be very problematic for a secular public school, and also because it is other-ing and not inclusive. Here is my question - are there any BUSD rules against religious

activities at school and would this count? Can instruction hours be used for this kind of religious activity? I'm researching CA education code on this, but thought I'd go to the source! Any suggestions would be appreciated.

Best,  
Monica Pa Moya

## Re: Santa Visits Discontinued

MD Lashes <mdlashes@gmail.com>

Tue 12/20/2022 12:11 PM

To: Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Caution! This message was sent from outside of Burbank Unified School District.

Wow this world is changing really bad, traditions are important and those families should be happy to have the experience and don't look at it as a religious tradition, they can have a talk with their kids and explain to them. I am sure they will also enjoy it.

It will be more kids disappointed that kids/parents "offended" they can easily transform it as a experience ...

Thanks for trying 🙏🙏

Monica D.

Sent from my iPhone

On Dec 20, 2022, at 11:02 AM, Matthew Osmond <matthewosmond@burbankusd.org> wrote:

*Greetings Roosevelt Families,*

*Over the past two weeks, I have received a number of inquiries about a visit by Santa. Complaints have been registered about Santa being a religious character and the lack of equal time to other religions and special observations during this holiday season. These concerns surround disproportionally celebrating Christmas in relation to other Winter holiday observations.*

*In consideration of these concerns, about half of the teachers felt that the school should forego the practice of having a visit by Santa. I also checked with other Burbank elementary schools and no other school has this practice of hosting Santa visits. Additionally, I consulted with District leadership and they concurred with the decision to forego a visit by Santa. Therefore, we will not be hosting a visit from Santa.*

*If you contributed any money to your class for a Santa visit, you may either have the funds refunded by reaching out to your child's teacher or room parent (whomever collected the funds) or you may make the funds a donation to your child's class to cover future classroom expenses.*

*I know this decision may not be welcome for some and I'm sorry for this change. We will continue to provide educational information about holiday practices across the school that reflects multiple perspectives. This decision was not an easy one to make and I appreciate the various points of view you have shared with me.*

*With Wishes for a Happy Holiday Season,*

*-Matt Osmond, Principal*

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## Re: Santa Visits Discontinued

Elizabeth Bennett <emails4liz@yahoo.com>

Tue 12/20/2022 12:14 PM

To: Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Caution! This message was sent from outside of Burbank Unified School District.

I'm so sorry you have had to deal with this! You are a champ!

Sent from my iPhone

On Dec 20, 2022, at 11:01 AM, Matthew Osmond <matthewosmond@burbankusd.org> wrote:

*Greetings Roosevelt Families,*

*Over the past two weeks, I have received a number of inquiries about a visit by Santa. Complaints have been registered about Santa being a religious character and the lack of equal time to other religions and special observations during this holiday season. These concerns surround disproportionately celebrating Christmas in relation to other Winter holiday observations.*

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**RE: Santa visiting Roosevelt Elementary School during school hours**

Peter Knapik <PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org>

Tue 12/20/2022 12:18 PM

To: Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Matt, I talked to Emily about an hour ago too so that you are aware.

Peter Knapik, Ed.D.  
Burbank Unified School District  
Director of Elementary Education  
1900 W. Olive Avenue  
Burbank, CA 91506-2460  
Office Number 818-729-4482

**From:** Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

**Sent:** Tuesday, December 20, 2022 12:02 PM

**To:** Emily Weisberg <EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org>; Matt Hill <MattHill@burbankusd.org>

**Cc:** Peter Knapik <PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org>

**Subject:** Re: Santa visiting Roosevelt Elementary School during school hours

Hi Emily,

Ultimately and with guidance, support, and advice from Matt, Peter, and Sharon, we discontinued the practice altogether and are no longer hosting any Santa visits whatsoever. I notified staff first thing this morning and parents about an hour ago. So far, I've received about equal amounts of supportive and disappointed emails from parents and slightly more supportive emails from staff than disappointed.

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IG: @teddyrooselem

(he/him/his)

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**Sent:** Monday, December 19, 2022 4:31 PM  
**To:** Matt Hill <[MattHill@burbankusd.org](mailto:MattHill@burbankusd.org)>  
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**Subject:** Re: Santa visiting Roosevelt Elementary School during school hours

Thank you, Matt (and Matt),

I'd like to learn a bit more about what's being done in regard to someone speaking about other non-Christmas celebrations. While I think it's a good step, having a Santa visit inherently others some students for whom Santa is not a normal part of their holiday experience, as you outlined in your email to staff.

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Could you share a bit more about how the visits are being explained to the classes who do not have Santa visiting? I'd also love to continue the conversation with you, and Dr. Hill, about the tradition moving forward, especially as I do trust your judgment and know that your insight into the school community runs far deeper than mine.

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---

**From:** Matt Hill <[MattHill@burbankusd.org](mailto:MattHill@burbankusd.org)>  
**Date:** Friday, December 16, 2022 at 8:26 AM  
**To:** Emily Weisberg <[EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org](mailto:EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org)>  
**Cc:** Peter Knapik <[PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org](mailto:PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org)>, Matthew Osmond <[MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org](mailto:MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org)>  
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Hi Emily,

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*about traditions of other holidays to balance a visit with Santa. If you need help with this, let me know.*

*If you plan to do this, please notify me before next Fri, Dec 16 so that we can count your class in a Santa visit schedule.*

Matt Osmond

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(818) 729-3150 x11491

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IG: @teddyrooselem

(he/him/his)

Sent from my iPhone

On Dec 15, 2022, at 5:56 PM, Emily Weisberg <[EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org](mailto:EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org)> wrote:

Please advise ☺

Emily

Emily Weisberg, Ed.D. (*she/her/hers*)

[EmilyWeisberg@Burbankusd.org](mailto:EmilyWeisberg@Burbankusd.org)

Boardmember, Burbank Unified School District

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**From:** Monica Pa Moyer <[monicapa4@gmail.com](mailto:monicapa4@gmail.com)>  
**Date:** Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 4:27 PM  
**To:** Emily Weisberg <[EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org](mailto:EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org)>  
**Cc:** Jessica Stamen <[jessicastamen1@gmail.com](mailto:jessicastamen1@gmail.com)>  
**Subject:** Santa visiting Roosevelt Elementary School during school hours

Caution! This message was sent from outside of Burbank Unified School District.

Hi Emily,

I hope you are doing well! We met at Jessica Stamen's house, and a few other times. I was texting with Jessica about this situation brewing at Roosevelt and wanted to get your views.

I'm a co-chair of Roosevelt's DEI committee and, this year, the principal decided to end the tradition of Santa visiting the classrooms. There was a discussion at the DEI meeting where the group seemed on board with this. But then the blowback came, and now Santa can visit some classes if the teacher agrees.

I find this to be very problematic for a secular public school, and also because it is other-ing and not inclusive. Here is my question - are there any BUSD rules against religious activities at school and would this count? Can instruction hours be used for this kind of religious activity? I'm researching CA education code on this, but thought I'd go to the source! Any suggestions would be appreciated.

Best,  
Monica Pa Moyer

## Santa

Nick Carr <nickcarr@gmail.com>

Tue 12/20/2022 12:25 PM

To: Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Caution! This message was sent from outside of Burbank Unified School District.

Hi Mr. Osmond --

My dad. Just wanted to throw in my two cents, in the event you're being inundated with all sorts of angry emails right now!

Raised Catholic myself, not religious at all as an adult. But Santa is definitely a thing we do in the household each year for Santa and his sister

I fully support your canceling the Santa visit. It's one thing to do the holiday play and include all sorts of songs from various faiths and general winter songs, and that's great! But I totally get that while Everett might be excited to see Santa in school, it could be really strange for, say, the Jewish child in the class who watches as his or her classmates get to meet with a magic man to tell him all the amazing gifts they're going to get for Christmas. And how excluded they could feel from that sort of fun.

I'm sure you're hearing all sorts of opinions today, but just wanted to add our two cents from a Santa-supporting household!

Best!  
Nick

--

Nick Carr  
Location Scout  
Cell: 978-578-5406  
Email: [nickcarr@gmail.com](mailto:nickcarr@gmail.com)  
Teamster, Local 399



## Re: Santa Visits Discontinued

Willie Ochoa <willieochoa@gmail.com>

Tue 12/20/2022 12:28 PM

To: Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Cc: Roosevelt Elementary Recipients <recipients@burbankusd.parentlink.net>

Caution! This message was sent from outside of Burbank Unified School District.

*Over the past two weeks, I have received a number of inquiries about a visit by Santa. Complaints have been registered about Santa being a religious character and the lack of equal time to other religions and special observations during this holiday season. These concerns surround disproportionately celebrating Christmas in relation to other Winter holiday observations.*

As this seems an issue of "The squeaky wheel gets the oil" I would like to get in the record that I do not have any issue with a visit from Santa, nor with any other holiday observance, teachings or celebrations.

Maybe the problem is that the school needs to be doing a better job with inclusion instead of exclusion.

El mar, 20 dic 2022 a las 11:01, Matthew Osmond (<[matthewosmond@burbankusd.org](mailto:matthewosmond@burbankusd.org)>) escribió:

*Greetings Roosevelt Families,*

*Over the past two weeks, I have received a number of inquiries about a visit by Santa. Complaints have been registered about Santa being a religious character and the lack of equal time to other religions and special observations during this holiday season. These concerns surround disproportionately celebrating Christmas in relation to other Winter holiday observations.*

*In consideration of these concerns, about half of the teachers felt that the school should forego the practice of having a visit by Santa. I also checked with other Burbank elementary schools and no other school has this practice of hosting Santa visits. Additionally, I consulted with District leadership and they concurred with the decision to forego a visit by Santa. Therefore, we will not be hosting a visit from Santa.*

*If you contributed any money to your class for a Santa visit, you may either have the funds refunded by reaching out to your child's teacher or room parent (whomever collected the funds) or you may make the funds a donation to your child's class to cover future classroom expenses.*

*I know this decision may not be welcome for some and I'm sorry for this change. We will continue to provide educational information about holiday practices across the school that reflects multiple perspectives. This decision was not an easy one to make and I appreciate the various points of view you have shared with me.*

*With Wishes for a Happy Holiday Season,*

*-Matt Osmond, Principal*

---

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## Re: Santa Visits Discontinued

Karen Lau <karen.o.lau@gmail.com>

Tue 12/20/2022 1:16 PM

To: Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Caution! This message was sent from outside of Burbank Unified School District.

Bravo! Well said Matt.

On Tue, Dec 20, 2022 at 11:02 AM Matthew Osmond <[matthewosmond@burbankusd.org](mailto:matthewosmond@burbankusd.org)> wrote:

*Greetings Roosevelt Families,*

*Over the past two weeks, I have received a number of inquiries about a visit by Santa. Complaints have been registered about Santa being a religious character and the lack of equal time to other religions and special observations during this holiday season. These concerns surround disproportionately celebrating Christmas in relation to other Winter holiday observations.*

*In consideration of these concerns, about half of the teachers felt that the school should forego the practice of having a visit by Santa. I also checked with other Burbank elementary schools and no other school has this practice of hosting Santa visits. Additionally, I consulted with District leadership and they concurred with the decision to forego a visit by Santa. Therefore, we will not be hosting a visit from Santa.*

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Sent with opposables

## Re: Santa Visits Discontinued

Michael Rubel <mrubel@lebur.net>

Tue 12/20/2022 1:22 PM

To: Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Hi Mr. Osmond,

Bet there's a lot of blowback on this one, but for what it's worth I think it's the right call. There's no shortage of Santa opportunities out there for families

-Mike

> MessageGreetings Roosevelt Families,Â Over the past two weeks, I have  
> received a number of inquiries about a visit by Santa. Complaints have  
> been registered about Santa being a religious character and the lack of  
> equal time to other religions and special observations during this holiday  
> season. These concerns surround disproportionately celebrating Christmas in  
> relation to other Winter holiday observations.Â In consideration of these  
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> the practice of having a visit by Santa.Â IÂ alsoÂ checked with other  
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> Therefore, we will not be hosting a visit from Santa.Â If you contributed  
> any money to your class for a Santa visit, you may either have the funds  
> refunded by reaching out to your child's teacher or room parent  
> (whomever collected the funds) or you may make the funds a donation to  
> your child's class to cover future classroom expenses.Â I know this  
> decision may not be welcome for some and I'm sorry for this change.Â We  
> will continue to provide educational information about holiday practices  
> across the school that reflects multiple perspectives.Â This decision was  
> not an easy one to makeÂ and I appreciate the various points of view you  
> have shared with me.Â With Wishes for a Happy Holiday Season,-Matt Osmond,  
> PrincipalYou are receiving this email because of your relationship with  
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> through the Blackboard service, please unsubscribe.Roosevelt Elementary |  
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## **Fw: Santa Visits Discontinued**

Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Tue 12/20/2022 1:36 PM

To: Kathy Wills <KathyWills@burbankusd.org>

Hi Kathy,

Here's the email I sent to families earlier today. I'm happy to share it with anyone who is interested. The staff I've spoken with today have expressed that whether they agree or disagree, they're ready to move on.

I had a good talk with Jackie. I know she's hurt and I'm sorry for that pain. I also spoke with Keith and explained how this progressed from my initial decision to the ultimate discontinuing. I thanked him for all he did for the past 15+ years and let him know there are many kids who have fond memories of their visit with him.

