

Winter Thematic Unit for Preschool

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This thematic unit was written and successfully implemented in my preschool program over the last three winters. I hope you enjoy using these ideas as much as we have had in testing and trying them out in our classroom. This winter I will be blogging many of our winter activities on my personal blog: <http://naturelovingkids.blogspot.in>

I'd love to hear feedback from all my new friends from the Fall VAEYC Conference!

Sincerely,
April Zajko M.Ed.



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Introducing our Snow & Winter Theme - Week 1

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4
Opening Circle Music / Poem	Ask the children, “What do you know about winter?”	Read aloud - <u>It’s Winter</u> by Linda Glaser Point out the beautiful cut-paper art work! Bring attention to winter activities included in the book - catching snowflakes, snow angels, sledding, building snowmen, drinking hot cocoa.	Recite the poem, <i>Winter Time</i> .	Introduce the action poem, <i>Winter Time</i> .
Read aloud	Introduce the action poem, <i>Winter Time</i> . Read aloud, <u>Winter is Here</u> by K. Weinberger.		Read aloud, <u>One Snowy Day</u> by Jeffrey Scherer “What are your favorite winter activities?”	Read aloud, <u>Here Comes the Snow</u> by A. S. Medearis. “Keeping ourselves warm while outside is important. Why?”
Outdoor Discovery	Snow Shoveling - fill the sensory bin with snow to take inside Snow Observations using the 5 senses		Cold Hands Experiment -which gloves keep your hands warmer (knit vs. thermal/waterproof)? Have kids test diff pairs of gloves.	
Gross Motor	Winter Construction Site (this is ongoing through the month)		Introduce how to play - Freeze Tag	
Art	Shaving Cream Prints spread shaving cream on trays and provide liquid water colors to drip on top. Kids swirl the paint then press a piece of paper on top to make a print. {Paper can be cut into shapes such as snowman, snowflakes, or icicles.}		Mitten Paint Blotto : Day one - fold cardstock in half and drip paint onto one side and fold. Let dry. Day two - child puts hand onto outside of card, draw mitten shape, and then cut out. Reveal identical pairs. Mix up mittens & match pairs!	
Play dough	Cloud Dough - Mix 8 c. flour to 1 c. oil, (put into the under bed storage bin) Add scoops, spoons, small silicone baking molds,			
Water Table	Real Snow Exploration - fill the water tub with snow. Add a variety of small sand shovels, spoons, cups, strainers, etc.		Frozen Hands - freeze water in latex gloves the night before. Peel off half of the gloves, leave the others knotted. Observe melting. *Continue same “ Cold Hands Experiment ” indoors!	
Sensory Bin	Pretend Snow Bin - two bags of fake paper snow (available at the Dollar Store), white & blue pom poms to be snowballs, some pulled apart cotton balls. Add a variety of scoops, tongs, tweezers, and mini sand shovels. Show how to use tweezers to move cotton balls into ice cube trays. Day 3 & 4 -- add items to make the bin into a “ Pretend Snow Globe Bin ” -same bin contents from Day 1 & 2 but add small plastic jars with mini figurines hot glued to the lid. Add appropriate sized spoons so kids can scoop 'snow' into the 'snow globe' and some loose figurines for the kids to play with.			
Easel	Encourage snowy paintings -- 4 paint cups: 1.white 2. Glitter white 3.Blue 4. light blue			
Writing Center	Snowflake envelopes, Glitter Snowflake Stickers, glitter crayons, white crayons, blue or black construction paper.			
Science Center	Convert train table area into -- “ Winter Forest Scape ” - add to this throughout the month as the children suggest new ideas! Beaded Snowflakes -need pipe cleaners, beads in white, clear, blue. Add a hanger using either dental floss or fishing line. Explain to the kids that the snowflake needs 6 arms, but each snowflake is unique. This is will likely continue throughout the theme since beading is a favorite activity!			
Toys or New Centers for this theme:	Snowy Cutting/ Tearing Bin --- in an under the bed storage bin add paper in a variety of winter colors, laminate scraps, shredded white & blue gift bag filler, silver “icicle” decorations, blue shredded copy paper, metallic bows, blue & white tissue paper and decorative & regular kid scissors. (Save contents for collages.) Blocks Center - add white cotton batting and arctic animals to make a winter scene (I ordered the Artic Toob Set for \$10-- includes: igloo, polar bear, arctic rabbit, arctic fox, huskies, caribou, harp seal, beluga whale, walrus, Eskimo and musher.			
Teacher Time	In small groups, complete a Snow Observation sheet - five senses		Name writing with pretend snow and white glue - on cardstock	
Closing Circle	“What is something you noticed with Pretend Snow vs. the Real Snow?”	Orally retell the story “ <u>The Snowman</u> ” by Raymond Briggs	Sing with book ~ <u>Winter Wonderland</u> by Dick Smith Play - What is covered in a blanket of snow?	

Snowflakes & Snowflake Bentley Theme - Week 2

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4
Opening Circle Music / Poem Read aloud	Introduce the song, <i>I'm a Little Snowflake</i> . Orally tell the story of Snowflake Bentley . Ask the children, "Have you ever looked really closely at a snowflake?"	Sing, <i>I'm a Little Snowflake</i> . Review some facts about Snowflakes: Snow begins with a speck (dirt, ash, salt).The speck becomes the center of a snow crystal. As it falls, the snow crystal forms. Reference- The Story of Snow.	Review some facts about Snowflakes: Snow crystal shapes can be like a star, plates, columns 6 is a snow crystals magic number! Each is unique & rarely are perfect! Sing, <i>I'm a Little Snowflake & Winter Wonderland</i> . Read aloud, <u>Let It Snow</u> by Maryann Cocca-Leffler.	Sing, <i>I'm a Little Snowflake</i> . Review some facts about Snowflakes: What is the magic number for snow crystals? SIX! *Many snow crystals make up one snowflake! When a snow crystal lands it starts to wither away- that's why Bentley wanted to photograph them!
Outdoor Discovery	<u>Catching Snowflakes</u> – While outside give each child their own <u>Snowflake Catcher Necklace!</u> (Or use a piece of black paper.) Make sure the necklace is cold by keeping it in the freezer beforehand. Explain that today we will be learning about snowflakes. Show children how to catch flakes while it's in flight. After children have successfully caught snowflakes, give them a magnifying glass to look at the flake closer.		Homemade Snow Gauge - cut 2 liter bottle to make, mark with inches. Monitor over the next couple of weeks!	
Gross Motor			*If snow is falling, Microscope Exploration with snowflakes * If snow is not falling, introduce Snow Flake Dancing with Scarves	
Art	Snowflake Print Making - put white glittery paint into a shallow pie pan. Lay out a variety of materials for print making: bottom of berry basket, bottom of a spool of thread, snowflake shaped cookie cutters, toilet paper rolls with slits cut out with decorative scissors. (Dark blue paper).		Snowflake Handprints – use blue construction paper. Dip hands into white paint. Paint three lines to form a star, then paint 6 handprints at the end of the spokes. This should form a circle, be sure not to overlap the hands & try to have the fingers in the same position for each print.	
Play dough	Snow Dough/ Bright White Playdough - encourage snowman by adding: buttons, small pieces of shiny pipe cleaners, beans, and beads			
Water Table	Pretend Snowflakes - fill the water table with water and add a variety of plastic snowflakes. Add fishing nets and strainers for the kids to scoop up the snowflakes.		Same contents as Day 1 & 2 but tint water with blue liquid watercolor.	
Sensory Bin	Pretend snow bin - Since we are learning about Snowflake Bentley this week, add magnifying glasses to examine the snow bin more closely!			
Easel	Oversize cut out of snowflakes - add salt to 2 paint cups and glitter to the other 2 cups (white, lavender, blue, and light blue)			
Writing Center	Cutting Snowflakes - using pre-folded coffee filters		Snowflake Coloring Sheet & glitter crayons	
Science Center	Display photographs by Snowflake Bentley and books related to snowflakes. Snowflake Matching Game - show how to play		Talk about <u>Snowflake Facts</u> . Look at a copy of the Snowflake Guide http://www.its.caltech.edu/~atomic/snowcrystals/class/class.htm	
Dramatic Play	Snowman Dress Up Center - top hats, scarves, sticky buttons from adhesive foam, carrot noses, winter gloves or mittens, etc.			
Teacher Time	Scissor Skills - demo how to cut a snowflake. "Don't get upset if your snowflake breaks, many snowflakes are not perfect when they fall to the ground."		Snowflake Pattern blocks, Snowflake Matching Game	
Closing Circle	Talk about why we needed dark felt or black paper to view the flakes outside. Why not white? Why did the paper have to be frozen?	Read first part of <u>Snowflake Bentley</u> , by J. B. Martin	Continue reading <u>Snowflake Bentley</u> , by J. B. Martin "Snowflake Bentley loved looking at snowflakes. What is something that you love to do?"	Finish reading <u>Snowflake Bentley</u> , by J. B. Martin

