

HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS

The holidays are amongst us! Thanksgiving has come and passed and Christmas is quickly approaching, followed soon by a new year! During these busy but wonderful moments, keep on the forefront how holidays are best shared: with fun and laughter. Let's not get wrapped up in the food.

Let's not get wrapped up in the presents. But let's DO get wrapped up in the festivities and holiday cheer. Children love to have fun; they also love to laugh. Children faces light up when presented with a fun activity. What can make their faces shine even brighter? Adults that join in on the fun activities!

Now THAT is a party! This holiday season, let's focus on celebrating with activities that engage children AND staff in the seasonal spirit!

A few Thanksgiving activities were shared in the November Youth Wellness Newsletter; hopefully you were able to share with the children in your care! For December, we are going to expand on more seasonal and holiday activities that can be incorporated into the child care setting:

Snowball Throwing Practice

- Make a very large snowman out of paper and tape it to the floor. Draw a face on your snowman. Draw 3 buttons on the snowman's chest.
- Provide the children with a bin of bean bags and have them toss the bean bags to try and cover the buttons!

FREEZE

A variety of "Freeze" activities to encourage dance and movement!

Freeze/Melt in the Snow!

- Play music and have children dance to the beat.
- Stop the music and yell "FREEZE!" They need to stay very still in the position they are in!
- Put the music back on and yell "MELT—KEEP DANCING!" Repeat.

Jingle Bell Freeze

- Provide children with a bell instrument (such as wrist bells) and play Christmas music. Tell the children that they can dance, sing and play their instruments along with the song.
- When the music stops, children stop shaking their bells and FREEZE!
- Turn the music back on and continue to dance. Repeat.

Ring in the New Year

- Provide children with various instruments** to celebrate the New Year. Tell them they have entered a FREEZE parade!
- Parade around with the instruments until a staff member yells "FREEZE!"
- All the children freeze and stop making noise with their instruments.
- Yell "Let's Celebrate!" and let the parade continue! Repeat.

Alternative to instruments:

**Provide dancing scarves or long strips of colorful fabric.
Wave them around, up and down, in circles, to music.



Christmas Gift Delivery Obstacle Course



- Set up an obstacle course for the children to follow to deliver a present!
 - Have small colored blocks at the end of the obstacle course and instruct children to pick one up and toss it into a box or basket at the end of the course.
 - Example obstacle course:
 - Under the chair, through the tunnel, balance across the beam, hop on the circles and toss the present into the large box!
- Link the activity to the curriculum: Instruct children to find...
 - A specific color block at the end
 - A piece of paper with a specific number or letter
 - Or any other concept you may be working on!
- For added fun, follow up with the Christmas Parachute activity below to “deliver” the presents!!



Do the “Parachute Move!”—Variety of Parachute Activities to “shake up” the holiday cheer!

- Materials needed: Parachute or large blanket; soft blocks or soft balls
- Instruct children to hold the parachute or blanket. Work with them to show them how to move the parachute up and down together.

Christmas Parachute: Bouncing Presents

- Place soft blocks in the middle of the parachute. Encourage children to bounce the “presents” off!
- Assign a few children as Santa’s Elves to collect the presents AFTER they have all bounced off the parachute.
 - When all blocks are off the parachute, yell “FREEZE!”
 - Say “Elf Jimmy, Elf Sarah, Elf Owen--please find our presents!” The elves collect the presents and put them back on the parachute.
 - “Deliver” them again and assign new elves!

New Year’s Parachute: New Year’s Countdown!

- Place several soft balls or blocks into the parachute. Tell the children they are going to try to get ALL the balls off the parachute before they get to 1 in the backwards countdown!
- Start the countdown and parachute away!

Parachute play is a great time to make up stories while you move and shake it!

Example:

- We are all walking in the store and shopping for Christmas presents. (Move parachute slowly)
- But, the store is closing soon so we have to hurry! (Move parachute fast, up and down)
- Phew, we are done shopping. (Move parachute slowly)
- Now we have to wrap the presents quickly so we can deliver them! Hurry, wrap, wrap, wrap! (Move parachute fast)
- Wow, we got a lot done! (Move parachute slowly)
- Let’s see how many we have! (Stop moving parachute and hold still)
- Let’s count. (Count with children as you toss the blocks onto the parachute)
- Now, it’s time to deliver them all! Let’s bounce the Christmas presents off until they are all gone and delivered! Ready....GO!

DID YOU KNOW?

These activities provide great examples for incorporating structured physical activity into the curriculum and celebrating the holidays in nonfood ways! By following this practice, you have successfully met one of the environmental Eat Smart Guidelines at the advanced level: “Holidays and celebrations are observed with non-food treats.”

It is very critical that children see the adults that they admire (this means YOU!) participating in physical activities with the children. The adults set the example; the children watch and LEARN from the examples set by the adults. Staff participating in the activities above will encourage children to move it, shake it, and actively engage in holiday festivities! Additionally, following this practice moves your child care one step closer in meeting the MOver Smart Guidelines: “Staff participate in structured and unstructured activity and remain engaged with the children. Teacher enthusiasm and effort promote physical activity.”

All in all, children learn that physical activities are fun and can be incorporated into celebrations for a lifetime!

Check out the [Missouri Eat Smart Guidelines](#) and the [Missouri MOver Smart Guidelines](#) to learn more!



SUCCESS STORIES:

Have you had great successes in meeting the Missouri Eat Smart and Missouri MOver Smart Guidelines? Are you working towards the Guidelines and found a resource to be extremely beneficial for you and your staff? Do you have any tips to share on facilitating best practices (unstructured, structured and learning-integrated physical activities, family style meals, adult role modeling, etc.) within your child care setting? If so, we would love to hear from you! Email cacfp@health.mo.gov with your success story and you may be featured in a future Wellness Newsletter!

Become a Missouri Eat Smart Child Care and a Missouri MOver Smart Child Care today! Go to www.health.mo.gov/eatsmart and www.health.mo.gov/movesmart to learn more, review the guidelines and to print out the applications! If you have questions about these programs, call 1-800-733-6251 or email cacfp@health.mo.gov. We will be more than happy to answer any questions and to help you reach your nutrition and physical activity goals for child care!



DECEMBER DAYS:

- 1- Eat a Red Apple Day
- 19- Oatmeal Muffin Day
- Pear Month
- Christmas

<http://food.unl.edu/fnh/december>



Incorporate activities into your lesson plans today!