Thanks,

Matt Osmond  
Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School  
(818) 729-3150 x11491  
[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)  
IG: @teddyrooselem  
(he/him/his)

---

**From:** Matthew Osmond <matthewosmond@burbankusd.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 20, 2022 11:00 AM  
**To:** Roosevelt Elementary Recipients <recipients@burbankusd.parentlink.net>  
**Subject:** Santa Visits Discontinued

This sender is trusted.

*Greetings Roosevelt Families,*

*Over the past two weeks, I have received a number of inquiries about a visit by Santa. Complaints have been registered about Santa being a religious character and the lack of equal time to other religions and special observations during this holiday season. These concerns surround disproportionately celebrating Christmas in relation to other Winter holiday observations.*

*In consideration of these concerns, about half of the teachers felt that the school should forego the practice of having a visit by Santa. I also checked with other Burbank elementary schools and no other school has this practice of hosting Santa visits. Additionally, I consulted with District leadership and they concurred with the decision to forego a visit by Santa. Therefore, we will not be hosting a visit from Santa.*

*If you contributed any money to your class for a Santa visit, you may either have the funds refunded by reaching out to your child's teacher or room parent (whomever collected the funds) or you may make the funds a donation to your child's class to cover future classroom expenses.*

*I know this decision may not be welcome for some and I'm sorry for this change. We will continue to provide educational information about holiday practices across the school that reflects multiple*

*perspectives. This decision was not an easy one to make and I appreciate the various points of view you have shared with me.*

*With Wishes for a Happy Holiday Season,  
-Matt Osmond, Principal*

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## Re: Santa Visits Discontinued

Eric Cameron <ericcameron@gmail.com>

Tue 12/20/2022 2:07 PM

To: Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Caution! This message was sent from outside of Burbank Unified School District.

Matt,

I'm sure you are expecting notes like this in reply, but I feel compelled to voice my opinion here. I would like to preface this by saying I do not envy your position as a decision-maker, and I hear very clearly that you have not taken this lightly. Still, I add my perspective here, in order to make clear what I think is wrong.

First and foremost, I think this is a poor decision, not as much in substance as in timing. It would be one thing to have an up front policy that does not allow Santa visits. I think it is another thing entirely to put a stop to something that has already been planned and announced to children, some of whom may have been looking forward to it quite a lot. That seems to me like a rug-pull, and feels cruel.

To be clear, I don't believe either of my boys are among the children who will be disappointed with this.

Santa Claus has never been much of a part of our holiday traditions, and they have known since they were old enough to speak that he is just a mythical fantasy.

We still enjoy watching certain Santa based films and such, but that's the extent of it.

I am honestly not arguing for Santa visits. If a "no Santa" policy were instituted before holiday planning commenced, I would not have batted an eye, even if I think it is silly and a bit "ruin the fun".

I am certainly and vigorously arguing that taking something from students that they were promised is on its face wrong.

Thank you,  
Eric Cameron

P.S.

While I stated above that I would not bat an eye at a "no Santa" policy, I do have some thoughts on this specifically, and some more general thoughts that I am going to put down:

I think the idea of Santa being considered a religious figure is a bit of a stretch in modern culture. Even the foundations of the myth tying him to real Christian figures are tenuous and murky, and these foundations are at most barely referenced in the modern cultural representation (his alternate title "Saint Nick" being probably the only bit of this that endures at large).

I understand that he is explicitly tied to Christmas, as opposed to any other religious holiday, but culturally this also seems like a weak argument to me.

Any serious and principled attempt to provide "equal time" to all winter holidays (or "all views" on anything) in school seems most likely to me to end with simply abolishing discussion or observation of any holiday, because it is an impossible standard to meet.

Someone will always feel like they and their beliefs or preferences are not being adequately represented.

As in broader society, the only practicable approach seems to be to make efforts to allow minority voices to be heard, not to silence the majority voices.

As you said, you have received complaints about the planned Santa visits. I find it unlikely that you received any unsolicited "Thanks for the upcoming Santa visits!" notes.

Applying this more broadly, if a decision is being made on unsolicited feedback from parents, actively soliciting feedback from a broader group (of parents) seems like a very sensible thing. The bar for acting on such unsolicited feedback directly ought to be quite high ("My child is very allergic to Santa. If he visits my child's classroom, my child will go into anaphylaxis").

Even in such a scenario, the narrowest remedy ought to be sought ("Ok, we can do the Santa visit outside, and children who want to visit him can opt to go over, and children who don't can spend some time on the playground")

On Tue, Dec 20, 2022 at 11:02 AM Matthew Osmond <[matthewosmond@burbankusd.org](mailto:matthewosmond@burbankusd.org)> wrote:

*Greetings Roosevelt Families,*

*Over the past two weeks, I have received a number of inquiries about a visit by Santa. Complaints have been registered about Santa being a religious character and the lack of equal time to other religions and special observations during this holiday season. These concerns surround disproportionately celebrating Christmas in relation to other Winter holiday observations.*

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*I know this decision may not be welcome for some and I'm sorry for this change. We will continue to provide educational information about holiday practices across the school that reflects multiple perspectives. This decision was not an easy one to make and I appreciate the various points of view you have shared with me.*

*With Wishes for a Happy Holiday Season,*

*-Matt Osmond, Principal*

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**Re: Save the date! Got an anxious kid?**

Roosevelt DEI committee <teddyrooseveltdei@gmail.com>

Tue 12/20/2022 3:46 PM

To: Carina Busse <dcarinabusse@gmail.com>

Cc: cc: Jamie Kiffel-Alcheh <editorpublishing@gmail.com>;to: Joanna Chau <jchau2005@sbcglobal.net>

Caution! This message was sent from outside of Burbank Unified School District.

Hi Carina,

I really appreciate all that you have done for DEI in the past. You are a super star volunteer and I hate to lose your support. I can't speak for the rest of the DEI committee, but I wanted to let you know that we didn't make any decisions. We were asked for our opinions at the last meeting. I feel that this Santa decision was the right one, but others on the DEI committee disagree with me. I consider you a friend, my kids adore your kids, and I hope we can find common ground going forward.

Best,  
Monica

On Tue, Dec 20, 2022 at 2:12 PM Carina Busse <dcarinabusse@gmail.com> wrote:

Please remove me from this email list. I will no longer participate in any DEI events. I was always so happy to provide support to this group. I'm disappointed on how the Santa at school was handled. My students come from different backgrounds and Santa is part of their culture. The point of this group is to include and grow. If we need more diverse celebrations during the holidays we could have organized something. My students and I did Posadas and taught on zoom about Tamales back in 2020z. Everyone is entitled to their opinions but when only the opinions of a few are taken into consideration to make decisions it is not fair to the rest of us. Plenty of children enjoyed this time of year when Santa visits the classrooms. My 1st grade class were looking forward to it and now we are canceling that.

Carina Busse

Sent from my iPhone

On Dec 20, 2022, at 1:39 PM, Roosevelt DEI committee <teddyrooseveltdei@gmail.com> wrote:

**Save the date!**

It's Jamie, your DEI co-chair. I'm proud to announce that I will be co-hosting a Zoom parent education event!

**When: January 17, 2023, 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM PT**

What: **"Helping Your Children to Manage Feelings of Anxiety"** parent training with Dr. Derek Ihuri, Exec. Director of Special Education & Psychological Services for La Cañada USD, and school psychologist Avra Warsofsky

Who: You!

Where: Zoom! You will receive a link when you [RSVP here.](#)

It's free, and it will be fun. The pros will explain how to help kids who are experiencing school-related anxiety (especially around social situations), and you'll have an opportunity to ask the pros all your questions.

All the best,

Jamie

[editorpublishing@gmail.com](mailto:editorpublishing@gmail.com)

## Fw: Santa Visits Discontinued

Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Tue 12/20/2022 5:23 PM

To: Peter Knapik <PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org>

Hi Peter,

I received the below email and public records request about Santa earlier this afternoon. Do you have time tomorrow to talk me through this process?

Thanks,

Matt Osmond  
Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School  
(818) 729-3150 x11491  
[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)  
IG: @teddyrooselem  
{he/him/his}

---

From: Brian Clauer <brianclauer@gmail.com>  
Sent: Tuesday, December 20, 2022 3:10 PM  
To: Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>  
Subject: Re: Santa Visits Discontinued

Caution! This message was sent from outside of Burbank Unified School District.

Hello,

This is an interesting topic of debate and I would like to know more about how you and your school handle this type of concern.

Can you please publish or distribute a detailed communique that explains your schools process, policies, and procedures for making complaints or expressing concerns about material Roosevelt Elementary School presents to our children in the event that a parent or parents might find that material to be harmful, overtly or subtly religious in nature, or presented in a disproportionate manner and how you handle those concerns or complaints? I think it would be helpful to the community to have an understanding of how the process works and how your school responds to concerns or complaints about concepts that some might find objectionable, improperly balanced or disproportionately presented.

Additionally, I would like to make a **public records request** to you for copies of any emails, instant messages, or written correspondence sent to you, your school, or any teacher or administrator at Roosevelt Elementary School regarding concerns or complaints about any scheduled or proposed visits by a person who would be impersonating the mythical character known as **Santa** within the last two years, including any sent today or tomorrow, including all responses to the email you sent above that are received today or tomorrow (12/2022-12/21/22) ... If this topic was discussed in any meetings within your school that are subject to transparency, please include the transcripts of those discussions as well. Please provide responsive records to this email address in PDF format in a timely manner.

thank you very much,

Brian Clauer

On Tue, Dec 20, 2022 at 11:02 AM Matthew Osmond <[matthewosmond@burbankusd.org](mailto:matthewosmond@burbankusd.org)> wrote:  
*Greetings Roosevelt Families,*

*Over the past two weeks, I have received a number of inquiries about a visit by Santa. Complaints have been registered about Santa being a religious character and the lack of equal time to other religions and special observations during this holiday season. These concerns surround disproportionately celebrating Christmas in relation to other Winter holiday observations.*

*In consideration of these concerns, about half of the teachers felt that the school should forego the practice of having a visit by Santa. I also checked with other Burbank elementary schools and no other school has this practice of hosting Santa visits. Additionally, I consulted with District leadership and they concurred with the decision to forego a visit by Santa. Therefore, we will not be hosting a visit from Santa.*

*If you contributed any money to your class for a Santa visit, you may either have the funds refunded by reaching out to your child's teacher or room parent (whomever collected the funds) or you may make the funds a donation to your child's class to cover future classroom expenses.*

*I know this decision may not be welcome for some and I'm sorry for this change. We will continue to provide educational information about holiday practices across the school that reflects multiple perspectives. This decision was not an easy one to make and I appreciate the various points of view you have shared with me.*

*With Wishes for a Happy Holiday Season,  
-Matt Osmond, Principal*

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## Holiday Celebrations

Marcel Wade <marcel.wade@gmail.com>

Tue 12/20/2022 7:36 PM

To: Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Caution! This message was sent from outside of Burbank Unified School District.

Hello Mr. Osmond. This is Marcel Wade - [redacted] ad. I'm writing this email to give my 2 cents and not to cause trouble. I love that [redacted] learns about other cultures and religions at school. She comes home, tells us about her activities, and is always excited. She has celebrated Diwali, a Hindu holiday celebrating a religion's gods. Halloween is a religious holiday, whether it has Pagan or Christian roots. Day of the Dead is another celebration that traces back to Mexicans and Catholicism. She also crafted a Menorah and learned about Hanukkah. We encourage our kids to know about this fantastic stuff inside our home even though we are Catholic. Also, as practicing Christians, we don't emphasize Santa being a religious character. He belongs to the holiday season as a mascot more than a religious symbol or deity to worship. I think Santa has been made secular, just like Halloween. I realize you have to please the most people with your decisions but getting rid of Santa for the reasons you suggested is puzzling given the holidays Roosevelt celebrates within its walls already. I wouldn't have written this email in reply had it not come right after [redacted] and her class made Menorahs. As I said, that is not a problem. The problem is the selective outcry. The Menorah is equal to or more representative of a religion than Santa. I hope you have a good day.

Marcel Wade

## **RE: Santa Visit Update**

Rhonda Wright <RhondaWright@burbankusd.org>

Wed 12/21/2022 7:50 AM

To: Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Have you informed the parents yet? When you do please make sure to copy the staff, so if asked about it, we can be informed.

-Rhonda Wright

**From:** Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

**Sent:** Tuesday, December 20, 2022 8:09 AM

**Subject:** Santa Visit Update

Hi All,

Our Santa visit tradition and my decision about it have been discussed passionately by staff and parents for the past two weeks. As discussions continued, our school board and district leadership inquired about this tradition and how my decision this year changed it.

After much discussion and consultation with district leadership, we are altogether cancelling Santa visits this year and for future years. (5<sup>th</sup> Grade Team-I'll be in touch with the parents who scheduled your Wed Santa visit).

I'm sending an email to parents informing them of this cancellation later this morning. It's important that they hear this message from me, so please do not share this information with non-staff members.

Part of my message to parents will include a note that any donations already made toward a Santa visit can either be refunded by contacting teachers or that it can remain a donation which teachers will use for classroom expenses.

I know some of you feel strongly about this practice and although you may disagree with this decision, I'm sorry for any frustration this causes.