Snowballs & Snowmen Theme - Week 3

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4
Opening Circle Music / Poem Read aloud	Read aloud - Snowballs by Lois Ehler - show the page of things to find on the snowmen Review shapes (find examples) Introduce the poem, <i>Chubby Little Snowman</i> .	Ask the children, “How do you make a snowball? What is the difference between a ball/ sphere and a circle?” (Discuss 2D/3D) Read aloud, Amy Loves the Snow by J. Hoban. Discuss sequence of building a snowman.	Ask the children, “Have you ever made a snowman at home? What do we need to make a snowman?” Read aloud - All You Need for a Snowman by B. Lavallee	Read aloud - No Snow for Seth What if we put snow in a big jar like Seth? Could we keep it from melting? When the snow melts what does it turn into?
Outdoor Discovery	How to pack a snowball, then roll to make a BIG snowball!	Snowman Building! - Bring in a variety of snowman supplies (scarves, carrots, sticks, buttons), so the kids can be creative in their snowman decorating. Have natural materials that animals can eat – bird seed, pretzels, acorns, pinecones. {If not good snowman building snow - snow painting with spray bottles or brushes!}	Headless Snowman - build snowman with 2 balls, put stool behind so kids can step up and they look like the snowman. Take pictures!	Lets fill 2 big jars of snow & put one in the classroom and one in the freezer. What will happen?
Gross Motor	Snowball Tossing Game before school starts create a bunch of snowballs using the plastic snowball maker, also have a variety of different sized balls. Talk about the qualities of a sphere. Make a simple toss game, targets?		Act out the poem, <i>Chubby Little Snowman</i> (bunny ears headband, snowman -- carrot nose, buttons using self stick foam circles)	Freeze Tag Act out, <i>Cubby Little Snowman</i>
Art	Snowman Collages - using card stock pre-cut into the shape of a snowman and lots of open ended accessories for the kids to choose: googly eyes, mini sticks, scarves, hats, whole punches as buttons, mini pom poms, real buttons, popsicle sticks, straw pieces, paper beads, feathers, sequins,		Yarn Snowballs - give each child a small balloon inflated with air. The children dip pieces of white yarn into watered down Elmer’s Glue. Wrap yarn all around the balloon, sprinkle with glitter, and dry overnight. Then pop the balloon.	
Play dough	Kool-Aid Playdough - One batch blue and one batch clear. Add small versions of snowman accessories such as orange pipe cleaner noses, real buttons, mini scarves cut from felt, a few small sticks gathered from outside. Also add snowflake & snowman cookie cutters.			
Water Table	Snow Ball Exploration - using a snowball maker make a bunch of snowballs before preschool begins. Leave the batches outdoors overnight to really solidify. Hide a little toy inside some of the snow balls.		Mini Snowmen Meet the Hair Dryer - help the kids to make mini snowmen in the water table. Then transfer them to individual plastic tubs. After talking about how snow melts, bring out a hair dryer. "Ask what do you think will happen?"	
Sensory Bin	Snowballs Bin - ping pong balls, golf balls, and practice golf balls. Paper towel and gift wrap tubes cut in half to make ramps. We are learning today about spheres so let's examine how spheres roll!		Snowman Assembly Bin - prior to class, add features to the ping pong balls (some snowman faces, some buttons, some shoes). Encourage the kids to find 3 ping pong balls and make their own snowman! Paper towel roll cut to hold them.	
Easel	Pre-cut oversized snowmen shapes for kids to paint.		Black paper with salt paint. Add different size corks for stamping.	
Writing Center	Snowballs - some pre-cut white circles (snowballs) of various sizes and some paper folded in half with half circle drawn on so kids to cut out independently. Show kids how to stack the different sized circles to make a snowman. (Day 3 & 4 - add left over accessories from the Snowman Collage project to the Writing Center.			
Science Center	Snowballs book by L. Ehler - children go back through the book to find the objects on snowmen.		Oral Language/ Comprehension - in pairs ask kids why snow melts. Observes changes with hair dryer, hot water. Discuss. Snowman Shaped lacing cards	
Teacher Time	Shape Assessment; Snowflake Counting Cards			
Closing Circle	Read aloud, The Biggest, Best Snowman by M. Cuyler “	Sing aloud Frosty the Snowman (reference book if needed)	Read aloud, Snowmen at Night .	Observe the two jars of snow - what happened & why?

Ice & Icicles Theme - Week 4

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4
Opening Circle Music / Poem Read aloud	Introduce the poem, <i>Icicle</i> . Have several large icicles and two large ice blocks at the circle. “Ice cubes and icicles are both made from water that is frozen.” Talk about the 3 states of water (solid, liquid, gas) and demonstrate: Icicles & ice are solids. Water is a liquid. Dragon’s Breath is a gas.		Recite the poem, <i>Icicle</i> . <i>Ask, “What is the difference between snow and ice?”</i>	“If we fill two identical containers, one with ice and one with snow and bring them inside, will they both melt? Will one have more water?” Have kids heap the container with snow so they know it’s full.
Outdoor Discovery	Go on an icicle hunt . Discuss where they form and why. What happens on a warm day? Why is it dangerous to play below icicles? What’s the difference between icicles & snow?		Go on an Ice Hunt - look for patches of ice in the outdoor playspace.	
Gross Motor	Play “Freezing Icicles” same rules as Freeze Tag but the frozen kids have to stand with arms above their heads.	Hide & Seek Colored Ice Cubes! (leave outside when done today)	Hide & Seek Colored Ice Cubes! (after playing have the kids gather all the cubes so we can bring them inside to watch melt in sensory bin)	Obstacle Course
Art	<i>Painting with Ice Cubes</i> – freeze several trays of ice cubes & food coloring or paint with a popsicle stick in it. Show the children how to hold the stick and ‘paint’ with the melting ice cube. Paint onto thin white construction paper or coffee filters.		<i>Glitter Icicles</i> - Have kids create thick lines of glue on wax paper (or laminate scraps). Let glue run. Sprinkle with glitter and let dry.	
Play dough	Add the Artic Toob miniatures to the playdough table this week. Also add plastic icicles and pretend ice cubes.			
Water Table	Ice cube trays, basters, jars of colored water. Open ended play, then just before clean up time - ask kids to fill all the ice cube trays and take outside to freeze for a game the following morning.		Snow vs. Ice - put both in bin to observe and play (Make winter gloves available!)	
Sensory Bin	Icicle Exploration (provide gloves, mag. Glass, cups) Add pretend icicles to compare - how are they the same / different?		Colored Ice Cubes, Frozen Hands (which are made by putting water into latex gloves overnight)	
Easel	Cut house from black construction paper. Kids paint on salt/white paint to make icicles on a house.		Cover easel with clear laminate. Kids paint with ice cubes and watch it melt down easel. (Lay cloth in easel tray, ice cubes in bin)	
Writing Center	Add icicles cut from white card stock, also add icicles cut from scraps of laminate. Glitter crayons and white crayons.			
Science Center {Display photographs of real icicles.}	<i>Melting Ice</i> – - All the children sit at tables. Give each child a bowl of warm water and a bowl of very cold water. Let kids feel both bowls of water. Ask them to tell you what they think will happen if they put an ice cube in each bowl. Make some predictions about which cube will melt faster and why. Have the students put one ice cube in each bowl. Watch closely as the ice cubes melt and discuss.		<i>Ice Block Designs</i> – Put several ice blocks in an under the bed storage bin. Children sprinkle coarse salt on top of the ice blocks. (Explain that salt make ice melt faster.) Children drip various colors of liquid water colors (food coloring could work, but it stains). Watch as tunnels of color are created as the salt melts through the ice block Leave the colorful ice blocks out to observe throughout the day.	
Teacher Time	Play “Don’t Break the Ice” - great strategy game. Kids learn to take turns and count ice cubes		Oral Language/ Comprehension check-- 1:1 talk to kids about their snow and ice observations. Journal writing - dictated sentences.	
Closing Circle	What will happen to the ice cube trays overnight? Read aloud, <i>Poppleton in Winter</i> - 1 st chapter	Read aloud, <i>The Icicle</i> by Valery Voskoboinikov	Observe the ice blocks again. Talk about the changes with the colored ice cubes. Why? Discuss melting process/ snow v. ice “Snow has a lot of air, so there was much less water from the melting snow. {Note- preschoolers likely won’t believe you! So do this experiment multiple days}	

Snow Shelters Theme - Week 5

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4
Opening Circle Music / Poem Read aloud	Review - Winter Time, <i>I’m a Little Snowflake, Chubby Little Snowman, & Icicle</i> “Why would someone build a snow shelter?”	Reference book, How to Build an Igloo and Other Snow Shelters by N. Yankielun. “Would you want to sleep in a snow shelter overnight?”	Reference book, How to Build an Igloo and Other Snow Shelters by N. Yankielun. “What is insulation? Is it warmer inside or outside of the quinzee?”	How does it feel being INSIDE of snow? Why would people build a snow shelter? Distinguish between play & survival.
Outdoor Discovery PLAN B: Create a lean to out of sticks and evergreen branches!	Snow Quinzee Project! Mounding snow is the first step of making a snow shelter. Research before building!!!	Pack and finish mounding snow. Begin to dig out.	(Dig out the night before) Kids find a real Snow Quinzee. At the end of the day, cover and disguise door.	Play inside quinzee, drink hot cocoa? Take off roof so no risk of collapsing on someone when not in session. (Continue to use as snow fort/snow wall)
Gross Motor	Hula Hoop Igloo Game - following directions game. Pretend hula hoop is an igloo. Stand next to, jump over, go inside, 2 friends, etc.		Ice Fishing Game - bamboo fishing rods, foam fish. (Take game indoors if too cold to play outside.)	
Art	Igloo Sculptures - turn paper bowl upside down. Cut out door and insert toilet paper roll, glue in place. Decorate igloo with either collage materials in snow colors, or cover in puffy snow. Create puffy snow by mixing 1 part shaving cream and 1 part Elmer’s glue - creates 3D effect.		Igloo Prints - dip balloon into white paint. Then press onto bottom of paper so just a half circle is on the paper. (Kids may like to do a snowman version, pressing different ways to make sm, med, large circles. {Open Ended - many papers will look like a blizzard instead!}) Other ideas - use different sized corks cut in half or potatoes cut into the shape of an igloo.	
Play dough	Group Playdough Igloo Sculptures but use white snow dough to cover the bowl.{“Explain Group project, can’t take home.”}			
Water Table	Insulation Experiments - see notes for details		Whipped Snow - grate Ivory soap bars into a bowl with a potato peeler, mix in 2 cups of boiling water. Add a quarter cup of liquid laundry starch and whip with an electric mixer. Make it ahead, then add more water if needed for kids to play.	
Sensory Bin	Ice Block Igloos - freeze 3 different sized bowls with water, turn upside down. Add the Artic Toob miniatures to this center.		Colored Ice Blocks & Igloos - add either liquid water colors or diluted tempera paint.	
Easel	Igloo Pictures - using yarn covered wooden blocks to make prints of the individual snow blocks.		Hang white paper, tape on a template of an igloo. Kids use blue, gray, and sparkly paints to paint the sky. Remove template and you have a negative image (ie. White space is the igloo, painting is sky)	
Writing Center	Small cut outs of igloos, blue paper, glitter glue.			
Science Center	Move wooden blocks to the science center to encourage stacking to build igloos. Post pictures of real igloos & snow shelters.			
Game	Ice Block Hop - cut out poster board into large squares. Write on a letters (or number, name, or word). Kids call out the letter and jump onto block.		Snow Tunnel – bring out six stools (that are arched so they are hollow). Move them next to each other to create a snow tunnel for crawling.	
Teacher Time	Lead insulation experiments & discuss results in pairs		Journal Writing - dictated sentences about snow shelters.	
Closing Circle	Read aloud, Snow by R. McKie {reference p. 39 - snow house, p. 61 snow in freezer like Seth!}	Using the white board, draw a diagram of the snow quinzee and discuss sequence of building	Discussion about the Snow Quinzee Was it warmer inside? Why?	Wrapping up our Snow & Winter theme!

