

Dear parents,

We hope you all enjoyed a wonderful Thanksgiving. It was so nice to have everyone back together! We kicked off the festive season with a busy winter- and holiday-themed week, featuring icy cold weather, snowmen, trees, letter D, and of course some "ugly Christmas sweaters" (since what holiday season would be complete without them!). We also had a chance to reminisce about all the fun we had over the Thanksgiving holidays. We loved hearing the children talk so animatedly about their good times with family and friends. Using prompts like photos and salient recollections not only makes for good conversation, but it also tends to carry over into the children's dramatic play, which at age four is typically a re-creation of what is important and interesting to them. Sleepovers, family meals, fun with grandparents and cousins, and travel were all big themes during free play this week.

On **Monday**, we read [*The Biggest, Best Snowman*](#) by Margery Cuyler, about a very small girl whose BIG family members doubt her ability to do much of anything because of her size. With the help of some forest friends, the little girl builds the biggest, best snowman, one that impresses even the biggest naysayers in her family. In our second read-aloud, *The Biggest Snowman Ever* by Steven Kroll, two mice friends also vied for first prize in a biggest snowman contest eventually learning that teamwork makes the dream work. After a discussion about the accoutrements a well-dressed snowman needs, the children made their own (not so big) snowmen, using white Model Magic and some snowman accessories Pam's daughter Catherine gave us. We then had a fun yoga class, where we boarded the Polar Express and passed through some wintry landscapes and spotted a few cold-weather animals.

On **Tuesday**, we talked about what happens when a snowman sits out in the warm sun for too long. After reading *The Snowman* by Raymond Briggs, about a magical snowman gone too soon, we made use of symmetrical painting (a callback to our Matisse symmetry work) using white puffy paint to create "melted snowmen."

Keeping the conversation going about what happens when water freezes and melts, for our *What Do You See?* experiment, we investigated what causes ice - in the form of water balloon "eggs" - to melt more or less quickly. Based on their own experience with ice freezing and melting, the children knew exactly what had been required to freeze our water balloon eggs, and they then hypothesized that both hot water and salt would speed up the melting process. When we checked back in later in the morning, we discovered that they were exactly right - the egg with hot water and the one with salt had done a lot of melting, while the one we didn't treat with anything was still quite frozen. We learned too that if you cover ice with cornmeal, it takes much longer to melt, because cornmeal acts as an insulator (much like a cooler you might take to the beach). We were excited to check on our eggs one last time on Wednesday morning - the children guessed that every one of them would be melted by then, and they were right. We've sent home instructions for how to conduct this experiment if you're interested in trying it at home.

Christmas trees also featured prominently this week. On **Wednesday**, we read *Once There Was a Christmas Tree*, by Jerry Smath, about some generous animal friends who turned one Christmas tree into four so everyone in the neighborhood could enjoy it. The children then made torn paper Christmas trees of their own. This month, we introduced a new twist to our usual torn paper art activity. With a triangle drawn on paper to guide them, the children tore green paper strips of different lengths to make a Christmas tree. This required some careful spatial reasoning and planning, as they had to make sure longer strips went at the bottom, with increasingly shorter strips added from the bottom up. (We reminded them,

if trees were pointy at the bottom and fat on top, they'd never be able to stand up on their own.) They then decorated their trees with torn paper ornaments, lights, and stars; several children also made sure to include presents under their trees. We also got in some good counting practice - we bet your children can tell you what seasonal stampers they used to practice their 1-8 counting. And we made room in the classroom for not one but two Christmas trees - one small live one and one large one that the class painted together. The children were quick to point out that our trees looked bare and pretty uninteresting, and they were right. But never fear, they didn't stay unadorned for long!

On **Thursday**, our group thought our Christmas trees needed some immediate attention, so many set to work making beaded pipe cleaner ornaments and a colorful pipe cleaner garland. (Over the coming weeks we will be decorating our class trees with a slew of ornaments, candy canes, snow flakes, and more.) Some of us made a third tree for the classroom, this one made of cardboard, colorful tissue paper, and contact paper. In Spanish, we kept the holiday spirit alive, learning a song about reindeer, snowmen, and Santa, and then practicing *Feliz Navidad* (coming soon to a Holiday Show near you!).

We also dove into letter D, kicking things off by reading *Dragons Love Tacos* by Adam Rubin. The children guessed right away why we thought choosing a book about dragons was a particularly appropriate decision on letter D day. With **Duke** starting us off, we all practiced writing a capital D on our whiteboard (noting that D looks like a straight line with a great big Santa belly) and did some more handwriting practice with our letter D worksheets. And last but not least, at lunch, we answered the all important question "Do you dig donuts?" (It turns out we do all dig donuts, although there is some disagreement about the best flavor.)

Friday featured letter D again. We started the morning by reading *Danny and the Dinosaur* by Syd Hoff (almost a dinosaur itself - it was published in 1958!). We then had a dazzling and delightful celebration of letter D at Show and Tell - on display were several adorable dogs, a dinosaur, **Daisy Duck**, two drills, a couple of **Dalmatians**, a duster, a doll with three dinosaurs on her shirt, and two dragonflies. To celebrate a successful D week, we put our hypothesis that we all love a good donut to the test at snack time, enjoying some delicious **Dunkin Munchkins**.

Also taking center stage were some truly magnificent holiday sweaters (both the ones some of us wore to school and the ones we designed in the art room). You will be impressed with the children's incredible creations - they put even the most flamboyant real-life sweaters to shame!

Finally, we introduced the children to two Christmas tales this week. The first was Arthur Ginolfi's *The Tiny Star*, a sweet, age-appropriate retelling of the Nativity story, in which the tiniest star in the sky proudly shines its light on - and elicits a sweet smile from - a very special baby. Later in the week, we read a second Christmas story, *The Christmas Baby* by Marion Dane Bauer. We then talked about the elements the two books shared: a mother and father, a beloved baby, a stable with animals, angels, a moon and stars shining bright. These books will serve as the foundation for the play your children will be performing for you at our Holiday Show on Friday, December 19. We will be practicing hard for the performance over the next two weeks, and we know it will be an adorable performance featuring your 11 tiny stars. (Details about the Holiday Show can be found below, and still more will follow in the coming days.)

****IMPORTANT REMINDERS****

December 12 Show and Tell - For next Friday's Show and Tell, we would love to have the children bring in **a new, unwrapped toy to be donated** to a child in need this holiday season. Pam and Carolyn will deliver the toys to the Toys for Tots toy drive on Saturday, December 13. We hope this is something you all will enjoy doing with your children. We know our collection of toys will bring smiles to lots of children's faces.

Holiday Traditions - If you haven't already done so, please fill out the attached Holiday Traditions page and return it to us by this coming Monday, December 8. We are excited to learn about everyone's favorite holiday traditions!

Holiday Show - Our Holiday Show will take place on Friday, December 19, immediately following the 3s' performance in Parish Hall. Please plan to drop your children off at our Maple Avenue door at 9:10 - we'll have a chance to put our costumes on, do a quick run-through, and make our way to Parish Hall, where we will meet you all for a 9:30 showtime. Our morning will conclude by 10:15 or so.

Wishing you all a happy weekend,
Pam and Carolyn



Red 4s
Ugly
Holiday
Sweater
Party!













