



Imagine IF... We All Belonged

One Festival. Many Cultures. A Shared Home.

International Festival of Minnesota

Preliminary Student Field Toolkit

Produced by the Minnesota Humanities Center

The Official Education & Community Learning Sponsor of IFest -MN



**Minnesota
Humanities
Center**

About the Minnesota Humanities Center

The humanities help us understand ourselves, our communities, and our histories. By increasing collective understanding, we can spark positive change and create a more just society.

Our Mission

To spark positive change by increasing collective, understanding of ourselves, our communities, and our histories through stories and experiences.

Our Vision

A just society that is curious, connected, and compassionate.

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In 2008, Minnesota's voters passed the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment (Legacy) to the Minnesota Constitution, supporting arts, art education and arts access, and preserving Minnesota's history and cultural heritage. We receive Legacy appropriations from the Minnesota Legislature to create humanities programming and issue humanities grants.



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SECTION 1: Overview for Educators

About the Festival Theme

This year's theme, “**Imagine IF... We All Belonged,**” focuses on identity, community, and belonging. It highlights what connects people across cultures and generations.

At IFest, communities share traditions that matter deeply to who they are. Through food, music, dance, art, ceremony, and storytelling, cultural traditions express identity and communicate what communities value.

Minnesota is home to people from many cultures, identities and backgrounds. Festivals like IFest create opportunities to learn more about one another and strengthen connections across communities.

Cultural traditions are not only personal or family practices—they are also part of how communities participate in public life. Festivals like IFest create shared spaces where people express identity, build relationships across cultures, and strengthen a sense of belonging in Minnesota.

About the Toolkit

This toolkit helps students move beyond simply observing the festival. Instead, students use a simple inquiry process to explore the meaning behind the traditions they see.

Students will:

- **Observe:** Look closely at a cultural tradition being shared.
- **Interpret:** Think about what the tradition might represent.
- **Discuss:** Share observations and ideas with classmates.
- **Reflect:** Consider how cultural traditions help communities express identity and build understanding.

This process helps students move from noticing cultural traditions → thinking about their meaning → reflecting on their impact.



SECTION 2: Teacher Quick Start Guide

Use this toolkit to help you make the most of your students' visit to IFest. Choose the level of engagement that best fits your time, goals, and schedule.

- **Level 1: Festival-Only:** Students complete observation activities and reflection at the festival.
 - **Level 2: Light Inquiry:** 30-minute pre-lesson + festival activities + classroom reflection.
 - **Level 3: Full Inquiry:** Pre-lesson + festival activities + research + civic reflection.
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● Grades 4–5 Inquiry Learning Arc

Compelling Question: How do cultural traditions show who people are and help others understand them?

Supporting Questions

- What does this tradition tell us about what is important to this community?
- Why might this tradition matter deeply to the people who practice it?
- How does sharing this tradition help others understand them?

● Grades 6–8 Inquiry Learning Arc

Compelling Question: How do cultural traditions express identity and shape how communities are understood?

Supporting Questions

- What identity, history, or experience might this tradition express?
- How might sharing this tradition publicly shape understanding?
- What might be difficult to fully understand at a festival?

● Grades 9–12 Inquiry Learning Arc

Compelling Question: How does public cultural expression influence identity, representation, and belonging in a diverse society?

Supporting Questions

- How does this tradition shape how a community presents its identity?
- How does public visibility influence how the community is perceived?
- Does cultural celebration contribute to meaningful belonging?



SECTION 3: Pre-Event Lesson

Before attending IFest, teachers may prepare students with a short discussion or mini-lesson. The goal is to help students understand that cultural traditions carry meaning and communicate identity. Students should leave knowing they are not simply identifying traditions — they are thinking about what traditions represent and why they matter.

● **Grades 4–5:** Traditions carry meaning

Students:

- Reflect on a tradition in their own lives
- Describe what makes something a tradition
- Discuss why traditions matter to families or communities

Teacher prompt: *"Why might this tradition be important to the people who practice it?"*

● **Grades 6–8:** Traditions express identity

Students:

- Examine examples of cultural traditions
- Discuss how traditions communicate identity, history, or experiences
- Consider how people might interpret traditions differently

Teacher prompt: *"What might this tradition tell us about the experiences or identity of the community sharing it?"*

● **Grades 9–12:** Cultural expression and public meaning

Students:

- Discuss the difference between celebration and belonging
- Examine how cultural representation shapes perception
- Practice interpreting public cultural expression

Teacher prompt: *"How might public celebrations of culture influence how communities are understood?"*



SECTION 4: At the Festival

Student Cultural Observation Guide

At IFest, communities share traditions that matter deeply to who they are. These traditions can include food, music, dance, art, clothing, storytelling, and ceremony. Your job is not just to notice what is happening; your job is to think about what these traditions might mean to the communities sharing them.