Outdoor Gross Motor Games

Freeze Tag - this is a great game to teach young children. When playing with 3 or 4 year olds they may not stay 'frozen' but it's fun to learn either way. Explain that everyone should spread out and one person is the 'tagger'. The Tagger tries to tag other kids. When you are tagged, you must "freeze like a statue". Other players can come "melt" or unfreeze tagged players by touching them. Play for a set amount of time and then change the 'tagger'. **Icicle Freeze Tag** - same directions but when tagged the child must "freeze like an icicle" with their arms together overhead.

Snowball Toss Game - before school starts create a bunch of snowballs using the plastic snowball maker, also have a variety of different sized balls. Talk about the qualities of a sphere. Make a simple toss game. Targets - paint targets into the snow, form with rope, lay out buckets & hula hoops. NOTE: Discuss school rules before playing. Snow ball fights are not allowed at school!

Snowball Target Practice - since snowball fights would not be advisable, set up a fun target practice instead. 1. Recycled pie tins & cardboard targets would be fun. Figure out how to hang them from a tree or fence. 2. A second way would be to paint a bull's eye onto the ground with circles surrounding it, and with older children you could have flags with different point values. 3. A third fun target practice would be to make six colored frozen ice blocks from plastic cups, stack them in a pyramid shape, and then take turns trying to knock them down by throwing snowballs at them. 4. Pack a snow bull's eye on the side of brick wall or fence. Take turns practicing your marksmanship! Any of these three games would be great hand/eye coordination for kids!

Snowman Bowling – partially fill milk jugs or 2 liter bottles with sand so they will stand up. Paint snowmen on the bottles (or create a snowman picture on cardstock and attach to the jug). Arrange the jugs as pins in bowling and let children take turns bowling with ball. **Ice Bowling** - create ice balls by filling balloons with water and food coloring. Use the ice balls to knock down homemade or store bought bowling pins.

Tic-Tac-Toe: create a large grid by drawing lines into the snow, use sticks for the X's and pinecones for the O's. Many traditional games that kids play in the summer are just as fun in winter. Why not try out winter versions of: **Hopscotch, Croquet, Horseshoes, Kickball, Capture the Flag, T-ball**

Winter Olympics- When you feel that you've tap out all your creative ideas, why not make up a fun Winter Olympics Course that focuses on elements in your play space & projects you've already played outside. Weave around the snowmen, dig to find 5 colored ice cubes, pretend to be the Cubby Little Snowman, toss 5 snowballs at the targets, dance like a snowflake by spinning in 10 circles, drive a truck around the winter construction site, etc. This is fun way to do all of your outdoor activities that your children have been playing over the last couple of weeks, while keeping it fresh and exciting!

Outdoor Activities for Winter

Snowflake Dancing - using tulle & curling ribbon create dancing scarves. Simply attach to a rubber band by looping the tulle & ribbon. The rubber band makes it easy to slip them over the kids mittens. NOTE: these look very princess, if you have some boys who might object, try cutting some white sheets into strips or use rainbow color scarves.

Mr. Potato Head - use snow to create the head, then insert the piece to design your own Mr. Snow Head!

Snow angels – is a classic snowy day activity. Add a new element by sprinkling the impression with bird seed and creating a design with pinecones, branches, and other natural elements. Make a colorful version by painting the impression with spray bottles filled with diluted liquid watercolors. Make a whole family of snow angels by having different sized children and adults lay near each other and then decorate their faces and add details. Teddy bear or other stuffed animals can also be used to make snow angels and take a photograph to make it a lasting memory. Sneak in some math skills by measuring the length of the angel from head to toe, then the wing span. To measure count how many footprints long using the adult's foot. Then measure using the child's foot. Why are the numbers different?

Snow Silhouettes - try lying down to make different geometric shapes, numbers, or letters. What about animals? How can we make our body imprint on the snow look like an octopus?

"Breathe like a dragon" – on a cold chilly day, explain that dragons normally breathe fire but the cold weather makes dragons only able to produce steam.

Action Songs – "Head Shoulders Knees and Toes", "Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear Turn Around" For young children being bundled up limits their dexterity. Songs such as these make them active without being frustrated at what they can't do.

"Snowman Says" – just like Simon Says except the actions are winter themed – Snowman says downhill ski, make a snow angel, shovel snow, catch snowflakes on your tongue, etc.

Pin the Button on the Snowman- ahead of time create buttons by hot gluing milk lids onto long dowels or sticks. To play the game kids stand in front of a snowman with their eyes covered, they hold one button and try to push it into the snowman where buttons should go.

Frosty's Hat Toss – build shorter snowmen and then make a game out of tossing a top hat onto the snowman's head. (Save the plastic ones from New Year's Eve parties!) Make a line in the snow to show the children where to stand. Be sure to teach your child the words to "Frosty the Snowman" "There must have been some magic in that old silk hat..."

Outdoor Mazes- I put on my snowshoes, and packed down a winding path with a couple of dead ends. At the end of the path I buried a large plastic tote with buried treasure. We changed the treasures often – sometime toys, colored ice cubes, large chunks of snow, or a stuffed animal. Another option would be to hide treasure (ice cubes or pinecones) along the way and the kids could have a bucket to gather the items.

Obstacle Course – when you have LOTS of snow use it to build the ultimate obstacle course. Mound up hills to be climbed, smaller compacted masses to jump over, several piles of snow just a few feet apart that the kids have to weave back and forth through, spray water with blue food coloring for a river to cross, have a feat of super strength such as pushing a giant snowball across the yard, create a small snow tunnel, and some grand finale like jumping into a large snow pile or sledding down a hill. Remember that there is a lot of fun in making the course and the kids should be a part of the creative planning and building!

Hiding in the Snow - talk to the children about snowshoe hares and how they change their color to blend in with their environment. In the summer, the snowshoe hare is brown and in the winter it is white. Play a game of Hide and Seek to reinforce this idea of camouflage. Hide five objects that are brown and five that are white. Which items were easier to find in the snow? Why? What if we played this game in the summer?

Hide & Seek Colored Ice Cubes - Make up lots of batches of colored ice cubes for the kids to find. Preschoolers will often call them jewels or diamonds, and will love hunting them over and over again. The children can both hide them & seek them. To begin, it's best to "hide" the ice cubes in plain sight so everyone can find them! If temperatures are cold enough, leave them outside when done playing. If you get a snow dusting overnight, it is fun to have to dig a bit to find them! Colored ice cubes that are not found, might melt and reveal themselves another day. Variations: 1. Assign each child a color to find, everyone is told to find 12 ice cubes and is given an egg carton to hold the cubes as they find them. 2. Hide the cubes in tricky places and play hot/cold

Winter Scavenger Hunt – this is a fun activity to use year-round. Make sure you take a walk around ahead of time so that the items you list can actually be found on the hunt. Items to include – snow drift, dripping icicle, pinecone, twig, animal track, flying bird, deer droppings, frozen puddle, ice, etc. Check the items off as you find them. Be sure to use it as an opportunity to ask questions too!

Winter Treasure Hunt – half bury treasure in the snow. This could be done again and again by changing up the items you hide. Plastic coins, ice blocks, colored ice cubes, silicone shaped ice cubes, ice frozen into sand molds, painted pine cones, small trinkets, etc. Count the number of items before and after hiding them to ensure you found all the treasure!

Nature Walks - find a natural area close to your facility and walk there often. There is so much to learn just by walking and observing. One great way to document your walks to take photographs that you print and display in your indoor classroom. Compare photos from a fall walk, winter, and spring. This helps children see the changes that happen slowly over time.

Snowman Building

There are wonderful teachable moments while building snowmen: patience, persistence, sequencing events, ordering by size, and team work!

Snowman Building - gather a variety of snowman supplies (scarves, carrots, sticks, buttons), so the kids can be creative in their snowman decorating. Talk about the sequencing of building a snowman.

Snowman Sack - read Snowballs by Lois Ehlert. Revisit the page that says: “We’d been waiting for a really big snow, saving good stuff in a sack. Finally it was a perfect snowball day.”

What would be “really good stuff” to decorate a snowman? Give each child a brown grocery bag to gather up snowman accessories from the outdoors - small branches, dead weeds, pinecones, acorns as well as edible items for birds such as bird seed, popcorn, etc. Get kids thinking and planning ahead for their snowman making! Let’s draw our ideas for our snowmen! **“Perfect Snowball Day”** - in Snowballs by Lois Ehlert she mentions this term. What makes a “perfect snowball day”? Talk about different types of snow and try packing snowballs. Can we make snowmen with all types of snow?!

Snowman Variations- do a pinterest search and get inspired! Some favorites I have pinned for this coming winter: upside down snowman like he’s doing a headstand. Rosy cheeked snowman. Snow caterpillar using a snowball maker for perfect spheres -- could color like the Very Hungry Caterpillar. Snowman bird feeder - create a bowl shape at the top and fill with seeds. Snow animals. Snoopy shaped snowman. Snowman family like in Snowballs by Lois Ehlert.

Snow creatures – mound up snow to make animals, children’s book characters, and imaginary creatures. To create a different creatures provide the kids with a variety of natural materials -- twigs, leaves, tall grasses, icicles. Try making: Porcupine – twigs to make the spines, Deer – bring antlers to add to a pile of snow, Squirrel - pretend fur for his bushy tail, Tiger – paint on stripes.

Headless Snowman - build snowman without a head, put stool behind so kids can step up and they look like the snowman.

Mini Snowmen- have kids create their very own snowman on a small scale. If they can be picked up, you could move the mini snowman around for a photo shoot around the outdoor play space. These pictures could be printed into a book to teach positional words: under the umbrella, on top of the mailbox, beside the bird feeder, etc. *(Later, mini snowmen could be brought indoors to observe melting, preserved in the freezer, or meet their demise with a hair dryer)*

Chubby Little Snowman - Act out the poem, *Chubby Little Snowman* (bunny ears headband, snowman -- carrot nose, buttons using self stick foam circles)

Sun Protection - what can we do on a sunny warm day to help our snowmen? Beach umbrellas, blankets, cardboard – kids are great problem solvers, especially when they want to keep their snowman from melting away.