Thanks,

Matt Osmond

Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School

(818) 729-3150 x11491

[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)

IG: @teddyrooselem

---

(he/him/his)

## FYI: Santa Msg to Families

Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Wed 12/21/2022 7:59 AM

Bcc: Candace Cobery <CandaceCobery@burbankusd.org>;Melody Lopez <MelodyLopez@burbankusd.org>;Rachelle Shipstad <RachelleShipstad@burbankusd.org>;Kathy Wills <KathyWills@burbankusd.org>;Chez Mohler <ChezMohler@burbankusd.org>;Dawn Ignatian <DawnIgnatian@burbankusd.org>;Monica Coughlin <MonicaCoughlin@burbankusd.org>;Julie Skujins <JulieSkujins@burbankusd.org>;Bridgett Murphy <BridgettMurphy@burbankusd.org>;Christine Cecchini <ChristineCecchini@burbankusd.org>;Kerie Stein <KerieStein@burbankusd.org>;Rhonda Wright <RhondaWright@burbankusd.org>;Amber Moore Myers <AmberMooreMyers@burbankusd.org>;Roxanne Hunt <RoxanneHunt@burbankusd.org>;Ellen Craig <EllenCraig@burbankusd.org>;Carol Walcoff <CarolWalcoff@burbankusd.org>;John Pike <JohnPike@burbankusd.org>;Aileen Ermino <AileenErmino@burbankusd.org>;Carmella Jaramillo <CarmellaJaramillo@burbankusd.org>;Amy Jensen <AmyJensen@burbankusd.org>

Hi All-FYI...Here's the message that went to families yesterday re: discontinued Santa Visits:

*Greetings Roosevelt Families,*

*Over the past two weeks, I have received a number of inquiries about a visit by Santa. Complaints have been registered about Santa being a religious character and the lack of equal time to other religions and special observations during this holiday season. These concerns surround disproportionately celebrating Christmas in relation to other Winter holiday observations.*

*In consideration of these concerns, about half of the teachers felt that the school should forego the practice of having a visit by Santa. I also checked with other Burbank elementary schools and no other school has this practice of hosting Santa visits. Additionally, I consulted with District leadership and they concurred with the decision to forego a visit by Santa. Therefore, we will not be hosting a visit from Santa.*

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*I know this decision may not be welcome for some and I'm sorry for this change. We will continue to provide educational information about holiday practices across the school that reflects multiple perspectives. This decision was not an easy one to make and I appreciate the various points of view you have shared with me.*

*With Wishes for a Happy Holiday Season,  
-Matt Osmond, Principal*

Matt Osmond  
Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School  
(818) 729-3150 x11491  
[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)  
IG: @teddyrooselem  
(he/him/his)

## Re: Santa Visit Update

Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Wed 12/21/2022 7:59 AM

To: Rhonda Wright <RhondaWright@burbankusd.org>

Sure thing. I sent it yesterday morning around 11 am. Just forwarded to teachers.

Thanks,

Matt Osmond

Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School

(818) 729-3150 x11491

[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)

IG: @teddyrooselem

(he/him/his)

---

**From:** Rhonda Wright <RhondaWright@burbankusd.org>

**Sent:** Wednesday, December 21, 2022 7:50 AM

**To:** Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

**Subject:** RE: Santa Visit Update

Have you informed the parents yet? When you do please make sure to copy the staff, so if asked about it, we can be informed.

-Rhonda Wright

**From:** Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

**Sent:** Tuesday, December 20, 2022 8:09 AM

**Subject:** Santa Visit Update

Hi All,

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I know some of you feel strongly about this practice and although you may disagree with this decision, I'm sorry for any frustration this causes.

Thanks,



Matt Osmond  
Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School  
(818) 729-3150 x11491  
[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)  
IG: @teddyrooselem  
(he/him/his)

## Re: Santa Visits Discontinued

Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Fri 12/23/2022 12:47 PM

To: Susanna Mirzoyan <susy3mir@yahoo.com>

Hi Susanna,

Thanks for sharing your thoughts. It was a difficult decision that ultimately was made at the district level to bring our school's practices in line with all the other elementary schools.

Have a great holiday!

Matt Osmond

Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School

(818) 729-3150 x11491

[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)

IG: @teddyrooselem

(he/him/his)

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**From:** Susanna Mirzoyan <susy3mir@yahoo.com>

**Sent:** Wednesday, December 21, 2022 10:09 AM

**To:** Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

**Subject:** Re: Santa Visits Discontinued

Caution! This message was sent from outside of Burbank Unified School District.

Good morning Mr. Osmond,

Hope everything is well with you. Ever since I have read this email about canceling the Santa's visit to school, I have been thinking should I write back something or not.

First of all thank you for everything you do for our children and thank you for updating us with the decision. I do respect and I understand that there are many students who come from different countries and have different religions. However, I feel that it's unfair to those who do celebrate Christmas and would be happy to see the Santa. I am Armenian, my family is Armenian and we do not celebrate Christmas in my country (I mean American Christmas). Armenians do celebrate Christmas in January, but it's different from the one we celebrate in US in December. My family choose to come and live in US, my children were born here. Therefore, I feel that all of us who choose to live here, should respect country's traditions / holidays and celebrate them if we want to. If not, we shouldn't and can't force anyone to not celebrate them.

Also, if our children learn about different cultures and celebrate it at school (Diwali, Hanukkah, Chinese New Year, Hispanic heritage month / Cinco de Mayo, African American month, etc.), why not have Santa at school?

Once again I do respect all the cultures and religions.

Thank you,  
Susanna Mirzoyan

On Dec 20, 2022, at 11:02 AM, Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org> wrote:

*Greetings Roosevelt Families,*

*Over the past two weeks, I have received a number of inquiries about a visit by Santa. Complaints have been registered about Santa being a religious character and the lack of equal time to other religions and special observations during this holiday season. These concerns surround disproportionately celebrating Christmas in relation to other Winter holiday observations.*

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*I know this decision may not be welcome for some and I'm sorry for this change. We will continue to provide educational information about holiday practices across the school that reflects multiple perspectives. This decision was not an easy one to make and I appreciate the various points of view you have shared with me.*

*With Wishes for a Happy Holiday Season,  
-Matt Osmond, Principal*

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*With Wishes for a Happy Holiday Season,*

*-Matt Osmond, Principal*

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## Re: Santa Visits Discontinued

Jen <jenmccreary@gmail.com>

Fri 12/23/2022 9:21 AM

To: Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Caution! This message was sent from outside of Burbank Unified School District.

Hi Matt,

Since I imagine you have gotten some unhappy responses to this email, I wanted to take time to write to express my support of and appreciation for this choice.

While our family does celebrate Christmas, we have many friends from other religious traditions who feel othered and marginalized by the emphasis on Christmas traditions - especially in school settings. It's really important to our family to be inclusive and sensitive to families' varied experiences- especially those not in the majority. So I truly appreciate this choice - and I'm sure many other families do too!

I recognize it was a hard decision and change to make, but I believe it will really benefit a lot of kids by removing a situation that makes them feel other-ed.

Thank you for your consistent commitment to making Roosevelt an inclusive and equitable community. It is one of the most special and important of the school's many stellar qualities.

I hope you have a really wonderful holiday break.

All best,

Jen

On Dec 20, 2022, at 11:00 AM, Matthew Osmond <matthewosmond@burbankusd.org> wrote:

*Greetings Roosevelt Families,*

*Over the past two weeks, I have received a number of inquiries about a visit by Santa. Complaints have been registered about Santa being a religious character and the lack of equal time to other religions and special observations during this holiday season. These concerns surround disproportionately celebrating Christmas in relation to other Winter holiday observations.*

*In consideration of these concerns, about half of the teachers felt that the school should forego the practice of having a visit by Santa. I also checked with other Burbank elementary schools and no other school has this practice of hosting Santa visits. Additionally, I consulted with District leadership and they concurred with the decision to forego a visit by Santa. Therefore, we will not be hosting a visit from Santa.*

## Re: Santa Visits Discontinued

Juliane Crump <ujulisnr@yahoo.com>

Thu 12/22/2022 2:17 PM

To: Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Caution! This message was sent from outside of Burbank Unified School District.

Thank you for making thoughtful decisions on behalf of our community!  
--Juliane

Never let anything artistic stand in your way. --Noel Coward

On Tuesday, December 20, 2022 at 11:00:58 AM PST, Matthew Osmond <matthewosmond@burbankusd.org> wrote:

*Greetings Roosevelt Families,*

*Over the past two weeks, I have received a number of inquiries about a visit by Santa. Complaints have been registered about Santa being a religious character and the lack of equal time to other religions and special observations during this holiday season. These concerns surround disproportionately celebrating Christmas in relation to other Winter holiday observations.*

*In consideration of these concerns, about half of the teachers felt that the school should forego the practice of having a visit by Santa. I also checked with other Burbank elementary schools and no other school has this practice of hosting Santa visits. Additionally, I consulted with District leadership and they concurred with the decision to forego a visit by Santa. Therefore, we will not be hosting a visit from Santa.*

*If you contributed any money to your class for a Santa visit, you may either have the funds refunded by reaching out to your child's teacher or room parent (whomever collected the funds) or you may make the funds a donation to your child's class to cover future classroom expenses.*

*I know this decision may not be welcome for some and I'm sorry for this change. We will continue to provide educational information about holiday practices across the school that reflects multiple perspectives. This decision was not an easy one to make and I appreciate the various points of view you have shared with me.*

*With Wishes for a Happy Holiday Season,*

*-Matt Osmond, Principal*

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You are receiving this email because of your relationship with Roosevelt Elementary. If you wish to stop receiving email updates sent through the Blackboard service, please [unsubscribe](#).  
Roosevelt Elementary | 850 N Cordova Street, Burbank, CA 91505 | 818-729-3150

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*I know this decision may not be welcome for some and I'm sorry for this change. We will continue to provide educational information about holiday practices across the school that reflects multiple perspectives. This decision was not an easy one to make and I appreciate the various points of view you have shared with me.*

*With Wishes for a Happy Holiday Season,  
-Matt Osmond, Principal*

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Roosevelt Elementary | 850 N Cordova Street, Burbank, CA 91505 | 818-729-3150

**To:** Matthew Osmond <[MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org](mailto:MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org)>  
**Subject:** RE: Santa Visits Discontinued

Mr. Osmond-

Somehow you have completely missed one the most important things experienced through Santa which is the innocence of a child. This innocence is seen through most children eyes regardless of religion. You arbitrarily stripped this away. You created division that was not needed with adult matters. Please give me the courtesy of admitting this.

So, you say you received complaints about Santa coming. Were those complaints held with more weight than those who were against your decision. I know that answer, but I'd sure you like to hear your response. Many of those people who opposed your decision are some of the most devoted volunteers at the school. No consideration was given to these people at all. Great show of appreciation.

Also, you said it was your decision. Then you needed to consult with the district? If you were so confident in your decision, why did you deflect this on others? You also brought fear to teachers who might not agree with you, that's being a bully. You also went completely against a previous email. No consistency and alarmingly bad leadership.

A quick visit by Santa to the classrooms bringing smiles to children faces was worth upsetting many during the Holidays? I guess you believe so. This was not about any child's experience. This was bringing your political ideology into an elementary school that created an unnecessary circus.

Kevin Bailey PGA  
Head Golf Professional  
(818) 985-3335  
4500 Lakeside Drive, Burbank CA 91505  
P.O. Box 2386, Toluca Lake CA 91610



**From:** Matthew Osmond <[matthewosmond@burbankusd.org](mailto:matthewosmond@burbankusd.org)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 20, 2022 11:00 AM  
**To:** Roosevelt Elementary Recipients <[recipients@burbankusd.parentlink.net](mailto:recipients@burbankusd.parentlink.net)>  
**Subject:** Santa Visits Discontinued

*Greetings Roosevelt Families,*

*Over the past two weeks, I have received a number of inquiries about a visit by Santa. Complaints have been registered about Santa being a religious character and the lack of equal time to other religions and special observations during this holiday season. These concerns surround disproportionately celebrating Christmas in relation to other Winter holiday observations.*

*In consideration of these concerns, about half of the teachers felt that the school should forego the practice of having a visit by Santa. I also checked with other Burbank elementary schools and no other school has this practice of hosting Santa visits. Additionally, I consulted with District leadership and they concurred with the decision to forego a visit by Santa. Therefore, we will not be hosting a visit from Santa.*



**RE: Santa Visits Discontinued**

Kevin Bailey <Kevin@lakesidegolfclub.com>

Thu 12/22/2022 8:49 AM

To: Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Caution! This message was sent from outside of Burbank Unified School District.

Matt-

As I said prior I value your time, you have enough to do. My faith will not allow me to be angry long, disappointed yes. I see a group of people who have been nothing but supportive of the school and of their principal being pushed aside by inconsistency. What saddens me is these recent events are only going to take from all the good that goes on at Roosevelt. I know for a fact this is going hurt volunteerism and financial support.

Kevin Bailey PGA

Head Golf Professional

(818) 985-3335

4500 Lakeside Drive, Burbank CA 91505

P.O. Box 2386, Toluca Lake CA 91610



**From:** Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

**Sent:** Thursday, December 22, 2022 8:15 AM

**To:** Kevin Bailey <Kevin@lakesidegolfclub.com>

**Subject:** Re: Santa Visits Discontinued

Hi Kevin,

I know you're angry and disappointed and I'll make the same offer again to either meet or even to speak via phone so that I can address your concerns. I won't try to change your mind but I can answer your questions and hopefully rebuild our parent/principal partnership.