Step 1: Observe Carefully

Take time to look closely before writing your ideas. Pay attention to:

- What people are doing
- Sounds you hear (music, language, singing)
- Objects, clothing, or instruments being used
- How people interact with one another
- Signs, explanations, or stories being shared

Step 2: Think About Meaning

Traditions often communicate something important about a community. Ask yourself:

- What might this tradition represent?
- What values might it show?
- Why might it matter to the people sharing it?

You may not know the full story yet—and that’s okay.

Step 3: Learn From Others

Talking with classmates can help you notice something new. Ask:

- What did you notice?
- What might it represent?
- What questions do you still have?

Step 4: Stay Curious

Public festivals often show only one part of a cultural tradition. You may need to learn more later to fully understand what you observed. Stay curious and respectful as you continue learning.



Festival Exploration Map: Finding Traditions Across the Festival

Ifest includes many different spaces where communities share traditions. As you explore the festival, notice how traditions appear in different ways depending on the space. Different parts of the festival may show traditions through food, performance, cultural objects, or community storytelling.

Festival Areas

- **Performance Stages:** Dance, music, and cultural performances.
- **Food Vendors (Cafés):** Traditional foods and cultural dishes.
- **International Bazaar:** Clothing, crafts, artwork, and cultural goods.
- **Cultural & Community Booths:** Cultural traditions and community resources.
- **Demonstrations & Activities:** Hands-on demonstrations and activities.

What Do You Notice?

Write observations from **two areas** of the festival.

Festival area and tradition observed	What did you notice?	What might this tradition represent?

What tradition or community do you want to learn more about?

What question do you still have?



● Student Activities Grades 4–5: Tradition Detective

Tradition Observed: _____

Step 1: What Do We Notice?

I see...

I hear...

I notice...

Step 2: What Might This Mean?

We think this tradition might show:

because

Step 3: Why Might It Matter?

This tradition might help the community feel:

- Proud
- Connected
- Remembered
- Recognized
- I'm not sure yet — I want to learn more

Explain your thinking:



● **Student Activities Grades 6–8: Identity in Action**

Tradition Observed: _____

Step 1: Identity & Experience

What identity, history, or experience might this tradition reflect?

Evidence from what you observed:

Step 2: Public Meaning

How is this tradition presented?

- Performance
- Demonstration
- Storytelling
- Explanation signs

How might this presentation shape how others understand the community?

Step 3: Interpretation Check

Public festivals often show **only part of a tradition**.

What might be difficult to fully understand without learning more?



● Student Activities Grades 9–12: Visibility & Meaning Tracker

Tradition Observed: _____

Step 1: Identity Expression

How does the community present itself here?

What aspects of identity are emphasized?

Step 2: Representation

How is the tradition framed?

- Celebration
- Education
- Commerce
- Preservation

What message might this framing send?

Step 3: Belonging Signals

Where do you see signs of recognition, inclusion, or shared community space?

What evidence suggests belonging is being shaped?



SECTION 5: Post-Festival Learning

Students deepen understanding by researching the tradition they observed.

● Grades 4–5

Explore:

- What the tradition represents
- Cultural background
- Connection to community identity

Final Product: Illustrated explanation or paragraph.

● Grades 6–8

Research:

- Historical background
- Community presence in Minnesota
- Meaning of the tradition

Final Product: Evidence-based explanation or presentation.

● Grades 9–12

Research:

- Historical context
- Representation and perception
- Community contributions

Final Product: Short argumentative essay or seminar discussion.

Civic Reflection

Students consider how cultural traditions contribute to belonging.

● Grades 4–5

How does sharing traditions help people understand one another?

● Grades 6–8

Why might it matter for communities to share traditions publicly?

● Grades 9–12

To what extent can cultural festivals strengthen belonging in a diverse society?