Snow Engineering

Snow Castles - get out the sand toys and let the kids create a snow fortress. Show the kids how to fully fill the sand castle buckets, pack it in, and then carefully dump from the bucket. If you have a “Flexible Flyer Snow Block Maker” or other brick maker, you may want to start with a plain brick wall and then add details with the sand buckets. The plastic that sand toys are typically made out of will crack if left out in the snow, so it’s better to use them and then store in the garage.

Snow City – use the brick mold to make lots of small buildings & houses. To create variety with the buildings use different sized containers such as dishpans, yogurt containers, etc. Create roads that will accommodate your child’s outdoor plastic trucks. Show the kids how to add details to the buildings with windows, doors, sidewalks, paths, etc.

Snowy Bridges - using the snow block maker, attempt to create a bridges around the play space. Then using small toy cars, kids can drive their small toys car around the yard.

Snow Lantern - make a mini igloo shape by stacking snowballs. Before putting on the top, add either a LED tea light that is battery operated or a glow stick. This creates a wonderful effect!

Snow Block Wall – persistence, determination, and some team work and you can build your very own snowy “Great Wall of China”

Demolition Day- together discuss rules for destroying snow buildings. Would it be kind to destroy someone else’s snow fort or snowman? When the weather begins to warm and any remaining snow walls or structures are beginning to fall, consider having a group “Demolition Day” where everything gets crumbled and taken down.

Snow Playhouse - a simple way to create a simple snow structure is to use a plastic playhouse (such as a Step 2) as the base. Before the snow flies, relocate the playhouse to somewhere that you won’t mind it getting frozen to the ground. Each snowfall, have the kids help you shovel the snow to cover the walls of the play structure. Do not cover the roof since heavy snow could cause the roof to cave in. Decorate the snow playhouse with snow paints or artificial flowers!

Snow Shelters - without a doubt, one of the most memorable activities that you can do outdoors with children in winter is to build snow shelters. Our favorite type of snow shelter is a snow quinzee. It’s important to learn how to safely make a shelter since a child could get trapped if it collapses. Recruit an experience snow shelter builder, attend a workshop on it, or do some research before attempting this project. It’s one of the best projects we do each year and I can’t recommend it enough! We make our snow pile ahead the night before and

then carve it out with the children the following day. We decided that we could not safely leave snow quinzee in our public space because it's a trapping hazard....so we sadly destroy it at the end of the day. **An alternative is to create a structure that does not have roof that could collapse!** One great resource is: <http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/>

Montshire Museum has an "Igloo Build" on February 15, 2014. The host of the event is Dr. Bert Yankielun, engineer and author of the book *How to Build an Igloo and Other Snow Structures*. You'll learn the structural secrets of building with snow, from making an initial snow angel to placing the final block on the dome to sawing yourself out. Then try your own hand at building an igloo! Indoor activities and presentations included throughout the day. Check their website for more information <http://montshire.org/programs/special-events/igloo-build/>

Dramatic Play Outdoors

Hot Chocolate Stand- all the same features as a lemonade stand, but offer up some real or pretend hot cocoa to your customers!

Outdoor Ice Cream Shop - one of the best investments I've made for our outdoor play equipment was the "Melissa and Doug Sunny Patch Speck Seahorse Sand Ice Cream Set". This little \$15 set has provided hours of year round fun for my preschoolers. It comes with two ice cream scoops, two cones, a sprinkle shaker, and bucket with a lid. My preschoolers love to play with it in the sand box before it's covered with snow. This year, I plan on bringing it back out in winter so they can make cool treats with fresh snow!

Winter Construction Site - gather every plastic truck & tractor you have so there are enough vehicles for each child. Add yellow construction flagging to make the play area look like a construction site. Round up a bunch of shovels and sand tools. Prior to the kids arriving, use food coloring in spray bottles to make roads on the snow. As kids arrive, explain that this is a winter construction site! (Hard hats would add to the fun, but they will not stay on with winter hats and hoods. Maybe save the hard hats for warmer days.){Note – plastic trucks that are left outside will become brittle. Metal components will rust in the snow. The best bet is to take the trucks inside after playing, and make sure to drain the bin you store them in!}

Snow Pirates – shiver me cold timbers! Put on some pirate dress up gear over the kids snow suits and go outdoors for a cool pirate adventure. Create a pretend boat out of mounded snow, add a pirate flag, bury some treasure, and mark an X.

Snow Kitchen - offer a variety of play kitchen accessories such as pots, pans, plates, cups, and utensils. Gather a bunch of natural materials to use as the 'food' - sunflower heads, acorns, pinecones, dried herbs, and rocks.

Snow Furniture - create a table and chairs to sit on outdoors. Large storage totes that were filled with snow and left overnight to settle can be turned out and resembles a table. Chairs can be made from 5 gallon buckets. With a larger group, you could have each child make their own chair or something special for the snow room. For a fun photo op, you could add a beach umbrella to the snow room!

Snow Art Outdoors

Icy Sun Catchers- indoors begin with a pie pan and a variety of natural materials. Pinecones, hemlock cones, acorns, small pine branches, cedar branches, leaves, sticks, cranberries, and small pebbles can be used to create a mandala design or abstract art. Talk about the textures, shapes, colors, and aroma as you create your art. Add a long string or wire across the pan, making sure that it is fully submerged, and that there is enough string outside of the pie pan to tie it onto something later. Allow for it to freeze overnight in the freezer or outdoors. Do not remove from the pan until fully frozen. Once it's ready, remove the pie pan and hang outdoors in a spot that you can see it. These are best to make in the coldest months so they last for weeks before melting. Make a glitzy version by using sequins, glitter and food coloring!

Icy Ornaments- use the same directions as above but instead, use cookie cutters with aluminum foil wrapped on the bottom as the molds. These smaller ornaments are beautiful to adorn a tree outside in the winter months.

Icy Sculptures- using the same types of materials as the sun catchers, create larger 3D sculptures. Use a large yogurt container or ½ gallon orange juice container as the mold. Children fill the container with natural materials and then add water. Predict how long it will take for the water to freeze outdoors, test it, and record. Once frozen take it out of the mold and observe. Let the children to decide if they want to keep it outside or bring it indoors. If they bring it in, predict how long it will take to melt, test it, and record.

Icy Letters - fill an 8x8 or 9x9 inch pan with water, add flexible grapevine or sticks to make one letter. Decorate with additional natural materials if desired. Allow to freeze overnight. Over the course of a few days, make more letters to spell a word.

Snow Carvings – pack snow into several large totes, compress firmly, and allow to freeze for several days. Then gently flip it out so you have several large snow blocks for the children to carve. Give younger children thick wooden dowels or tongue depressors. Garden tools such as metal trowels, rakes, or bulb planters can add variety to the carvings.

Drawing or Mark Making in the Snow - use a stick to create pictures in the snow. Remember Peter in Snowy Day by Ezra Jack Keats? Try dragging a stick behind you to create a trail, make shapes, letters, names, messages, and drawings. Then photograph and create a class book.

Snowy Land Art - snow acts a beautiful white canvas for our young artists to create on. Offer bird food and items from nature. Take a photograph the day you create it and then observe to see if any footprints appear in the snow. Who would have eaten our art?!

Ice Sculptures - obviously we won't be bringing out chain saws for our preschoolers to carve huge ice blocks, but there are still fun sculptures to create. Freeze large containers of water with different colors added. Stack the blocks (using salt if needed to make them stick to one another). You could make a variety of Inukshuks like the Inuit use to point the way. Or you could make abstract sculptures. Check Pinterest for more inspiration!

Color the Snow

Transform your white covered play space into a sea of colors. There are many ways to color the snow, and children will delight in any or all of these techniques! Take pictures of the kid's masterpieces since they will disappear under the next snow fall!

Pros & Cons of Painting Options:

Food coloring - add to water creating a concentrated solution. This creates bright colors, is relatively cheap but can stain clothes.

Kool-aid - dilute packets into warm water so that it all dissolves. This creates bright colors, comes in wide variety of colors, smells great, is inexpensive, but can stain clothes. (Some children may attempt to drink it since it smells like candy.)

Tempera or washable paint - will not stain clothes but the colors are dull. One frugal tip is to save your "empty" tempera paint containers. Add water and shake, let sit for a couple of days and repeat. Use this diluted paint for outdoor paintings. Also, when you are cleaning the easel paint cups, add water to the leftover bit and use as diluted paint.

Liquid watercolors - vibrant colors, can be diluted with water, totally washable & does not stain, but the most expensive option.

Crushed up sidewalk chalk – save up all your little scraps, pound & crush them into powder, and add water. Best used with brushes since it can jam a spray bottle.

Snow Spray Painting: fill small spray bottles with water and coloring. Show the kids how to spray AWAY from themselves. Try out the spray bottles ahead of time to make sure that kids can easily spray them independently.

Experiment with color saturation – “when I spray close the color is darker and when I spray far away the color is lighter.”

Create oversized stencils from cardboard or poster board.

Lay down 4 sticks to create picture frames.

Purchase old frames at a thrift shop and create an outdoor gallery

Snow Painting with Brushes: use diluted tempera paint (or any washable paint). Use paint cups from the easel but keep them in a tray or basket so they don't tip over. If you are doing this activity with multiple children, create a “canvas” for each child's artwork using a cardboard piece and press into the ground. Create your art gallery in an out of the way area so the work can be enjoyed for several days (or until the next big snowfall)!

Drip Paintings: on warmer days you could offer small cups of colored water and either turkey basters, eye droppers, or squeeze bottles (such as ketchup bottle). Kids can create various effects of drizzling and dumping paint onto the snow.

Powdered Tempura: sprinkle onto the snow on a day that has wet flurries OR use a spray bottle with water to create tie dye effects

Animal Tracks

Animal Tracks- after a fresh snowfall, it's so much fun to find and follow a set of animal tracks in your back yard (even cat tracks are fun to find). See how far you can follow an animal tracks and try to figure out who left those tracks. Take a photograph and then find it's match in a track book. (Older children might enjoy drawing the tracks they find into a journal and identifying them.)