If you'd rather not, I understand.

Sincerely,

Matt Osmond

Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School

(818) 729-3150 x11491

[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)

IG: @teddyrooselem

(he/him/his)

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**From:** Kevin Bailey <Kevin@lakesidegolfclub.com>

**Sent:** Thursday, December 22, 2022 6:46 AM

- > You make so many promises to so many people can't even keep them straight.
- >
- > You have said that many people have complained about Santa visits being a problem but I just can't imagine that more people are complaining about him coming than the overwhelming amount of people who are upset that he is not.
- >
- > I can't tell you how disappointed I am at your lack of concern for the people of your school and your apparent need to be right no matter who you alienate. It very much seems as if your decisions are based solely on your emotions and you don't care who you hurt along the way.
- >
- > The kids are saying that you cancelled Christmas and I have to agree but unfortunately, you haven't just cancelled Christmas, you're destroying their fun, their hope, and their joy for something that that love so that you can push your agenda to inundate them with random facts about stuff they don't care about.
- >
- > I really hope you've read this far and haven't given up because here's the important part: Santa is not a religious figure but your insistence that he is and your using that as an excuse to remove him means that you can no longer have menorahs, ofrendas, or anything else that remotely touches religion. Please be prepared for this.
- >
- > To echo your sentiments from your hurtful and somewhat sarcastic email closure...
- >
- > "Merry Christmas!"
- >
- > - Jake Brodsky

## Re: Santa visits

Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Thu 12/22/2022 7:55 AM

To: Alexa Brodsky <alexa.brodsky@gmail.com>; Jake Brodsky <jakepbrodsky@gmail.com>

Cc: Angie Pop <angiepopsorokin08@gmail.com>

Hi Alexa,

I'm also very interested in moving forward. If you have time in the next two days or even after break and would like to talk more about your concerns and suggestion, we can set up time to meet.

Thanks,

Matt Osmond

Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School

(818) 729-3150 x11491

[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)

IG: @teddyrooselem

(he/him/his)

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**From:** Alexa Brodsky <alexa.brodsky@gmail.com>

**Sent:** Tuesday, December 20, 2022 12:42 PM

**To:** Jake Brodsky <jakepbrodsky@gmail.com>

**Cc:** Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>; Angie Pop <apop66@me.com>

**Subject:** Re: Santa visits

The more I reflect on this with a desire to move forward, I think it would be in the best interest of the school, the staff and the families that make up the population, to move to a Google survey that polls opinions on these types of matter. I think it's time for transparency. If you really do have angry mobs claiming Santa is some religious figure, then why not survey everyone and post the results. I will bring this up again in a more official capacity, but I think this is the only solution to avoid future hurt like you have caused the last two weeks. Because whether you want to admit it, you chose other families over others. You valued others options over others. You showed biased judgement and it has hurt so many more than you even know. As I shared in my last email, I am deeply concerned for the state of our school and the divide this has caused. The responsibility always lands on the leadership, so I hope you do the right thing moving forward and survey the parents of the students this establishment is serving. Transparency always wins. Growth mindset always wins.

-Alexa

> On Dec 20, 2022, at 11:17 AM, Jake Brodsky <jakepbrodsky@gmail.com> wrote:

>

> I just received your email about discontinuing Santa visits and I have to say that I am more than a little upset. As I told you the other day, it's not about Santa, it's more about your removing things under the guise of being "inclusive."

>

> This decision basically feels like a huge retaliatory gesture to everyone that raised an objection to your earlier decision and I can't believe how spiteful and vindictive you are being about this Santa thing. You said you made a decision to allow it on a class by class basis as long as teachers were willing to jump through all the ridiculous hoops you asked for.

>

> You say you make decisions and stick to them. Clearly you do not. You make decisions and then go back on them when it suits you the most.

>



**School Site Council Meeting**

Thursday, Dec. 15, 2022

3:15PM

**In Person Location:** Roosevelt Library

Meeting also available via Zoom

Quota met with 10 present.

- *Members present in person:* Matt Osmond, Rhonda Wright, Keri Stein, Terry Williamson, Tiffany Root, Shelly Davies, Sarah Redmond, Kat Olson
- *Members present via Zoom:* John Ejimofor, Jessica Grimshaw
- Absent: Annie Bunje

**I. Call to order**

The meeting was called to order at 3:18PM.

**II. Review and approval of minutes**

Minutes were reviewed from Nov. 10, 2022 and no revisions were suggested.

**III. Public comment**

A. None

**IV. Reports**

A. **Chairperson** - no report.

B. **Principal report**

1. Updates

a) Rppsevelt was hit hard with Covid after Thanksgiving break, up to 18 staff members tested positive - one class had 8 positive cases. All total, the number of cases created our first official public outbreak. As a result, we posted a sign on the door and received a visit from public health. Kudos to staff who covered in other roles to be sure we had the coverage we needed.

b) There will no longer be schoolwide Santa visits.

(1) For 15+ years, a volunteer Santa has visited classrooms on the Friday before break. The last such visit was 2019.

Santa was also included among presenters in the zoom event in 2020.

(2) Having a person coming to every class elevates Christmas above other holidays. Not about religion, rather about exposing kids to customs. The visits weren't an educational experience - all kids in Burbank know who Santa is. Issue isn't that Christmas shouldn't be discussed; there needs to be representation that's more balanced.

(3) Santa visits may continue if we can identify others to come in and discuss other winter holidays. K & 1 took advantage of this already, other classrooms may as well. No other Burbank schools do Santa visits, and are still able to have a joyful holiday season - same goes for Roosevelt students who do not celebrate Christmas. Not meant to be taking anything away.

2. School Safety

a) Campus is currently in the next step of Fire Alarm improvements. Issue is that the main building and north wing system are not connected. Now the main building system is so antiquated so when we do drills it goes off day after day. It is being replaced; workers have been here for last week and a half. Hoping to be finished & have a system-wide test the Friday before we come back to school.

3. DEI

a) To clarify, Santa decision was not made by DEI committee, it was a principal's call.  
b) The second & final consultation with the district DEI consultant was last Tuesday. DEI reps met w/ Washington & Stevenson - looked at hypotheticals and discussed implications.

**C. English Language Development**

1. Roosevelt is up to 29 English learners.

**V. Old business**

A. None

**VI. New Business**

A. School Plan Review and Approval

1. Council reviewed 2022-23 School Plan budget including operating budget, LCAP budget, and carryover donations.

a) Money from donations categories may have oversight from SSC, school leadership, and may be used as needed.

2. Goals for Planned improvements

a) ELA - Need to determine % of students will meet or exceed grade level standards in ELA

(1) Measures to consider:

- (a) 3rd trimester report card grades - 91% of 1st-5th scored 3 or 4 in reading
    - (b) iReady assessment scores from 1st trimester of this year - 81% of students
    - (c) SBAC scores - just 3/4/5 - 59% at or above
  - (2) District guidance is at least a 3% growth (refers to SBAC scores). Roosevelt's goal could be 62% for SBAC only, or aim for 3% growth across all 3 measures. There is no penalty for not meeting goals.
    - (a) Comment - SBAC creates its own outcome - it's a stressful situation for some and kids who don't test well aren't well represented. SBAC scores already carry a lot of weight.
    - (b) Comment - iReady may not be funded by BUSD next year.
  - (3) ELA GOAL - 3% growth across standardized assessment measures (keeping wording open for whatever is being used at the time).
- b) Math
- (1) Measures to consider:
    - (a) 89% 3s or 4s on report cards
    - (b) 67% achievement iReady
    - (c) 69% SBAC at or above
  - (2) MATH GOAL - 3% growth across standardized assessment measures keeps it open for whatever is being used at the time.
- c) Student Engagement
- (1) Previous goal: 75% in at least one school-based program or activity.
  - (2) An option for update is to take the school DEI goal that staff agreed on and apply that here: All students will engage in identity-based activities throughout the year.
    - (a) Includes activities, programming. etc.
  - (3) STUDENT ENGAGEMENT GOAL - Sticking with previous 75% as goal for recurring extra-curriculars.
- d) Student behavior
- (1) Previous goal: Students who receive 3 or more referrals will be referred for an intervention program.
  - (2) Goal met or nearly met last year - not having an intervention specialist in the spring was a challenge.
  - (3) STUDENT BEHAVIOR GOAL: Will keep as is.
- e) Facilities

- (1) Previous goal: Custodial team will implement a schedule that ensures facilities are well maintained at all times.
  - (2) Has been challenging bc of night staff shortages.
  - (3) FACILITIES GOAL - goal will be updated to be more specific.
3. SSC reviewed additional funds as allocated to each goal.
  4. Sarah Redmond motioned to approve the school plan as proposed. Kat Olson seconds. No additional discussion ensued. A vote was taken and the motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:21.

Next SSC meeting will be held on Thursday 1/12 at 3:15 in the library.

## Peter Knapik

---

**From:** Peter Knapik  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 20, 2022 12:19 PM  
**To:** Matthew Osmond  
**Subject:** RE: Santa visiting Roosevelt Elementary School during school hours

Matt, I talked to Emily about an hour ago too so that you are aware.

Peter Knapik, Ed.D.  
Burbank Unified School District  
Director of Elementary Education  
1900 W. Olive Avenue  
Burbank, CA 91506-2460  
Office Number 818-729-4482

---

**From:** Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 20, 2022 12:02 PM  
**To:** Emily Weisberg <EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org>; Matt Hill <MattHill@burbankusd.org>  
**Cc:** Peter Knapik <PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org>  
**Subject:** Re: Santa visiting Roosevelt Elementary School during school hours

Hi Emily,

Ultimately and with guidance, support, and advice from Matt, Peter, and Sharon, we discontinued the practice altogether and are no longer hosting any Santa visits whatsoever. I notified staff first thing this morning and parents about an hour ago. So far, I've received about equal amounts of supportive and disappointed emails from parents and slightly more supportive emails from staff than disappointed.

If you're still interested to learn what we had planned before cancelling the Santa visits, I'm happy to share that with you.

The conversations I had with staff and families definitely led to passionate debate about how we recognize and celebrate diversity inclusively without families who celebrate traditional holidays feeling left out. There's an expected level of disagreement to have about this and I was prepared for some of it, but I'll be honest that this issue has definitely surpassed the amount of time I thought it would require to manage

Looking forward to continuing to work toward these efforts...and to our upcoming 2-week break.

Please let me know if you have any other questions and Happy Holidays!

Matt Osmond

Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School

(818) 729-3150 x11491



[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)

IG: @teddyrooselem

(he/him/his)

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**From:** Emily Weisberg <[EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org](mailto:EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org)>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 19, 2022 4:31 PM  
**To:** Matt Hill <[MattHill@burbankusd.org](mailto:MattHill@burbankusd.org)>  
**Cc:** Peter Knapik <[PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org](mailto:PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org)>; Matthew Osmond <[MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org](mailto:MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org)>  
**Subject:** Re: Santa visiting Roosevelt Elementary School during school hours

Thank you, Matt (and Matt),  
I'd like to learn a bit more about what's being done in regard to someone speaking about other non-Christmas celebrations. While I think it's a good step, having a Santa visit inherently others some students for whom Santa is not a normal part of their holiday experience, as you outlined in your email to staff.

I have no doubt you've dealt with some rough parent emails, and I also have no doubt you've handled them with grace and care.

Could you share a bit more about how the visits are being explained to the classes who do not have Santa visiting? I'd also love to continue the conversation with you, and Dr. Hill, about the tradition moving forward, especially as I do trust your judgment and know that your insight into the school community runs far deeper than mine.

Thank you and Happy Holidays,  
Emily

Emily Weisberg, Ed.D. (*she/her/hers*)  
[EmilyWeisberg@Burbankusd.org](mailto:EmilyWeisberg@Burbankusd.org)  
Boardmember, Burbank Unified School District  
*Black Lives Matter*



I acknowledge the traditional, ancestral, unceded territory of the Chumash, Tongva, Fernandefio Tataaviam and First Nations on which we are learning, educating, and living. "It is important to understand the longstanding history that has brought us to reside on the land, and to seek to understand our place within that history."

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**From:** Matt Hill <[MattHill@burbankusd.org](mailto:MattHill@burbankusd.org)>  
**Date:** Friday, December 16, 2022 at 8:26 AM  
**To:** Emily Weisberg <[EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org](mailto:EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org)>

**Cc:** Peter Knapik <[PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org](mailto:PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org)>, Matthew Osmond <[MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org](mailto:MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org)>  
**Subject:** Re: Santa visiting Roosevelt Elementary School during school hours

Hi Emily,

I've copied Matt if you would like more info. Here is a summary from him.

In the past, it was really just a visit they did for fun. We haven't done it since Dec 2019 and I discontinued it this year because it elevated Christmas above other Winter Holidays. I explained to teachers that if they felt strongly about a visit, they needed to balance that by having someone (student, community member, family member, parent, etc) come talk about traditions from a non-Christmas celebration.

We've been careful to ensure neither the Santa visit nor the other presentations teach religion and instead teach customs and traditions. The Santa visits also discuss the tradition and often accompany readings of stories like The Grinch, The Polar Express, etc.

Out of 23 classroom teachers, there are 11 who have opted into a Santa visit. 8 of them coordinated an assembly yesterday where someone came and presented about traditions connected with Hanukkah (latkes, menorah, dreidel) and have a planned visit with Santa next Fri. The other 3 are doing so next week and have a planned visit with Santa next Wed.

I had pushback from two teachers who felt I was either ruining Christmas or favoring non-Christian traditions over Christian. I've had either conversations or emails with 7 parents who also disagree for the same reasons.

Happy to fill you in more if you need additional info.

Here's the email I sent to staff about it (first two paragraphs are unrelated):

*Hi All,*

*The stage risers will be moved from the stage to the Primary Playground next week where our Holiday Performances will be held. Upstairs teachers may need to adjust your line up spots accordingly if they are in your normal spot. I'll have two sound systems handy to test which one works best while you're rehearsing next week.*

*You probably noticed that the Auditorium is decorated for a holiday performance. This is for the Band/Orchestra performance on Tues, Dec 20 at 6pm. They're able to perform inside because the concert is outside of school hours and the rules for requiring and checking vaccination apply to events held during school hours, but not after school.*

*It's been a few years since we've hosted a Santa Claus visit and after much thought, I've decided to discontinue this schoowide practice based on a few factors:*

- ***Balancing Christmas with Other Winter Holidays***-You all do a great job of incorporating stories, art, lessons, and activities highlighting customs from Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Las Posadas, Winter Solstice, etc as part of your instruction to teach about traditions from diverse cultures and people of different backgrounds. Teaching about Christmas traditions should be included in this, however a visit from Santa Claus disproportionately celebrates Christmas compared to other holidays.

- **Consideration for What Students Already Know and Experience**-I am confident that the majority, if not all, our students already know about Santa, have experiences visiting with Santa outside of school, and do not rely on a school-provided Santa visit. If families wish to have a Santa visit, there are many opportunities to do so outside of school.
- **Many Other Ways to Teach About Traditions**-As you talk about and do activities to teach about diverse holiday experiences, there are many ways to include Christmas traditions in a similar manner to how you teach about other holidays. A visit from Santa, while joyful, does not teach students anything new about holiday traditions.

*If you feel strongly about hosting a Santa visit in your class, you need to arrange a visit from someone (community member, parent/family member, etc) who can speak about traditions of other holidays to balance a visit with Santa. If you need help with this, let me know.*

*If you plan to do this, please notify me before next Fri, Dec 16 so that we can count your class in a Santa visit schedule.*

Matt Osmond

Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School

(818) 729-3150 x11491

[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)

IG: @teddyrooselem

(he/him/his)

Sent from my iPhone

On Dec 15, 2022, at 5:56 PM, Emily Weisberg <[EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org](mailto:EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org)> wrote:

Please advise 🙏

Emily

Emily Weisberg, Ed.D. ([she/her/hers](#))

[EmilyWeisberg@Burbankusd.org](mailto:EmilyWeisberg@Burbankusd.org)

Boardmember, Burbank Unified School District

*Black Lives Matter*



I acknowledge the traditional, ancestral, unceded territory of the Chumash, Tongva, Fernandefio Tataviam and First Nations on which we are learning, educating, and living. "It is important to understand the longstanding history that has brought us to reside on the land, and to seek to understand our place within that history."

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**From:** Monica Pa Moya <[monicapa4@gmail.com](mailto:monicapa4@gmail.com)>  
**Date:** Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 4:27 PM  
**To:** Emily Weisberg <[EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org](mailto:EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org)>  
**Cc:** Jessica Stamen <[jessicastamen1@gmail.com](mailto:jessicastamen1@gmail.com)>  
**Subject:** Santa visiting Roosevelt Elementary School during school hours

Caution! This message was sent from outside of Burbank Unified School District.

Hi Emily,

I hope you are doing well! We met at Jessica Stamen's house, and a few other times. I was texting with Jessica about this situation brewing at Roosevelt and wanted to get your views.

I'm a co-chair of Roosevelt's DEI committee and, this year, the principal decided to end the tradition of Santa visiting the classrooms. There was a discussion at the DEI meeting where the group seemed on board with this. But then the blowback came, and now Santa can visit some classes if the teacher agrees.

I find this to be very problematic for a secular public school, and also because it is other-ing and not inclusive. Here is my question - are there any BUSD rules against religious activities at school and would this count? Can instruction hours be used for this kind of religious activity? I'm researching CA education code on this, but thought I'd go to the source! Any suggestions would be appreciated.

Best,  
Monica Pa Moya

## Peter Knapik

---

**From:** Peter Knapik  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 21, 2022 7:12 AM  
**To:** Matthew Osmond  
**Subject:** Re: Santa Visits Discontinued

Hi Matt.

Yes. I will be at work late today. We can pull Board Policy. Emails.

We will need to request any lesson plans and worksheets that teachers have related to religion.

Sent from my iPhone

On Dec 20, 2022, at 5:23 PM, Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org> wrote:

Hi Peter,

I received the below email and public records request about Santa earlier this afternoon. Do you have time tomorrow to talk me through this process?

Thanks,

Matt Osmond  
Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School  
(818) 729-3150 x11491  
[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)  
IG: @teddyrooselem  
(he/him/his)

---

**From:** Brian Clauer <brianclauer@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 20, 2022 3:10 PM  
**To:** Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>  
**Subject:** Re: Santa Visits Discontinued

---

Caution! This message was sent from outside of Burbank Unified School District.

---

Hello,

This is an interesting topic of debate and I would like to know more about how you and your school handle this type of concern.

Can you please publish or distribute a detailed communique that explains your schools process, policies, and procedures for making complaints or expressing concerns about material Roosevelt Elementary School presents to our children in the event that a parent or parents might find

that material to be harmful, overtly or subtly religious in nature, or presented in a disproportionate manner and how you handle those concerns or complaints? I think it would be helpful to the community to have an understanding of how the process works and how your school responds to concerns or complaints about concepts that some might find objectionable, improperly balanced or disproportionately presented.

Additionally, I would like to make a **public records request** to you for copies of any emails, instant messages, or written correspondence sent to you, your school, or any teacher or administrator at Roosevelt Elementary School regarding concerns or complaints about any scheduled or proposed visits by a person who would be impersonating the mythical character known as **Santa** within the last two years, including any sent today or tomorrow, including all responses to the email you sent above that are received today or tomorrow (12/2022-12/21/22) ... If this topic was discussed in any meetings within your school that are subject to transparency, please include the transcripts of those discussions as well. Please provide responsive records to this email address in PDF format in a timely manner.

thank you very much,

Brian Clauer

On Tue, Dec 20, 2022 at 11:02 AM Matthew Osmond <[matthewosmond@burbankusd.org](mailto:matthewosmond@burbankusd.org)> wrote:

*Greetings Roosevelt Families,*

*Over the past two weeks, I have received a number of inquiries about a visit by Santa. Complaints have been registered about Santa being a religious character and the lack of equal time to other religions and special observations during this holiday season. These concerns surround disproportionately celebrating Christmas in relation to other Winter holiday observations.*

*In consideration of these concerns, about half of the teachers felt that the school should forego the practice of having a visit by Santa. I also checked with other Burbank elementary schools and no other school has this practice of hosting Santa visits. Additionally, I consulted with District leadership and they concurred with the decision to forego a visit by Santa. Therefore, we will not be hosting a visit from Santa.*

*If you contributed any money to your class for a Santa visit, you may either have the funds refunded by reaching out to your child's teacher or room parent (whomever collected the funds) or you may make the funds a donation to your child's class to cover future classroom expenses.*

*I know this decision may not be welcome for some and I'm sorry for this change. We will continue to provide educational information about holiday practices across the school that reflects multiple perspectives. This decision was not an easy one to make and I appreciate the various points of view you have shared with me.*

*With Wishes for a Happy Holiday Season,*

*-Matt Osmond, Principal*

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You are receiving this email because of your relationship with Roosevelt Elementary. If you wish to stop receiving email updates sent through the Blackboard® service, please [unsubscribe](#).

Roosevelt Elementary | 850 N Cordova Street, Burbank, CA 91505 | 818-729-3150

## Peter Knapik

---

**From:** Peter Knapik  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 20, 2022 10:27 AM  
**To:** Matthew Osmond  
**Subject:** RE: DRAFT Email to Families in 11 Classrooms Expecting a Santa Visit

Looks good. Thank you.

Peter Knapik, Ed.D.  
Burbank Unified School District  
Director of Elementary Education  
1900 W. Olive Avenue  
Burbank, CA 91506-2460  
Office Number 818-729-4482

---

**From:** Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 20, 2022 9:53 AM  
**To:** Peter Knapik <PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org>  
**Subject:** Re: DRAFT Email to Families in 11 Classrooms Expecting a Santa Visit

Hi Peter,

Here's the full msg to parents with the \$ info highlighted. I'm hoping to send it before noon or as soon as you approve:

*Dear Roosevelt Families,*

*Over the past two weeks, I have received a number of inquiries about a visit by Santa. Complaints have been registered about Santa being a religious character and the lack of equal time to other religions and special observations during this holiday season. These concerns surround disproportionately celebrating Christmas in relation to other Winter holiday observations.*

*In consideration of these concerns, about half of the staff felt that the school should forego the practice of having a visit by Santa. I also checked with other Burbank elementary schools and no other school has this practice of hosting Santa visits. Additionally, I consulted with District leadership and they concurred with the decision to forego a visit by Santa. Therefore, we will not be hosting a visit from Santa.*



*If you contributed any money to your class for a Santa visit, you may either have the funds refunded by reaching out to your child's teacher or room parent (whomever collected the funds) or you may make the funds a donation to your child's class to cover future classroom expenses.*

*I know this decision may not be welcome for some and I'm sorry for this change. We will continue to provide educational information about holiday practices across the school that reflects multiple perspectives. This decision was not an easy one to make and I appreciate the various points of view you have shared with me.*

*I wish you and your family a happy holiday season.*

Matt Osmond

Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School

(818) 729-3150 x11491

[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)

IG: @teddyrooselem

(he/him/his)

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**From:** Peter Knapik <[PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org](mailto:PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org)>

**Sent:** Monday, December 19, 2022 4:41 PM

**To:** Matthew Osmond <[MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org](mailto:MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org)>

**Subject:** RE: DRAFT Email to Families in 11 Classrooms Expecting a Santa Visit

*Dear Roosevelt Families,*

*Over the past two weeks, I have received a number of inquiries about a visit by Santa. Complaints have been registered about Santa being a religious character and the lack of equal time to other religions and special observations during this holiday season. These concerns surround disproportionately celebrating Christmas in relation to other Winter holiday observations.*

***In consideration of these concerns, about half of the staff felt that the school should forego the practice of having a visit by Santa. I also checked with other Burbank elementary schools***

*and no other school has this practice of hosting Santa visits. Additionally, I consulted with District leadership and they concurred with the decision to forego a visit by Santa. I know this decision may not be welcome for some and I'm sorry for this change, but we will not be hosting a visit from Santa. We will continue to provide educational information about holiday practices across the school that reflects multiple perspectives. This decision was not an easy one to make **and I appreciate the various points of view you have shared with me.** I sincerely wish you and your family a happy holiday season.*

*Matt Osmond*

*Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School*

Peter Knapik, Ed.D.  
Burbank Unified School District  
Director of Elementary Education  
1900 W. Olive Avenue  
Burbank, CA 91506-2460  
Office Number 818-729-4482

---

**From:** Matthew Osmond <[MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org](mailto:MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org)>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 19, 2022 4:20 PM  
**To:** Peter Knapik <[PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org](mailto:PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org)>  
**Subject:** Re: DRAFT Email to Families in 11 Classrooms Expecting a Santa Visit

Hi Peter-Everything in bold is revised (paragraph 2 and 3). Take a look and let me know if approved.

Thanks!

*Dear Roosevelt Families,*

*Over the past two weeks, I have received a number of inquiries about a visit by Santa. Complaints have been registered about Santa being a religious character and the lack of equal time to other religions and special observations during this holiday season. These concerns surround disproportionately celebrating Christmas in relation to other Winter holiday observations.*

***In consideration of these concerns, some of our classes were interested in continuing with a Santa visit while hosting a presentation about other holiday celebrations. I also checked with other Burbank elementary schools and no other school has this practice of hosting Santa visits.***

*Additionally, I consulted with District leadership and they concurred with the decision to forego a visit by Santa.*

*I know this decision may not be welcome for some and I'm sorry for this change, but we will not be hosting a visit from Santa. We will continue to provide educational information about holiday practices across the school that reflects multiple perspectives. This decision was not an easy one to make **and I appreciate the various points-of-view you have shared with me even if we ultimately disagreed.***

*I sincerely wish you and your family a happy holiday season.*

Matt Osmond

Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School

(818) 729-3150 x11491

[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)

IG: @teddyrooselem

(he/him/his)

---

**From:** Peter Knapik <[PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org](mailto:PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org)>

**Sent:** Monday, December 19, 2022 3:56 PM

**To:** Matthew Osmond <[MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org](mailto:MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org)>

**Subject:** RE: DRAFT Email to Families in 11 Classrooms Expecting a Santa Visit

Hi Matt,

I rewrote using your foundational parts for my revision. Matt Hill and Sharon proofread my email. Please take a look and see what you think.