Who are the frequent visitors? - ask the kids, which tracks do we see each time we have a new snowfall?

Winter Track Walk: Taking a winter walk in the forest looking for animal tracks can be quite the adventure for young children. Explain that in addition to tracks people also look for tree scarring and scat (animal droppings). Look for real animal tracks. Any time that tracks are found look around the area closely without disturbing the tracks. Take a photograph of the tracks so that you can print and make a book of your discoveries. Look for other signs of animal activity - chewed acorn shells, scat, and scratches in bark.

* Give each child their own 'Animal Track Pattern Cards' to wear as necklace. (www.pbskids.org used to have one from Curious George but the link is no longer active. Another printable version can be found in the Project Season book from Shelburne Farms.)

*Follow the Footprints activity: Make animal footprints that are to scale of the actual size of the animal. Laminate the sheets for durability. Before the students arrive, put the footprints out in the outdoor space. Then have the children track the prints down and follow the animal. {If there is snow on the ground, stomp out human footprints in various sized boots instead.}

* Flip Flop Tracks - there are lots of pins on Pinterest showing how people transform flip flops into various animal tracks. It would be fun to make these so they could be tied onto a pair of boots, then kids could stomp out their own versions of animal tracks.

Small Scale Track Making : Bring a few plastic toy animals outdoors. Show the kids how they can make the animals walk through the snow leaving behind mini tracks.

Tracking Basket: in the outdoor play space, display an animal track identification poster on the fence or wall. Keep a small tracking manual or plastic tracking cards available for the kids to explore. Animal Tracks matching cards could be laminated and kept on a ring. One set that is very preschool age appropriate can be found at - <http://www.2teachingmommies.com/2010/09/forest.html>

Indoor Gross Motor Games

Indoor Snowball Toss- using paper snowballs, rolled up socks, practice golf balls, ping pong balls, or white bean bags. Set up buckets or rings to toss into. Review guidelines for indoor toss games! For older children you could make up a set of plates or pie pans that have a number written onto them; the child adds their points as they toss their snowballs. {Kids love to make their own snowballs! Give them scrap paper and roll of masking tape. Add in some math skills such as ordering by size(small, medium, large), counting groups, and comparing sets of snowballs. } **Mitten Toss Game** - take a couple pairs of small knit mittens and fill with fiber-fill. Sew shut and use to toss into a bucket or hoop. Use the same concept as above.

Indoor Snowball Bowling- using recycled drink bottles or snack containers, decorate them as a snow theme. Make the pins to resemble snowmen or add snowflakes to them. Have the kids bowl with an oversized snowball (white ball) or rolled up socks.

Ice Fishing - poles, fish, blue sheet as the pond; could add letters or numbers to the fish to work on early literacy or math skills

Floating Snowballs - inflate several white, clear, or blue balloons. Establish the rules before playing - each person (or team) must keep the snowball (balloon) floating in the air using their hands (or head, breath, elbow, ect.) The child can move around the room but the balloon cannot touch any object or it 'melts'. Noncompetitive - if your snowball melts you can pretend to make a new one and pick up your balloon and start again. Competitive - the person who keeps it from melting the longest is the winner.

What is covered in a blanket of snow? - the teacher covers a familiar object with a white blanket. The child has to feel to determine what's under the snow. Play this game during circle time until the kids can do it independently, and then make it a center.

Balancing on Icebergs - create a path of flat icebergs by cutting out shapes from white poster board. Begin by having the icebergs close and then as the kids play the game, spread them further apart. Decide on the rules with you children - for younger kids as long as their foot is touching an iceberg they are safe, but older children can play that if any part of their foot is off the iceburg then they are frozen. (Can a team mate unfreeze/thaw them?) Add other obstacles?

Indoor Ice Skating - two sheets of wax paper on carpet, or if you have tile or linoleum the kids could wear socks to skate in.

Balancing Snowballs on wooden spoons

Hot Potato/ Cold Ice - explain the rules for playing hot potato, then play the game using a ball or potato. When the music stops clap for the person with the potato. Then explain since it is winter we are going to pass an ice cube, play until the music stops and clap for the person holding the ice cube. (Competitive version - the person with the ice cube is out, and play continues in the circle.)

Art Ideas

Shaving Cream Prints spread shaving cream on trays and provide liquid water colors to drip on top. Kids swirl the paint then press a piece of paper on top to make a print. {Paper can be cut into shapes such as snowman, snowflakes, or icicles.}

Mitten Paint Blotto: Day one - fold cardstock in half and drip paint onto one side and fold. Let dry. Day two - child puts hand onto outside of card, draw mitten shape, and then cut out. Reveal identical pairs. Mix up mittens & match pairs!

Beaded Snowflakes -need pipe cleaners, beads in white, clear, blue. Add a hanger using either dental floss or fishing line. Explain to the kids that the snowflake needs 6 arms, but each snowflake is unique. This is will likely continue throughout the theme since beading is a favorite activity!

Snowflake Print Making - put white glittery paint into a shallow pie pan. Lay out a variety of materials for print making: bottom of berry basket, bottom of a spool of thread, snowflake shaped cookie cutters, toilet paper rolls with slits cut out with decorative scissors. (Dark blue paper).

Snowflake Handprints – use blue construction paper. Dip hands into white paint. Paint three lines to form a star, then paint 6 handprints at the end of the spokes. This should form a circle, be sure not to overlap the hands & try to have the fingers in the same position for each print.

Snowman Collages - using card stock pre-cut into the shape of a snowman and lots of open ended accessories for the kids to choose: googly eyes, mini sticks, scarves, hats, whole punches as buttons, mini pom poms, real buttons, popsicle sticks, straw pieces, paper beads, & feathers.

Yarn Snowballs - give each child a small balloon inflated with air. The children dip pieces of white yarn into watered down Elmer's Glue. Wrap yarn all around the balloon, sprinkle with glitter, and dry overnight. Then pop the balloon.(You could also use concentrated sugar water instead.)

Painting with Ice Cubes – freeze several trays of ice cubes & food coloring or paint with a popsicle stick in it. Show the children how to hold the stick and 'paint' with the melting ice cube. Paint onto thin white construction paper or coffee filters.

Glitter Icicles - Have kids create thick lines of glue on wax paper (or laminate scraps). Let glue run. Sprinkle with glitter and let dry.

Igloo Sculptures - turn paper bowl upside down. Cut out door and insert toilet paper roll, glue in place. Decorate igloo with either collage materials in snow colors, or cover in puffy snow. Create puffy snow by mixing 1 part shaving cream and 1 part Elmer's glue - creates 3D effect.

Igloo Prints - dip balloon into white paint. Then press onto bottom of paper so just a half circle is on the paper. (Kids may like to do a snowman version, pressing different ways to make small, medium, large circles. {Open Ended - many papers will look like a blizzard instead!}) Other ideas - use different sized corks cut in half or potatoes cut into the shape of an igloo.

Additional Art Ideas (this page not listed in the lesson plans)

***Homemade Snow Globes** - prior to beginning clean small jars well. To the lid hot glue a seasonal figure such as a snowman, sled, pine tree, or holiday designs. Plastic or ceramic figures are best since metal will rust. Plastic cupcake or cake toppers with the pick cut off are affordable and come in a variety of themes. To the jar add distilled water, white glitter, and a small amount of glycerin (which makes the glitter fall slower). Make sure that the figurine will fit into the jar when the lid is screwed on, if it's too big try a larger jar. The liquid in the jar should fill almost the entire jar. Screw the lid on and try a few practice shakes - add more glitter if needed, and then hot glue the lid to the jar. To make it look more finished, paint the lid to match the scene and add a bit of thin ribbon around the lid. (could also add sequins, small foam snowflakes, beads, etc. & for the lid you could cover in glitter glue) Note: to make them more of a keepsake, you may want to use glass baby food jars, sand the inside of the lid, and add a silicone rubber sealant when adding the figurine, then add more when screwing the jar shut. More ideas at this blog:

<http://www.teachpreschool.org/2011/12/snow-globe-sensory-play/>

***Winter Scene Collages** - show children how to use cut paper scraps to create a snowy landscape scene ~ add hills, snow covered trees, houses, and animals. When done, children can coat it with a layer of clear glitter glue or a grown up can use Mod Podge.

***Snowy Sun Catchers** - using contact paper layer on: tissue paper squares, scraps from cutting snowflakes from coffee filters or white paper, glitter, and any other snowy collage materials. Make a frame out of construction paper to make it look like a window or a snow globe.

*** Q-Tip Snowflake Creations** - provide a variety of glitter glues, white glue, kid scissors and q-tips. Also provide some pre-cut q-tips for kids who find cutting them too difficult. Either provide blue construction paper to mount the snowflake creations onto or make them on wax paper. For the later choice, let the snowflakes dry overnight before adding a ribbon to hang them up. Super simple, but lots of fun!

{My son enjoyed the q-tip cutting as much as the snowflake creating. It led to a great discussion about ordering by length. I love when math comes up during art time!!! This was NOT a good project for my daughter though (2.5 years old) because she kept trying to stick the q-tips in her ears! So this might be better suited for school aged children.}

***Indoor Snowballs** - recycled white copy paper and masking tape. My kids both love to play with tape so this was a fun project on a frigid snowy day. When you have a bunch of snowballs, have a snowball fight by throwing them at stuffed animals or create a gentler snowball toss game.

Snowmen from Egg Cartons - 3 sections of egg cups, decorate with pom poms, googly eyes, small buttons, paper cut-outs of boots & hats

Bleeding Tissue Paper Snowflake Prints- <http://artfulparent.typepad.com/artfulparent/2009/12/snowflake-prints-with-bleeding-tissue-paper.html>

Snowflake Window Clings - glue, wax paper, glitter <http://almostunschoolers.blogspot.com/2009/11/make-snowflake-window-clings-out-of.html> Painting using fingerprints or q-tips to dab white paint into a snowman shape.

Cotton Ball snowmen – cut out a snowman shape from cardstock or a cereal box, then let kids glue on cotton balls

Handprint Polar Bear - White paint onto blue paper. Take a picture of the child next to the Polar Bear in the Museum. Put into a frame and give as a Valentine Gift for families.

"If You Should Meet a Polar Bear" poem

<http://www.playbasedlearning.com.au/2011/03/winter-wonderland/>

Snowflake Painting Using Masking Tape - <http://www.frugalfamilyfunblog.com/2009/12/art-so-easy-toddler-can-do-it.html>

Snowflake Making – offer blue paper and white paint. You could make snowflake stamps cut from potatoes, find thread spool ends that look like snowflakes, or even just show kids how to use their fingerprints to make simple snowflakes.

Easy Snowflake Sun Catchers - <http://www.frugalfamilyfunblog.com/2010/01/easy-snowflake-suncatchers.html>

Snowman Mobile - <http://jennwa.blogspot.com/2009/01/snowman-mobile.html>

Three paper plates connected with yarn is a frugal and easy preschool project. Laying out a wide assortment of materials makes this a very open ended project!

Giant Snowman for the Class - 3 white trash bags filled with crumbled newspaper. Glue on paper or foam features!

Salty Watercolor Glue Pictures of Snowmen - <http://momsbyheart.net/guest-post-frugal-summer-art-project/>

Tie Dye Coffee Filter Snowflakes - <http://prekandksharing.blogspot.com/2011/12/tie-dye-coffee-filter-snowflakes.html>

Puffy Snow Paint - the first time I tried this my son was 2 and we were at a community playgroup. I seriously couldn't believe that the mixture dries as nicely as it does. Working with it it is soft and fluffy but dries and stays 3D. To make simply mix 1 part white glue to 4 parts shaving cream. Sprinkle on some painted rice or glitter for an added effect!

Cut out a large circle from a piece of corrugate cardboard. Attach the lid to a table and place large construction paper underneath. Have the children paint snowballs with the Puffy Snow paint. (or cut out a snowman shape)

Magnetic Snowman -this works best if you have a magnet white board, white refrigerator, or white metal filing cabinet in your classroom. Precut snowman features from foam and add magnets. Encourage kids to build an indoor snowman using the pieces!

Oversized Felt Snowman - This is meant to be an interactive activity in the classroom so make sure the snowman is created in a way that even the shortest child can reach the top of it. Begin by cutting out the shape of a snowman from oversized white felt. Cut all of the snowman features from colorful felt. Many kids have not explored with felt boards and are often excited to discover that felt sticks to felt. If you rub the colorful felt pieces with a scouring pad, the decorations will stick more easily. Encourage kids to decorate the snowman in many different ways. Take photographs so kids are willing to change their designs.

Fine Motor Skills

There are fine motor skills throughout the lesson plans provided. Listed below are some additional ideas if you need to add more fine motor work for children in your program.

- Tweezer “snowballs” (cotton balls) into ice cube trays
- Tweezer “marshmallows” (white pom poms) into tea cups from the play kitchen
- Cutting snowflakes
- Scooping & pouring at the water and sensory table
- Lacing around a plate that looks like a snowman
- Create a tearing bin with white paper - use the paper scraps to make a snowy scene
- Deconstruct a pine cone - lots of hard work for little fingers
- Lacing cheerios onto a pipe cleaner. Tie the ends and hang up for the winter birds.
- Play dough
- Glue packing peanuts onto circles to make a 3D snowman
- Scoop snowballs (ping pong balls) with a wooden spoon and transfer to a bowl
- Q-tip paint water onto black board to make snowflakes or snowballs

Play Dough Center

Cloud Dough - To make simply **mix 8 cups of flour and 1 cup of vegetable oil**. For making at home, I would likely start with just 2 Cups of flour and 1/4 cup of oil. The consistency should be like moon sand. To contain the mess, I put the dough into a under the bed storage bin and laid it on a tarp. Small cups, sand molds, cookie cutters in the shape of snowmen & snowflakes, popsicle sticks for cutting, and plastic woodland animals to make prints.

Kool-Aid Play dough - One batch blue and one batch clear. The clear kool-aid doesn't have a color but has a scent, you could add some white tempera paint or glitter to it for variety!

Ingredients: 1 ¼ cup flour, ¼ cup salt, 1 pkg unsweetened Kool-aid powder, 1 cup boiling water, 1 ½ Tbsp vegetable oil

Directions: In a bowl, mix flour, salt and kool-aid. Stir in water and oil. Knead with hands for about 5 minutes. Store in ziploc bag for up to 2 months. This play dough smell great which may be too much temptation for younger children. We like this type of dough for it's vivid color!

Snow Dough/ Bright White Playdough - I've tried several versions over the years but my favorite was found at this blog --

<http://www.thechocolatemuffintree.com/2012/01/two-kinds-of-snow-dough.html>

To encourage snowman making I took the blogs suggestions and added: buttons, small piece of shiny pipe cleaners, beans, and beads!!! Maybe for carrot noses I will make rolled paper beads?

Ingredients: 1 cup cornstarch, 2 cup salt, 1 tbsp oil, 1 tbsp cream of tartar, 1 cup boiling (or nearly boiling) water, few drops liquid glycerin (makes it smoother), silver glitter

Directions: In a bowl, mix all the dry ingredients, then add the oil, grown up pours in boiling water, and mix. Let cool for a bit, then knead until smooth, add in glitter.

InstaSnow - just add water mixes. Steve Spangler brand now available at Amazon. Dollar Store variety has a chemical smell. ☹

Ice Skating Rink - freeze water in a 9x13 pan and play on the play dough table (towel underneath). Kids make play dough people & snowmen to go ice skating on the big ice rink!

Frozen Pond - fill large turkey tray 1/3 full of water. Lay in plastic frogs, snakes, and fish at the bottom of the water. Freeze overnight. Lay on play dough table with woodland animals that stay awake in winter.

Water Table

Real Explorations – bring some of the great outdoors inside to explore more closely. Snow, ice, colored ice cubes icicles, and ice blocks are all interesting to observe and examine. Add a variety of small sand shovels, spoons, cups, strainers, etc. Comparing two materials in the bin creates great conversation when kids notice snow melting faster than ice.

Pretend Snowflakes - fill the water table with water and add a variety of plastic snowflakes. Add fishing nets and strainers for the kids to scoop up the snowflakes.

Snow Ball Exploration - using a snowball maker make a bunch of snowballs before preschool begins. Leave the batches outdoors overnight to really solidify. Hide a little toy inside some of the snow balls.

Mini Snowmen Meet the Hair Dryer - help the kids to make mini snowmen in the water table. Then transfer them to individual plastic tubs. After talking about how snow melts, bring out a hair dryer. "Ask what do you think will happen?"

Craft Foam Snowmen – precut a bunch of snowballs and snowmen features (hats, buttons, scarves, etc.) for kids to play with at the water table. When the craft foam is moistened, it sticks to the walls of water table. Lots of fun and can be reused again and again!

Soapy Snow Exploration - tear toilet paper into small pieces (Charmin Ultra) and grate Ivory soap into the water table. Add water and let it sit over night. In the morning drain any extra water off. Preschoolers love to squeeze the mixture with their hands. Provide small forms, silicone cups and shapes they can fill and pop out. Molding, sculpting, and squishing – this is a wonderful texture to experience. Do not put down the drain though!

Shaving Cream – white and fluffy but totally different feeling than snow. Check to see if it's permissible to use shaving cream.

Ice Skating – freeze a giant slab of ice using the largest pan you own (such as 9x13 inch cake pan). Add a few small figures to dance and skate across the "skating rink"

Iceburgs - freeze multiple cups and bowls full of water. Provide arctic animals (Arctic Toob by Safari Toys).

"Ice Break" - freeze small toys in plastic containers, provide spoons and tools to free the objects. Be sure to wear eye protection!

Frozen Hands - using laytex gloves make frozen hands for kids to explore

Real & Pretend Ice - add real ice cubes and the "Ice Cubes" from the game - "Don't Break the Ice". What is the same & different?

Sensory Bin

Pretend Snow Bin - two bags of fake paper snow, white & blue pom poms to be snowballs, some pulled apart cotton balls. Add a variety of scoops, tongs, tweezers, and mini sand shovels.

Snow Globe Bin -same bin contents from the pretend snow bin but add small jars with mini figurines hot glued to the lid. Add appropriate sized spoons so kids can scoop 'snow' into the 'snow globe' and some loose figurines for the kids to play with. Since we are learning about Snowflake Bentley and how to use a magnifying glasses...why not add a few magnifying glasses to examine the snow bin more closely! We chose to use plastic containers for this exploration.

Inspired by Deborah's post at: <http://www.teachpreschool.org/2011/12/snow-globe-sensory-play/>

Snowballs Bin - ping pong balls, golf balls, and practice golf balls. Paper towel and gift wrap tubes cut in half to make ramps. We are learning about spheres so let's examine how spheres roll!

Snowman Assembly Bin – draw on snowman features on to the ping pong balls. If time, I might make pretend carrots from salt dough and add various other snowman features such as real buttons, felt scarves, and few small stick arms.

Inspired by a photo on this blog - <http://katherinemaries.com/blog/archives/11089>

Slushy Diaper Snow – I haven't done this yet myself but it's on my list to try. Inspired by this post- <http://jennwa.blogspot.com/2010/01/making-snow.html>

Hail Bin - Naturally white rocks and painted glittery white rocks - would be fun to have a chart of actual sized hail to compare to the pretend hail!

Packing peanuts – plain white packing peanuts are great to pretend with, add a few small shovels and mini buckets for some fun play

Snowball Surprise - grate Ivory soap bars, add a bit of water. Take a small plastic toy and cover with the soap. Mold into the shape of a snowball!

Sensory trays with sand, salt or flour (white powders to resemble snow)

Bubbling Snow – create a thin layer of baking soda, give children a small cup of vinegar, so they can scoop and make it fizz!

Writing Center

Writing Center – an ongoing center in our classroom is the writing center. It is normally stocked with scissors, crayons, colored pencils, and glue. We change out the materials to keep it interesting and inspiring to our students. During our winter theme we use many ideas to inspire snowy themed writing!

White crayons & colored pencils – offer a bunch of white writing utensils and dark blue paper to draw onto

Scrapbook paper – purchase some snow themed papers to inspire letter writing and drawing.

Rubber stamps – snowflakes and snowman stamps with light blue rubber stamps and white card stock

Snowflake cutting – show kids how to fold a circle so that they can cut their own snowflakes. Save the scraps for snowy collage projects

Snowflake tracers – use manila folders to craft some teacher created snowflakes. Kids use them to trace snowflakes onto their paper

Snowflake printable sheets – we don't use many coloring sheets in our program, but the beauty and variety of snowflakes is fun to trace and color. Glitter crayons make these look even prettier!