*Dear Roosevelt Families,*

*Over the past two weeks, I have received a number of inquiries about a visit by Santa. Complaints have been registered about Santa being a religious character and the lack of equal time to other religions and special observations during this holiday season. The concerns surround disproportionately celebrating Christmas in relation to other Winter holiday observations.*

*After consulting with Roosevelt's staff about half felt that the school should forego the practice of having a visit by Santa. I checked with other Burbank elementary schools and no other school has this practice. I also consulted with District leadership and they concurred with the decision to forego a visit by Santa.*

*I know this decision may not be welcome for some and I'm sorry for this change, but we will not be hosting a visit from Santa. We will continue to provide educational information about holiday practices across the school that reflects multiple perspectives. This decision was not an easy one to make.*

*I sincerely wish you and your family a happy holiday season.*

**Matt Osmond**  
*Principal, Roosevelt Elementary School*

Peter Knapik, Ed.D.  
Burbank Unified School District  
Director of Elementary Education  
1900 W. Olive Avenue  
Burbank, CA 91506-2460  
Office Number 818-729-4482

---

**From:** Matthew Osmond <[MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org](mailto:MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org)>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 19, 2022 11:34 AM  
**To:** Peter Knapik <[PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org](mailto:PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org)>  
**Subject:** DRAFT Email to Families in 11 Classrooms Expecting a Santa Visit

Hi Peter-Here's a draft I put together. Let me know what you think.

*Greetings Families,*

*In past years, Roosevelt hosted a visit with Santa in each classroom around this time of year, with the last visit occurring in Dec 2019. This year, I discontinued this schoolwide practice for the following reasons:*

- Hosting Santa disproportionately celebrates Christmas in relation to other Winter holidays.*
- The educational experience of discussing and learning about various holiday traditions, including Santa, can be done without experiencing a Santa visit.*

*Initially, I set a criteria allowing for a Santa visit if the class also had someone (parent, community member, etc) come to speak about another cultures holiday traditions so that there was balance between various celebrations. However, after consulting with our district leadership, we are not able to host any of these Santa visits.*

*This issue has been passionately discussed for the past two weeks. For those of you who have strong feelings either in favor of or opposed to a Santa visit at school, I appreciate the points-of-view you have shared.*

*I know this decision will be frustrating for some and I'm sorry for the frustration. Despite our agreement or disagreement with this decision, I sincerely wish you and your family a happy holiday season.*

Thanks,

Matt Osmond

Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School

(818) 729-3150 x11491

[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)

IG: @teddyrooselem

(he/him/his)

# Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

## Team Planning Guide

November 2022

Use the questions below as you work with your DEI Change Team to plan your work for this year. This list is not meant to be exhaustive, but to provide a starting point or a lens to refine an existing plan.

### Action Goal(s) Roll Out Schedule & Scope

- When and how often will your DEI Team meet?
- Is your action goal clear and does it have meaningful DEI impact?
  - What is the particular issue/concern you are trying to solve?
  - Is there a clear who/group that you are working to shift their experience or learning outcomes?
- What topics do you plan to cover with your full staff to ensure successful implementation of your action goal(s)?
- When will those topics be shared with staff?
  - Full staff meetings, Grade Level meetings, Department meetings, other site specific team groups?
  - What will staff be expected to do on their own time?
- Have you planned your timeline so that DEI Leads (and/or other appropriate leaders) have a chance to try it out first prior to staff being asked to do it?
  - It is important for those leading this work to be able to model what others are being asked to do.
  - It will also provide a chance for your core team to troubleshoot.
- What expectations will there be for staff? How will they be held accountable?
  - Have expectations been clearly communicated to staff?
  - Are there specific behaviors or actions that staff are being asked to shift?
  - Do they have to submit something that demonstrates they have met the expectations?
  - What happens if someone doesn't follow through?

- When folks need additional support, how will they get it? Will DEI leads be available to support their peers? Is there a particular person to contact, or a google form that can be available for questions that come up?
- Have you built in time for refinement based on how the implementation is going?

### **Benchmarks?**

- What benchmarks will you use to determine the success of your implementation?
- How frequently can you use those benchmarks so that adjustments can be made along the way?
- How will you share progress with your staff and community?
- What will you do if you don't get the results that you are hoping for?

### **Resources & Capacity Building**

- As you continue this work, you will identify areas of capacity building needed in the DEI team and the staff.
  - What resources are already available on the BUSD DEI web page?
  - What materials from the Teaching for Equity & Justice Training can be incorporated and connected to your work with your school staff?
  - How can the work staff engaged with Ebony Williams be connected to the action goals?
  - How will you onboard new employees who may not have the same foundational knowledge?

### **Who is Missing?**

- Depending on your goal, are there voices missing from the planning process that need to be considered?
  - Students?
  - Parents?
  - Non-teaching staff?
  - Other community members?
- How will you work to ensure that the voices you hear/seek are reflective of the communities you most desire to engage?

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**Policy 1312.2: Complaints Concerning Instructional Materials**

**Status:** ADOPTED

**Original Adopted Date:** 04/19/2007 | **Last Reviewed Date:** 04/19/2007

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The Board of Education uses a comprehensive process to adopt district instructional materials that is based on selection criteria established by law and Board policy and includes opportunities for the involvement of parents/guardians and community members. Complaints concerning the content or use of instructional materials, including textbooks, supplementary instructional materials, library materials, or other instructional materials and equipment, shall be properly and fairly considered using established complaint procedures.

Parents/guardians are encouraged to discuss any concerns regarding instructional materials with their child's teacher and/or the school principal. If the situation remains unresolved, a complaint may be filed using the process specified in the administrative regulation.

The district shall accept complaints concerning instructional materials only from staff, district residents, or the parents/guardians of children enrolled in a district school.

When deliberating upon challenged materials, the Superintendent and/or review committee shall consider the educational philosophy of the district, the professional opinions of teachers of the subject and of other competent authorities, reviews of the materials by reputable bodies, the teacher's stated objectives in using the materials, community standards, and the objections of the complainant.

Complainants are encouraged to accept the Superintendent's or review committee's decision. However, if the complainant finds that decision unsatisfactory, he/she may appeal the decision to the Board.

The district's decision shall be based on educational suitability of the materials and the criteria established in Board policy and administrative regulation.

When any challenged instructional material is reviewed by the district, it shall not be subject to further reconsideration for 12 months, unless the Superintendent determines that reconsideration is warranted.

Complaints related to sufficiency of textbooks or instructional materials shall be resolved pursuant to the district's Williams uniform complaint procedure at AR 1312.4.

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**Regulation 1312.2: Complaints Concerning Instructional Materials**

Status: ADOPTED

Original Adopted Date: 04/19/2007 | Last Reviewed Date: 04/19/2007

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**Step 1: Informal Complaint**

If a staff member, district resident, or parent/guardian of a student enrolled in a district school has a complaint regarding the content or use of any specific instructional material, he/she shall informally discuss the material in question with the principal.

**Step 2: Formal Complaint**

If the complainant is not satisfied with the principal's initial response, he/she shall present a written complaint to the principal. Complaints regarding printed material shall name the author, title, and publisher and shall identify the objection by page and item numbers. In the case of nonprinted material, written information specifying the precise nature of the objection shall be given. Complainants shall sign all complaints and provide identifying information so that the district is able to make a proper reply. Anonymous complaints will not be accepted.

Upon receiving a complaint, the principal shall acknowledge its receipt and answer any questions regarding procedure. The principal then shall notify the Superintendent or designee and the teacher(s) involved of the complaint.

During the investigation of the complaint, the challenged material may remain in use until a final decision has been reached. However, upon request of the parent/guardian who has filed the complaint, his/her child may be excused from using challenged materials until a resolution has been reached. The teacher shall assign the student an alternate material of equal merit.

**Step 3: Superintendent Determination**

The Superintendent or designee shall determine whether a review committee should be convened to review the complaint.

If the Superintendent or designee determines that a review committee is not necessary, he/she shall issue a decision regarding the complaint.

**Step 4: Review Committee**

If the Superintendent or designee determines that a review committee is necessary, he/she shall appoint a committee composed of administrators and staff members selected from relevant instructional and administrative areas. The Superintendent or designee may also appoint community members to serve on the committee.

The review committee shall review the criteria specified in Board policy and shall determine the extent to which the challenged material supports the curriculum, the educational appropriateness of the material, and its suitability for the age level of the student.

Within 30 days of being convened, the review committee shall summarize its findings in a written report. The Superintendent or designee shall notify the complainant of the committee's decision within 15 days of receiving the committee's report.

**Step 5: Appeal to the Board of Education**

If the complainant remains unsatisfied, he/she may appeal the Superintendent's or the review committee's decision to the Board. The Board's decision shall be final.

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**Exhibit (PDF) 1312.2-E PDF(1): Complaints Concerning Instructional Materials**

**Status:** ADOPTED

**Original Adopted Date:** 04/19/2007

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*See PDF on the next page.*

## REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

This form is for use only by district employees, district residents, or parents/guardians of children enrolled in a district school to challenge the content or use of an instructional material. For complaints regarding sufficiency of instructional materials, please use the Williams Uniform Complaint Procedure complaint form.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of person filing complaint: \_\_\_\_\_

Anonymous complaints will not be accepted.

Group represented (if any): \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail address, if any: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Material Being Challenged:

Title:

Author:

Publisher: Date of Edition:

Name of school/classroom material was used:

\_\_\_\_\_

1. Please specifically state the nature of your concern or objection and identify your objection by page, tape sequence, video frame, or words, as appropriate. You may use additional pages if necessary.

2. Did you read/view the entire selection?

3. For what age group would you recommend this material?

4. If not, what percentage did you read/view, or what parts?

5. What do you feel might be the result if a student reads/views this material?

6. What would you like the school to do about this material?

Do not assign it to my child

Withdraw it from all students

Reconsider it

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of complainant

For District Use:

Request received by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Action taken: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Policy 6141.2: Recognition Of Religious Beliefs And Customs**

**Status:** ADOPTED

**Original Adopted Date:** 06/14/2007

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The Board of Education recognizes that students' education would be incomplete without an understanding of the role of religion in society. As appropriate for a particular course, teachers may objectively discuss the influences of various religions, using religious works and symbols to illustrate their relationship with culture, literature or the arts. The Board expects that such instruction will identify principles common to all religions and foster respect for the diversity of religions and customs in the world.

(cf. 6143 - Courses of Study)

In order to respect each student's individual right to freedom of religious practice, religious indoctrination is clearly forbidden in the public schools. Instruction about religion shall not promote or denigrate the beliefs or customs of any particular religion or sect, nor should a preference be shown for one religious viewpoint over another. Staff members shall be highly sensitive to their obligation not to interfere with the religious development of any student in whatever tradition the student embraces.

(cf. 0410 - Nondiscrimination in District Programs and Activities)

(cf. 1330 - Use of School Facilities)

(cf. 1325 - Advertising and Promotion)

(cf. 5113 - Absences and Excuses)

(cf. 6145.5 - Student Organizations and Equal Access)

Staff shall not endorse, encourage or solicit religious or anti-religious expression or activities among students during class time. As part of their official duties, staff shall not lead students in prayer or other religious activities. However, staff shall not prohibit or discourage any student from praying or otherwise expressing his/her religious belief as long as this does not disrupt the classroom.

(cf. 5127 - Graduation Ceremony and Activities)

Students may express their beliefs about religion in their homework, artwork and other class work if the expression is germane to the assignment. Such work shall be judged by accepted academic standards.

(cf. 5121 - Grades/Evaluation of Student Achievement)

(cf. 5145.2 - Freedom of Speech/Expression)

(cf. 6144 - Controversial Issues)

(cf. 6154 - Homework/Make-up Work)

While teaching about religious holidays is a permissible part of the educational program, celebrating religious holidays is not allowed in the public schools. School-sponsored programs shall not be, nor have the effect of being, religiously oriented or a religious celebration. School and classroom decorations may express seasonal themes that are not religious in nature.

A student absence related to an observance of a religious holiday or ceremony shall be considered an excused absence. Make-up work shall be provided and accepted in a manner that is consistent with an absence due to illness or other excused absence.

Music, art, literature or drama programs having religious themes are permitted as part of the curriculum for school-sponsored activities and programs if presented in an objective manner and as a traditional part of the cultural and religious heritage. The use of religious symbols that are part of a religious holiday is permitted as a teaching aid or resource provided that such symbols are displayed as an example of cultural and religious heritage of the holiday and are temporary in nature.

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**Regulation 6141.2: Recognition Of Religious Beliefs And Customs**

**Status:** ADOPTED

**Original Adopted Date:** 06/14/2007

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Staff shall be informed and make every effort to schedule one-time events, such as examinations, auditions, school-sponsored trips, special laboratories, picture-taking days and class parties, to minimize conflicts with major religious holidays of all faiths.

(cf. 6111 - School Calendar)

**Programs and Exhibits**

When school programs and exhibits are in any way related to instruction about religion or religious holidays, the following guidelines shall be observed:

1. The principal or designee shall ensure that school-sponsored programs are presented in an objective manner, consistent with Board policy.
  2. The principal or designee shall be kept informed of the program's development.
  3. Program or exhibit planners shall take into consideration the diverse religious faiths represented in the community, student body and staff.
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**Policy 1312.2: Complaints Concerning Instructional Materials**

**Status:** ADOPTED

**Original Adopted Date:** 04/19/2007 | **Last Reviewed Date:** 04/19/2007

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The Board of Education uses a comprehensive process to adopt district instructional materials that is based on selection criteria established by law and Board policy and includes opportunities for the involvement of parents/guardians and community members. Complaints concerning the content or use of instructional materials, including textbooks, supplementary instructional materials, library materials, or other instructional materials and equipment, shall be properly and fairly considered using established complaint procedures.