Snowballs -offer pre-cut snowballs of various sizes and some paper folded in half with half circle for the kids to cut out themselves.

Q-tip painting – offer the kids a very small bowl (such as a recycled applesauce container) with glitter or white paint and a q-tip. It's great to see the snowy effect added to kids drawings or their snowy scenes made onto paper by themselves.

Snowy mark making- offer a salt tray for kids to practice mark making and letter writing

Snowman cards – using card stock pre-cut into the shape of a snowman and lots of open ended accessories for the kids to choose: googly eyes, mini sticks, small scraps of real fabric for scarves, hats, whole punches as buttons, mini pom poms, & real buttons

Science Center

Science Center – an ongoing center in our classroom that reinforces the theme that we are studying. This is a hands-on exploration center for the kids. The materials are added as we study them but cleaned out and kept tidy so the children feel motivated to spend time here investigating items further.

Hands-on lab – throughout the theme we leave child-safe experiments out for kids to re-create , re-test, and re-examine. Kids love to do the real work that scientists do.

“Kid Did” – children create the best posters and resources that we can hang in our room. Drawings of snowmen they want to design, copies of snowflakes they have seen in books, or favorite winter sports all make great materials to hang in the science center. Hanging their drawings shows that you honor their work and inspires their classmates to create posters of their own.

Real photographs – as we take pictures outdoors, we print the photos to display at the science center. Kids love to see the animal tracks we find, snowmen they’ve built, or pictures of their friends playing in the snow.

Snowballs by Lois Ehlert – after reading this book aloud, place the book at the science center for kids to go back through the book to find the objects on the snowmen. Offer some sticky notes so they can mark where they find the hidden objects.

Melting Snow - while outdoors have the children fill 4-6 small containers with the same amount of snow. Bring the containers indoors and put them in various locations . Set a timer and check them every 20 minutes. Take photos and discuss results.

Snowflake Matching Game – one great free resources is at this blog-

<http://letsgoflyakiteuptothehighestheight.blogspot.com/2011/01/snowflake-matching-game.html>

Snowflake Matching - use coffee filters and contact paper <http://www.icanteachmychild.com/2012/01/snowflake-matching/>

Another version of snowflake matching - <http://strongstart.blogspot.com/2012/01/play-trays.html>

Thematic Healthy Snack Ideas:

Igloo Snack - slice an apple in half and carefully take out the seeds by cutting the away the middle portion. Lie it on the plate with the cut side down. Cover with a sticky substance, we chose peanut butter since it has some nutritional value. (Fluff or Cool-whip would be white and possibly look nicer but neither are healthy choices.) Give the child a small bowl of mini marshmallows to create their own igloo. I wanted my kids to share the igloo so I pre-cut it into slices before spreading the peanut butter. Both kids LOVED this snack and it was voted the best of the snow snacks we made!

Igloo made Vermont Style (a.k.a. Cabot Cheese House) To make, I laid down a small glass bowl to act as the base. Then I sliced the best cheddar cheese in the world. To build, I started at the bottom and worked my way to the top. My kiddos liked this igloo almost as much as the marshmallow one, can you believe that?!

Snowman Noses - just a really cute way to say we are eating raw carrots. I sent some in my son's lunch box and wrote on the Ziploc, "Uh oh, some snowman is now missing his nose!"

Snowman Lunch Scapes - I used cucumber slices for three snowballs of the snowman, and carved a simple cucumber hat. I made the arms and nose from a carrot by slicing them to size. I added raisins for eyes and buttons. Since I was making lunch - I cut a sandwich into fourths and laid it at the bottom of the plate as the snow that the snowman would stand on.

Homemade Cocoa – The book, Snowmen at Night, says snowmen drink iced cocoa. Talk about why they can't drink hot cocoa. Taste test - hot cocoa v. iced cocoa

Snow Ice Cream : 1 Cup milk, 1/2 Cup sugar, 1 teaspoon vanilla extract, 5-7 cups of clean and fluffy snow. Mix together milk, vanilla, and sugar. Stir until the sugar dissolves. Slowly add the snow, stirring constantly, until it is thick or a consistency you like. We also made "**Cold Cocoa Snow Ice Cream**" so we also added 2 T. cocoa powder, 1/4 C chocolate chips, and a sprinkle of mini marshmallows on top!

Cracker Man - three circular crackers spread with flavored cream cheese, pretzel stick arms, veggie features! Easy and super cute.

Tortilla Snowflake - fold a flour tortilla into fourths and cut away a few sections to make a snowflake. Warm in an un-oiled frying pan then sprinkle with cheese. Serve with salsa or bean dip.

Apple Snowflake- arrange six slices of apple in a snowflake shape. We added craisins to the center but a little bowl of yogurt or peanut butter to dip into!

Cheesy Snowman Face - lay a slice of circular cheese (provolone is our favorite) add a mini carrot nose, raisin eyes, and slices of cucumber for mouths.

Banana Man - three circles of banana, peanut butter for buttons & facial features, mini pretzel sticks for arms

Snowman "Open Face" sandwich - either a bagel half, rice cake, English muffin, or slice of bread cut into a circle. Lay on either lunchmeat cut to size or spread with a topping such as cream cheese or peanut butter. Add features for the face with whatever fruits or veggies your kiddos would enjoy! Use just one circle as head or two as a head and body if you want a heartier snack or a lunch.

Strings of popcorn- after you've feed your feathered friends a string of air-popped popcorn, make a few strings for the kids to enjoy themselves. Tie them into long necklaces and feast on them during movie night!

Snowflake Designs – give children a small bowls of mini marshmallows and toothpicks. Have them create their very own six sided snowflake designs and then eat them!

Chilled juice- have your children pick out a bottle of juice from the pantry. Take turns feeling the bottle and notice that it is the same temperature as the room. Then take the bottle outside and stick the unopened bottle into a snow bank or pile of snow. Leave outside for an hour or so, then bring in and feel the bottle again. Pour a cup for each child and have them feel how cold it is in their mouth!

Snowman Breakfast - make silver dollar pancakes and serve three small pancakes arranged as a snowman. Another less labor intensive option is to use a snowman cookie cutter. Serve a small bowl with raisins, craisins, fruit slices, etc. for your kiddos to decorate their own pancakes. And don't forget to serve Vermont Maple Syrup for a true feast!

Winter Picnic - pull out the waterproof blanket and have a picnic in the snowy outdoors. Pack a basket with bread, warm soup, gooey macaroni & cheese, and hot cocoa. Non-breakable Thermos containers with a coupon for a "Winter Picnic" make a fun gift for winter holidays!

Winter Science Experiments & Explorations

Skype or Facetime: Our children are digital natives and LOVE technology. Find a family member of one of your students who lives in a warm climate. Video chat with them and ask, “What do you see in winter?” and have them show you their backyard. Why is it different than ours?

Signs of Winter- as the seasons shift, take notice of the little changes that happen each day. Go outside and explore. Take photographs or draw pictures of new things that you see.

Thinking like scientists – predict, observe, draw conclusion

Talk about the 3 states of water (solid, liquid, gas) and demonstrate examples: Icicles & ice are solids. Water is a liquid. “Dragon’s Breath” is a gas. This is a new concept for most kids and we explore it several times throughout the year in preschool. Look for examples in the play space and then again when we are indoors.

Volume- throughout the theme there are lots of opportunities to explore volume. Scooping, pouring, and transferring materials at the water table gives kids lots of opportunity to explore. Conducting experiments about how much space ice and snow takes up is a great way to extend their learning.

Melting- there will be lots of opportunities to observe materials melt (snow, ice, icicles, ice blocks, etc) but extend that concept to when making snack or lunch. Look at how the melted cheese looks different than the slice of cheese. Why? Or make a recycled crayon project by melting old crayons into new crayon cakes.

Ice & String: Ask children to lay a piece of string onto an ice cube. Does the string stick? Then spring salt onto the ice cube, lay the string onto the salty ice, and count to ten. Slow lift the string. Does the string stick to the ice now? Why? Preschoolers will not understand the science behind why this works but they can observe that salt changes the ice. After the teacher demos how this works, the children can experiment with the salt and trying to make it stick.

Winter Bubbles - blow bubbles on a day when it’s below 32F. Blow, catch bubble on the wand, and wait so that it freezes. Poke the bubble to see what happens! Try breathing onto a bubble that is still on the wand, will it thaw? For better results, start with bubble mix that is chilled in the fridge.

Bare Hands vs. Mittens - Which type of hand will make a small snowball melt faster? Make predictions, test it out, and discuss.

Making Frost - fill an empty coffee can 2/3 full with crushed ice. Sit the can on top of a piece of paper that has a small amount of water on it. Add ¼ cup of salt and mix with the ice. Keep mixing and on the outside of the can frost will begin to form.

Finding Frost Outdoors - on a frosty morning, go outside and carefully examine the frost. Then look for areas that have full sun next to an area still in the shade. How is the frost changing? Why?

Steaming Sandbox - on a sunny and chilly morning, look around at the equipment in your play space. On warm mornings, we find our sandbox with drifts of steam coming off it as the moisture on the tarp is evaporating.

Snow Cream - leave a large pan outdoors to gather fresh snow. Whisk together 1 cup condensed milk, ½ t. vanilla extract, ½ cup sugar -- continue whisking until the sugar is dissolved. Gradually add 5 cups of snow until it has the consistency of ice cream.

Fruity Snow Cones- gather fresh snow and add fruit juice, serve in a bowl with a spoon

Juicy Icicles - begin by hole punching three holes in the top of a plastic cup. Put string through the holes so that you can hang it outdoors. In the bottom of the cup, pierce a very small hole in the center. Fill the cup about a third full with juice and hang outside overnight. The cup will slowly leak through the bottom and an icicle will form. The next day, the children will have their very own juicy icicles to eat. Be sure to eat them indoors so they don't stick to wet lips.

Homemade Snow Gauge – cut the top off a 2 liter bottle, mark with inches by using a permanent marker. Another choice would be to use a large coffee can with a ruler inside. After a snowfall, check to see how many inches fell. Record the number, dump the gauge, and wait for the next snow fall.

The Art of Snowball Making – show children how to pack a snowball, then roll to make a BIG snowball! Talk about 2D & 3D shapes. Introduce the term SPHERE.