Parents/guardians are encouraged to discuss any concerns regarding instructional materials with their child's teacher and/or the school principal. If the situation remains unresolved, a complaint may be filed using the process specified in the administrative regulation.

The district shall accept complaints concerning instructional materials only from staff, district residents, or the parents/guardians of children enrolled in a district school.

When deliberating upon challenged materials, the Superintendent and/or review committee shall consider the educational philosophy of the district, the professional opinions of teachers of the subject and of other competent authorities, reviews of the materials by reputable bodies, the teacher's stated objectives in using the materials, community standards, and the objections of the complainant.

Complainants are encouraged to accept the Superintendent's or review committee's decision. However, if the complainant finds that decision unsatisfactory, he/she may appeal the decision to the Board.

The district's decision shall be based on educational suitability of the materials and the criteria established in Board policy and administrative regulation.

When any challenged instructional material is reviewed by the district, it shall not be subject to further reconsideration for 12 months, unless the Superintendent determines that reconsideration is warranted.

Complaints related to sufficiency of textbooks or instructional materials shall be resolved pursuant to the district's Williams uniform complaint procedure at AR 1312.4.

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**Regulation 1312.2: Complaints Concerning Instructional Materials**

**Status:** ADOPTED

**Original Adopted Date:** 04/19/2007 | **Last Reviewed Date:** 04/19/2007

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**Step 1: Informal Complaint**

If a staff member, district resident, or parent/guardian of a student enrolled in a district school has a complaint regarding the content or use of any specific instructional material, he/she shall informally discuss the material in question with the principal.

**Step 2: Formal Complaint**

If the complainant is not satisfied with the principal's initial response, he/she shall present a written complaint to the principal. Complaints regarding printed material shall name the author, title, and publisher and shall identify the objection by page and item numbers. In the case of nonprinted material, written information specifying the precise nature of the objection shall be given. Complainants shall sign all complaints and provide identifying information so that the district is able to make a proper reply. Anonymous complaints will not be accepted.

Upon receiving a complaint, the principal shall acknowledge its receipt and answer any questions regarding procedure. The principal then shall notify the Superintendent or designee and the teacher(s) involved of the complaint.

During the investigation of the complaint, the challenged material may remain in use until a final decision has been reached. However, upon request of the parent/guardian who has filed the complaint, his/her child may be excused from using challenged materials until a resolution has been reached. The teacher shall assign the student an alternate material of equal merit.

**Step 3: Superintendent Determination**

The Superintendent or designee shall determine whether a review committee should be convened to review the complaint.

If the Superintendent or designee determines that a review committee is not necessary, he/she shall issue a decision regarding the complaint.

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If the Superintendent or designee determines that a review committee is necessary, he/she shall appoint a committee composed of administrators and staff members selected from relevant instructional and administrative areas. The Superintendent or designee may also appoint community members to serve on the committee.

The review committee shall review the criteria specified in Board policy and shall determine the extent to which the challenged material supports the curriculum, the educational appropriateness of the material, and its suitability for the age level of the student.

Within 30 days of being convened, the review committee shall summarize its findings in a written report. The Superintendent or designee shall notify the complainant of the committee's decision within 15 days of receiving the committee's report.

**Step 5: Appeal to the Board of Education**

If the complainant remains unsatisfied, he/she may appeal the Superintendent's or the review committee's decision to the Board. The Board's decision shall be final.

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**Exhibit (PDF) 1312.2-E PDF(1): Complaints Concerning Instructional Materials**

**Status: ADOPTED**

**Original Adopted Date: 04/19/2007**

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*See PDF on the next page.*

## REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of person filing complaint: \_\_\_\_\_

Anonymous complaints will not be accepted.

Group represented (if any): \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail address, if any: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Material Being Challenged:

Title:

Author:

Publisher: Date of Edition:

Name of school/classroom material was used:

\_\_\_\_\_

1. Please specifically state the nature of your concern or objection and identify your objection by page, tape sequence, video frame, or words, as appropriate. You may use additional pages if necessary.

2. Did you read/view the entire selection?

3. For what age group would you recommend this material?

4. If not, what percentage did you read/view, or what parts?

5. What do you feel might be the result if a student reads/views this material?

6. What would you like the school to do about this material?

Do not assign it to my child

Withdraw it from all students

Reconsider it

\_\_\_\_\_

## Peter Knapik

---

**From:** Peter Knapik  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 20, 2022 10:27 AM  
**To:** Matthew Osmond  
**Subject:** RE: DRAFT Email to Families in 11 Classrooms Expecting a Santa Visit

Looks good. Thank you.

Peter Knapik, Ed.D.  
Burbank Unified School District  
Director of Elementary Education  
1900 W. Olive Avenue  
Burbank, CA 91506-2460  
Office Number 818-729-4482

---

**From:** Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 20, 2022 9:53 AM  
**To:** Peter Knapik <PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org>  
**Subject:** Re: DRAFT Email to Families in 11 Classrooms Expecting a Santa Visit

Hi Peter,

Here's the full msg to parents with the \$ info highlighted. I'm hoping to send it before noon or as soon as you approve:

*Dear Roosevelt Families,*

*Over the past two weeks, I have received a number of inquiries about a visit by Santa. Complaints have been registered about Santa being a religious character and the lack of equal time to other religions and special observations during this holiday season. These concerns surround disproportionately celebrating Christmas in relation to other Winter holiday observations.*

*In consideration of these concerns, about half of the staff felt that the school should forego the practice of having a visit by Santa. I also checked with other Burbank elementary schools and no other school has this practice of hosting Santa visits. Additionally, I consulted with District leadership and they concurred with the decision to forego a visit by Santa. Therefore, we will not be hosting a visit from Santa.*

*If you contributed any money to your class for a Santa visit, you may either have the funds refunded by reaching out to your child's teacher or room parent (whomever collected the funds) or you may make the funds a donation to your child's class to cover future classroom expenses.*

*I know this decision may not be welcome for some and I'm sorry for this change. We will continue to provide educational information about holiday practices across the school that reflects multiple perspectives. This decision was not an easy one to make and I appreciate the various points of view you have shared with me.*

*I wish you and your family a happy holiday season.*

Matt Osmond

Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School

(818) 729-3150 x11491

[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)

IG: @teddyrooselem

(he/him/his)

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**From:** Peter Knapik <[PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org](mailto:PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org)>

**Sent:** Monday, December 19, 2022 4:41 PM

**To:** Matthew Osmond <[MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org](mailto:MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org)>

**Subject:** RE: DRAFT Email to Families in 11 Classrooms Expecting a Santa Visit

*Dear Roosevelt Families,*

*Over the past two weeks, I have received a number of inquiries about a visit by Santa. Complaints have been registered about Santa being a religious character and the lack of equal time to other religions and special observations during this holiday season. These concerns surround disproportionately celebrating Christmas in relation to other Winter holiday observations.*

***In consideration of these concerns, about half of the staff felt that the school should forego the practice of having a visit by Santa. I also checked with other Burbank elementary schools***

*and no other school has this practice of hosting Santa visits. Additionally, I consulted with District leadership and they concurred with the decision to forego a visit by Santa. I know this decision may not be welcome for some and I'm sorry for this change, but we will not be hosting a visit from Santa. We will continue to provide educational information about holiday practices across the school that reflects multiple perspectives. This decision was not an easy one to make **and I appreciate the various points of view you have shared with me.** I sincerely wish you and your family a happy holiday season.*

*Matt Osmond*

*Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School*

Peter Knapik, Ed.D.  
Burbank Unified School District  
Director of Elementary Education  
1900 W. Olive Avenue  
Burbank, CA 91506-2460  
Office Number 818-729-4482

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**From:** Matthew Osmond <[MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org](mailto:MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org)>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 19, 2022 4:20 PM  
**To:** Peter Knapik <[PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org](mailto:PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org)>  
**Subject:** Re: DRAFT Email to Families in 11 Classrooms Expecting a Santa Visit

Hi Peter-Everything in bold is revised (paragraph 2 and 3). Take a look and let me know if approved.

Thanks!

*Dear Roosevelt Families,*

*Over the past two weeks, I have received a number of inquiries about a visit by Santa. Complaints have been registered about Santa being a religious character and the lack of equal time to other religions and special observations during this holiday season. These concerns surround disproportionately celebrating Christmas in relation to other Winter holiday observations.*

***In consideration of these concerns, some of our classes were interested in continuing with a Santa visit while hosting a presentation about other holiday celebrations. I also checked with other Burbank elementary schools and no other school has this practice of hosting Santa visits.***

*Additionally, I consulted with District leadership and they concurred with the decision to forego a visit by Santa.*

*I know this decision may not be welcome for some and I'm sorry for this change, but we will not be hosting a visit from Santa. We will continue to provide educational information about holiday practices across the school that reflects multiple perspectives. This decision was not an easy one to make **and I appreciate the various points-of-view you have shared with me even if we ultimately disagreed.***

*I sincerely wish you and your family a happy holiday season.*

Matt Osmond

Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School

(818) 729-3150 x11491

[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)

IG: @teddyrooselem

(he/him/his)

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**From:** Peter Knapik <[PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org](mailto:PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org)>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 19, 2022 3:56 PM  
**To:** Matthew Osmond <[MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org](mailto:MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org)>  
**Subject:** RE: DRAFT Email to Families in 11 Classrooms Expecting a Santa Visit

Hi Matt,

I rewrote using your foundational parts for my revision. Matt Hill and Sharon proofread my email. Please take a look and see what you think.

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*Dear Roosevelt Families,*

*Over the past two weeks, I have received a number of inquiries about a visit by Santa. Complaints have been registered about Santa being a religious character and the lack of equal time to other religions and special observations during this holiday season. The concerns surround disproportionately celebrating Christmas in relation to other Winter holiday observations.*

*After consulting with Roosevelt's staff about half felt that the school should forego the practice of having a visit by Santa. I checked with other Burbank elementary schools and no other school has this practice. I also consulted with District leadership and they concurred with the decision to forego a visit by Santa.*

*I know this decision may not be welcome for some and I'm sorry for this change, but we will not be hosting a visit from Santa. We will continue to provide educational information about holiday practices across the school that reflects multiple perspectives. This decision was not an easy one to make.*

*I sincerely wish you and your family a happy holiday season.*

**Matt Osmond**  
*Principal, Roosevelt Elementary School*

Peter Knapik, Ed.D.  
Burbank Unified School District  
Director of Elementary Education  
1900 W. Olive Avenue  
Burbank, CA 91506-2460  
Office Number 818-729-4482

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**From:** Matthew Osmond <[MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org](mailto:MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org)>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 19, 2022 11:34 AM  
**To:** Peter Knapik <[PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org](mailto:PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org)>  
**Subject:** DRAFT Email to Families in 11 Classrooms Expecting a Santa Visit

Hi Peter-Here's a draft I put together. Let me know what you think.

*Greetings Families,*

*In past years, Roosevelt hosted a visit with Santa in each classroom around this time of year, with the last visit occurring in Dec 2019. This year, I discontinued this schoolwide practice for the following reasons:*

- Hosting Santa disproportionately celebrates Christmas in relation to other Winter holidays.*
- The educational experience of discussing and learning about various holiday traditions, including Santa, can be done without experiencing a Santa visit.*

*Initially, I set a criteria allowing for a Santa visit if the class also had someone (parent, community member, etc) come to speak about another cultures holiday traditions so that there was balance between various celebrations. However, after consulting with our district leadership, we are not able to host any of these Santa visits.*

*This issue has been passionately discussed for the past two weeks. For those of you who have strong feelings either in favor of or opposed to a Santa visit at school, I appreciate the points-of-view you have shared.*

*I know this decision will be frustrating for some and I'm sorry for the frustration. Despite our agreement or disagreement with this decision, I sincerely wish you and your family a happy holiday season.*

Thanks,

Matt Osmond

Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School

(818) 729-3150 x11491

[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)

IG: @teddyrooselem

(he/him/his)



## Peter Knapik

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**From:** Peter Knapik  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 20, 2022 12:19 PM  
**To:** Matthew Osmond  
**Subject:** RE: Santa visiting Roosevelt Elementary School during school hours

Matt, I talked to Emily about an hour ago too so that you are aware.

Peter Knapik, Ed.D.  
Burbank Unified School District  
Director of Elementary Education  
1900 W. Olive Avenue  
Burbank, CA 91506-2460  
Office Number 818-729-4482

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**From:** Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 20, 2022 12:02 PM  
**To:** Emily Weisberg <EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org>; Matt Hill <MattHill@burbankusd.org>  
**Cc:** Peter Knapik <PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org>  
**Subject:** Re: Santa visiting Roosevelt Elementary School during school hours

Hi Emily,

Ultimately and with guidance, support, and advice from Matt, Peter, and Sharon, we discontinued the practice altogether and are no longer hosting any Santa visits whatsoever. I notified staff first thing this morning and parents about an hour ago. So far, I've received about equal amounts of supportive and disappointed emails from parents and slightly more supportive emails from staff than disappointed.

If you're still interested to learn what we had planned before cancelling the Santa visits, I'm happy to share that with you.

The conversations I had with staff and families definitely led to passionate debate about how we recognize and celebrate diversity inclusively without families who celebrate traditional holidays feeling left out. There's an expected level of disagreement to have about this and I was prepared for some of it, but I'll be honest that this issue has definitely surpassed the amount of time I thought it would require to manage

Looking forward to continuing to work toward these efforts...and to our upcoming 2-week break.

Please let me know if you have any other questions and Happy Holidays!

Matt Osmond

Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School

(818) 729-3150 x11491

[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)

IG: @teddyrooselem

(he/him/his)

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**From:** Emily Weisberg <[EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org](mailto:EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org)>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 19, 2022 4:31 PM  
**To:** Matt Hill <[MattHill@burbankusd.org](mailto:MattHill@burbankusd.org)>  
**Cc:** Peter Knapik <[PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org](mailto:PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org)>; Matthew Osmond <[MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org](mailto:MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org)>  
**Subject:** Re: Santa visiting Roosevelt Elementary School during school hours

Thank you, Matt (and Matt),  
I'd like to learn a bit more about what's being done in regard to someone speaking about other non-Christmas celebrations. While I think it's a good step, having a Santa visit inherently others some students for whom Santa is not a normal part of their holiday experience, as you outlined in your email to staff.

I have no doubt you've dealt with some rough parent emails, and I also have no doubt you've handled them with grace and care.

Could you share a bit more about how the visits are being explained to the classes who do not have Santa visiting? I'd also love to continue the conversation with you, and Dr. Hill, about the tradition moving forward, especially as I do trust your judgment and know that your insight into the school community runs far deeper than mine.

Thank you and Happy Holidays,  
Emily

Emily Weisberg, Ed.D. (*she/her/hers*)  
[EmilyWeisberg@Burbankusd.org](mailto:EmilyWeisberg@Burbankusd.org)  
Boardmember, Burbank Unified School District  
*Black Lives Matter*



I acknowledge the traditional, ancestral, unceded territory of the Chumash, Tongva, Fernandeño Tataviam and First Nations on which we are learning, educating, and living. "It is important to understand the longstanding history that has brought us to reside on the land, and to seek to understand our place within that history."

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**From:** Matt Hill <[MattHill@burbankusd.org](mailto:MattHill@burbankusd.org)>  
**Date:** Friday, December 16, 2022 at 8:26 AM  
**To:** Emily Weisberg <[EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org](mailto:EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org)>

Cc: Peter Knapik <PeterKnapik@burbankusd.org>, Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>

Subject: Re: Santa visiting Roosevelt Elementary School during school hours

Hi Emily,

I've copied Matt if you would like more info. Here is a summary from him.

In the past, it was really just a visit they did for fun. We haven't done it since Dec 2019 and I discontinued it this year because it elevated Christmas above other Winter Holidays. I explained to teachers that if they felt strongly about a visit, they needed to balance that by having someone (student, community member, family member, parent, etc) come talk about traditions from a non-Christmas celebration.

We've been careful to ensure neither the Santa visit nor the other presentations teach religion and instead teach customs and traditions. The Santa visits also discuss the tradition and often accompany readings of stories like The Grinch, The Polar Express, etc.

Out of 23 classroom teachers, there are 11 who have opted into a Santa visit. 8 of them coordinated an assembly yesterday where someone came and presented about traditions connected with Hanukkah (latkes, menorah, dreidel) and have a planned visit with Santa next Fri. The other 3 are doing so next week and have a planned visit with Santa next Wed.

I had pushback from two teachers who felt I was either ruining Christmas or favoring non-Christian traditions over Christian. I've had either conversations or emails with 7 parents who also disagree for the same reasons.

Happy to fill you in more if you need additional info.

Here's the email I sent to staff about it (first two paragraphs are unrelated):

*Hi All,*

*The stage risers will be moved from the stage to the Primary Playground next week where our Holiday Performances will be held. Upstairs teachers may need to adjust your line up spots accordingly if they are in your normal spot. I'll have two sound systems handy to test which one works best while you're rehearsing next week.*

*You probably noticed that the Auditorium is decorated for a holiday performance. This is for the Band/Orchestra performance on Tues, Dec 20 at 6pm. They're able to perform inside because the concert is outside of school hours and the rules for requiring and checking vaccination apply to events held during school hours, but not after school.*

*It's been a few years since we've hosted a Santa Claus visit and after much thought, I've decided to discontinue this schoowide practice based on a few factors:*

- ***Balancing Christmas with Other Winter Holidays***-You all do a great job of incorporating stories, art, lessons, and activities highlighting customs from Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Las Posadas, Winter Solstice, etc as part of your instruction to teach about traditions from diverse cultures and people of different backgrounds. Teaching about Christmas traditions should be included in this, however a visit from Santa Claus disproportionately celebrates Christmas compared to other holidays.

- **Consideration for What Students Already Know and Experience**-I am confident that the majority, if not all, our students already know about Santa, have experiences visiting with Santa outside of school, and do not rely on a school-provided Santa visit. If families wish to have a Santa visit, there are many opportunities to do so outside of school.
- **Many Other Ways to Teach About Traditions**-As you talk about and do activities to teach about diverse holiday experiences, there are many ways to include Christmas traditions in a similar manner to how you teach about other holidays. A visit from Santa, while joyful, does not teach students anything new about holiday traditions.

*If you feel strongly about hosting a Santa visit in your class, you need to arrange a visit from someone (community member, parent/family member, etc) who can speak about traditions of other holidays to balance a visit with Santa. If you need help with this, let me know.*

*If you plan to do this, please notify me before next Fri, Dec 16 so that we can count your class in a Santa visit schedule.*

Matt Osmond

Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School

(818) 729-3150 x11491

[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)

IG: @teddyrooselem

(he/him/his)

Sent from my iPhone

On Dec 15, 2022, at 5:56 PM, Emily Weisberg <[EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org](mailto:EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org)> wrote:

Please advise 🙏

Emily

Emily Weisberg, Ed.D. ([she/her/hers](#))  
[EmilyWeisberg@Burbankusd.org](mailto:EmilyWeisberg@Burbankusd.org)  
Boardmember, Burbank Unified School District  
*Black Lives Matter*



I acknowledge the traditional, ancestral, unceded territory of the Chumash, Tongva, Fernandeano Tataviam and First Nations on which we are learning, educating, and living. "It is important to understand the longstanding history that has brought us to reside on the land, and to seek to understand our place within that history."

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**From:** Monica Pa Moya <[monicapa4@gmail.com](mailto:monicapa4@gmail.com)>  
**Date:** Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 4:27 PM  
**To:** Emily Weisberg <[EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org](mailto:EmilyWeisberg@burbankusd.org)>  
**Cc:** Jessica Stamen <[jessicastamen1@gmail.com](mailto:jessicastamen1@gmail.com)>  
**Subject:** Santa visiting Roosevelt Elementary School during school hours

Caution! This message was sent from outside of Burbank Unified School District.

Hi Emily,

I hope you are doing well! We met at Jessica Stamen's house, and a few other times. I was texting with Jessica about this situation brewing at Roosevelt and wanted to get your views.

I'm a co-chair of Roosevelt's DEI committee and, this year, the principal decided to end the tradition of Santa visiting the classrooms. There was a discussion at the DEI meeting where the group seemed on board with this. But then the blowback came, and now Santa can visit some classes if the teacher agrees.

I find this to be very problematic for a secular public school, and also because it is other-ing and not inclusive. Here is my question - are there any BUSD rules against religious activities at school and would this count? Can instruction hours be used for this kind of religious activity? I'm researching CA education code on this, but thought I'd go to the source! Any suggestions would be appreciated.

Best,  
Monica Pa Moya

## Peter Knapik

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**From:** Peter Knapik  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 21, 2022 7:12 AM  
**To:** Matthew Osmond  
**Subject:** Re: Santa Visits Discontinued

Hi Matt.

Yes. I will be at work late today. We can pull Board Policy. Emails.

We will need to request any lesson plans and worksheets that teachers have related to religion.

Sent from my iPhone

On Dec 20, 2022, at 5:23 PM, Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org> wrote:

Hi Peter,

I received the below email and public records request about Santa earlier this afternoon. Do you have time tomorrow to talk me through this process?

Thanks,

Matt Osmond  
Principal, Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School  
(818) 729-3150 x11491  
[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)  
IG: @teddyrooselem  
(he/him/his)

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**From:** Brian Clauer <brianclauer@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 20, 2022 3:10 PM  
**To:** Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>  
**Subject:** Re: Santa Visits Discontinued

Caution! This message was sent from outside of Burbank Unified School District.

Hello,

This is an interesting topic of debate and I would like to know more about how you and your school handle this type of concern.

Can you please publish or distribute a detailed communique that explains your schools process, policies, and procedures for making complaints or expressing concerns about material Roosevelt Elementary School presents to our children in the event that a parent or parents might find

that material to be harmful, overtly or subtly religious in nature, or presented in a disproportionate manner and how you handle those concerns or complaints? I think it would be helpful to the community to have an understanding of how the process works and how your school responds to concerns or complaints about concepts that some might find objectionable, improperly balanced or disproportionately presented.

Additionally, I would like to make a **public records request** to you for copies of any emails, instant messages, or written correspondence sent to you, your school, or any teacher or administrator at Roosevelt Elementary School regarding concerns or complaints about any scheduled or proposed visits by a person who would be impersonating the mythical character known as **Santa** within the last two years, including any sent today or tomorrow, including all responses to the email you sent above that are received today or tomorrow (12/2022-12/21/22) ... If this topic was discussed in any meetings within your school that are subject to transparency, please include the transcripts of those discussions as well. Please provide responsive records to this email address in PDF format in a timely manner.

thank you very much,

Brian Clauer

On Tue, Dec 20, 2022 at 11:02 AM Matthew Osmond <[matthewosmond@burbankusd.org](mailto:matthewosmond@burbankusd.org)> wrote:

*Greetings Roosevelt Families,*

*Over the past two weeks, I have received a number of inquiries about a visit by Santa. Complaints have been registered about Santa being a religious character and the lack of equal time to other religions and special observations during this holiday season. These concerns surround disproportionately celebrating Christmas in relation to other Winter holiday observations.*

*In consideration of these concerns, about half of the teachers felt that the school should forego the practice of having a visit by Santa. I also checked with other Burbank elementary schools and no other school has this practice of hosting Santa visits. Additionally, I consulted with District leadership and they concurred with the decision to forego a visit by Santa. Therefore, we will not be hosting a visit from Santa.*

*If you contributed any money to your class for a Santa visit, you may either have the funds refunded by reaching out to your child's teacher or room parent (whomever collected the funds) or you may make the funds a donation to your child's class to cover future classroom expenses.*

*I know this decision may not be welcome for some and I'm sorry for this change. We will continue to provide educational information about holiday practices across the school that reflects multiple perspectives. This decision was not an easy one to make and I appreciate the various points of view you have shared with me.*

*With Wishes for a Happy Holiday Season,*

*-Matt Osmond, Principal*

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You are receiving this email because of your relationship with Roosevelt Elementary. If you wish to stop receiving email updates sent through the Blackboard service, please [unsubscribe](#).

Roosevelt Elementary | 850 N Cordova Street, Burbank, CA 91505 | 818-729-3150



## Peter Knapik

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**From:** Matthew Osmond  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 31, 2020 1:11 PM  
**To:** Kate Spencer  
**Subject:** Re: Santa and Roosevelt

Hi Kate,

Thanks for the feedback. We'll keep having these conversations with teachers so that we can be more aware and less exclusive. So many of the projects, assignments, lessons, and stories we share particularly around the holidays are done with good intentions and because they've been done for many years, but that doesn't mean they're still appropriate or shouldn't be reconsidered.

Thanks...and Happy New Year to you and yours!

Matt Osmond  
Principal, Roosevelt Elementary School  
[www.burbankusd.org/tres](http://www.burbankusd.org/tres)  
818-729-3150 x11491 (P)  
818-955-7648 (F)

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**From:** Kate Spencer <katelikesyou@gmail.com>  
**Date:** Monday, December 21, 2020 at 8:30 AM  
**To:** Matthew Osmond <MatthewOsmond@burbankusd.org>  
**Subject:** Santa and Roosevelt

Caution! This message was sent from outside of Burbank Unified School District.

Hi Matt - I wanted to touch base about something that hasn't sat well with me for a while: the focus on Santa Claus at school every holiday season. In past years I know "Santa" has visited classrooms, which always struck me as odd since obviously not every kid at school celebrates Christmas, believes in Santa, etc. And this year I'm hearing stories of Santa zooming into classes (kinder specifically), kids getting to discuss with Zoom Santa what they want for presents, etc. This seems wildly inappropriate to me, not only for religious and cultural reasons but for economic reasons as well. Not every kid is going to get what they want from Santa because their parents literally can't afford their requests.

Even Elf on the Shelf -- this has been taught and discussed in my son's 2nd-grade class, but I honestly don't see a reason this needs to be part of the curriculum.

I personally have appreciated the focus on diversity and inclusion at school this year and thought the assembly was amazing. It also got rave reviews from my kids. Perhaps this focus can be encouraged in the classroom during the holidays as well, and a more thoughtful and reserved approach to Santa, Christmas, and Christian-oriented holiday celebrations can be taken?

Appreciate the consideration. Thanks, and have a great holiday.  
Kate