Go on an **icicle hunt**. Discuss where they form and why. What happens on a warm day? Why is it dangerous to play below icicles? On another day, go on an **Ice Hunt** - look for patches of ice in the outdoor play space. (Discuss the difference between icicles / ice.)

How big can we roll our snowball? Start with a small snowball and roll it around as if you were making the base of a snowman. Ask the kids what will happen if we keep rolling it. What if we let it sit and roll it again with the next snow fall. How big can it get?

Static electricity- since winter air is so dry, it often means there is more static in the air. Fill balloons with air, tie shut, rub onto the child's hair, and then see if you can get the balloon to stick to the child's clothes.

Science of sledding – think of all the lessons on force, motion, gravity, and friction that could be connected to sledding!

Bird watching in winter - it is often easier for children to spot birds in the winter because the leaves are off the tree. Pay attention to the birds in your play space. Take photographs and write down the birds that you spot.

Make Bird Feeders- there are so many versions of homemade bird feeders, but one that is simple for preschoolers is to coat a large pinecone with peanut butter (or shortening if there are allergies) and then roll into birdseed.

Wildlife Tree - choose a special tree in the play scape or nearby woods and decorate it as a “Wildlife Tree”. String air popped popcorn and cranberries and bird cakes. Children love to watch as birds come to feast at their special tree. Visit the tree after freshly fallen snow to look for animal tracks.

Binoculars to watch the birds- invest in a child-size set of binoculars to enhance the kid's bird watching and observing. Keep the binoculars near the window with a simple bird identification pamphlet. Make every child their own pair of toilet paper tube binoculars for fun dramatic play!

Winter Forest Scape: The science center is an important part of the winter theme. We create a snowy forest scape on the train table, and continue to add to and expand on the scene by adding details and new materials throughout the month. To begin, I line the table with brown butcher paper to protect it and to start with a natural color. Since it's a winter scene, I sponge paint on white tempera paint. Then I add several natural materials such as bark, small sticks, “trees” (made from sticks stuck into air drying clay), pinecones, and a few plastic animals. I let the children play with the winter forest scape and have them add details & suggestions to it as we explore our theme. Items might include:

Pine trees-- Paint pinecones green to make pretend pine trees.

Icy pond - lay down a sheet of silver or gray paper, or a flat unbreakable mirror

Snow - add white paint to the trees or props and/or add cotton balls. Shredded paper is fun so kids can scoop it and move it around.

Houses - Lincoln Logs

Beaver dams & bear dens -- oatmeal containers, recycled containers covered with cotton batting

Icicles -- cut pieces of laminate scraps

The Science of Snow

What is snow? Imagine describing snow to someone who has never been to a cold climate. Snow is freezing cold, but then can insulate the ground and help keep animals warm. Snow crystals form on a speck of dust or dirt but when it falls, it creates a beautifully white scene. It's fluffy and light, but when we shovel it the weight can hurt our backs. When we scoop up this white powder and bring it inside it immediately starts to melt and changes into water. A full cup of snow transforms to just a small bit of water. Why? Snow is filled with tiny air pockets but as the snow melts the air escapes. Snow can be packed and carved out as a home for people to live in. Once inside the snow walls block the wind and the air pockets in the snow creates insulation.

Is snow clean? There are some kids who just cannot stop themselves from eating snow. Conduct an experiment to see if snow really is clean. Collect snow in a clear container and bring it indoors to observe. When it melts there will be specks of dirt at the bottom. All snowflakes begin their life as a speck of dust or dirt. The snow crystals grow on the dirt and when it melts, the dirt still remains.

The Story of Snow: The Science of Winter's Wonder – this is the best picture books to share with children (and adults) to explain the science of snow.

Catching Snowflakes - Mr. Bentley would be proud to see you taking a group of kids outdoors to catch falling snow! While outside give each child their own piece of black paper that was left outside ahead of time. Explain that today we will be learning about snowflakes. Show children how to catch flakes while it's in flight. After children have successfully caught snowflakes, give them a magnifying glass to look at the flake closer. Tip: Talk about this project the day before so the kids understand to catch the flake and quickly observe it.

Flake Shapes - there are no two snowflakes that are exactly the same but most have six sides. The variety of flake shapes is amazing - simple prisms, solid columns, sheaths, stellar crystals, needles, radiating dendrites. Introduce this concept to children by sharing photographs of snow crystals and talk about the life of Snowflake Bentley. Depending on the conditions when the snow crystal formed will determine the shape it becomes.

Print a free snow crystal chart from this website: <http://www.its.caltech.edu/~atomic/snowcrystals/class/class.htm>

Marshmallow Snowflake Shapes - give children mini marshmallows and toothpicks and have them try their hand at making six sided snow crystals.

Microscope Exploration with snowflakes - ask around if someone has a microscope you can borrow. It is wonderful to introduce young children to REAL science tools. TIP: Set up the microscope on a little table outside with a beach umbrella over you. You have to do this when the snow is falling but you don't want the microscope to get wet.

Snow Explorations

Snow Open Ended Play: In a large bin, add fresh snow and bring it indoors to observe and play.

Snow Observations - begin the theme by doing observations of snow. Discuss how we can use our 5 senses to describe snow. Print a Snow Observation sheet from www.2teachingmommies.com

Melting Snow: Bring in a container of snow and watch as it melts throughout the morning. Discuss what it means to melt and how temperature affects snow.

Melting Snow Race: Talk about how we've discovered that our warm classroom temperature melts snow. What would be the fastest way to melt snow? Bring in four cups of snow and place in various parts of the classroom to see if there will be different melting rates. (unheated mud room, in a sunny window, on the science center, in a dark spot, etc.) Let sit for 1 hour and then observe. Why are there different amounts of water? Allow to sit for longer and observe again.

Packing Snow: Show the children that you have two identical containers. In one container, loosely scoop snow to the top. In the second container, pack the snow very tightly. Ask the kids what is different about the two containers? Both look white and are filled to the top. Does one have more snow than the other? Bring the containers inside and observe as it melts. Once they are both fully melted, compare the amount of water that is contained and mark the line on the container. Discuss. Try the experiment again, do you get the same results?

Preserving Snow - what kid doesn't want to keep their snow and make it last forever, especially in places that it only snows 1-2 times per year. My favorite book for this topic is [No Snow for Seth](#) . After reading discuss with the kids, "What if we put snow in a big jar like Seth? Could we keep it from melting? When the snow melts what does it turn into? Lets fill 2 big jars of snow & put one in the classroom and one in the freezer. What will happen?" At the end of the day, observe the two jars of snow - discuss, what happened & why?

Mini Snowmen Meet the Hair Dryer - help the kids to make mini snowmen in the water table. Then transfer them to individual plastic tubs. After talking about how snow melts, bring out a hair dryer. "Ask what do you think will happen?" Conduct the experiment and ask, "What is snow made of? What is left after it melts?"

Ice Explorations

****Note:** Children can get frost bite from playing with ice. All ice explorations should be supervised and monitored closely. Nearby, have outdoor mittens children can wear, and dry towels so children can warm and dry their hands as need. “Hot Shot hand warmers” or warmed towels would be a great sensory experience afterward.

Ice Cube Open Ended Play: In a large bin, add several trays of ice cubes and a variety of tools that preschooler could use to explore ice. Tongs, scoops, spoons, and bowls will give children the opportunity to practice fine motor skills as they transfer the ice cubes. Adding several sizes of flat ice blocks may encourage kids to build ice structures inside the bin.

Children enjoy being able to explore the bin and will notice the changes as the ice cubes are at room temperature. Ice cube trays are available in a wide variety shapes and sizes. One of the favorites in my preschool room is the Lego brick ice cube tray! Standard sized ice cubes can be used one day in the classroom, and then other shapes or sizes can be used the next day. Another option is to add food coloring or paint to the water before freezing so that children can explore with different colors of ice.

Making Ice: Ask your children, “How do we make ice?” and listen to their responses. In small groups fill ice cube trays with water and put them into the freezer. Check on them throughout the day to see the process of freezing. Allow them to stay in the freezer overnight and take out the next day to observe in the water table.

Making Ice Balls: Talk about how your ice cubes froze into the shape of the container we used. What if we try making ice using a balloon, what shape will it be when frozen? Fill a balloon, tie it, and allow the children to feel the squishy water inside. Go to the freezer and take out one that you prepared a day in advance. Have the kids touch both balloons and describe how they feel. Cut off the balloon from the ice ball and observe it. How does the frozen water look, what can you see, what happens to the ice ball as we leave it out? Make more water filled balloons and put into the freezer to examine again the next day. (If you smaller balloons such as water balloons, you can get even smaller balls -- like ice marbles!)

Making Ice Eggs: Use the same technique as the ice balls, but freeze a small toy animal inside the balloon. How can we free our toy? (Be sure to wear eye protection if chipping or breaking ice.)

Ice Balls and Ramps - fill 6-8 balloons with various amounts of water and food coloring. (Making larger sized balls may take 48-72 to freeze solid.) Observe the ice balls indoors in the water table. Measure them to see how big they are when you first get them out of the fridge. Compare and order the balls by size. Observe them at room temperature over time, and measure again after two hours. What has changed? Do the different sizes melt at different rates? Continue to observe and note which ones melt first and last.

Alphabet Ice Cube Play – buy ice cube trays in the shape of the alphabet. Fill with colored water. Set up the exploration on a table with white paper covering the area and you will end up with a wonderful watercolor effect on the paper.

Painting with Ice Cubes- make diluted tempera paint and pour into an ice cube tray. Add popsicle sticks for handles.

Melting Ice- All the children sit at tables. Give each child a bowl of warm water and a bowl of very cold water. Let kids feel both bowls of water. Ask them to tell you what they think will happen if they put one ice cube in each bowl. Make some predictions about which cube will melt faster and why. Have the students put one ice cube in each bowl. Watch closely as the ice cubes melt and discuss.

Melting Colored Ice Cubes: Create ice cubes in the primary colors (red, yellow, & blue). Let the children play with the colored ice cubes indoors. Talk about the changes with the colored ice cubes. Why? Discuss melting process. Offer small clear bowls or cups for kids to try mixing colors to make new colors as the ice cubes drip.

Colored Ice Blocks & Igloos - add either liquid water colors or diluted tempera paint. Encourage stacking - add a small container of salt to help them stick together.

Frozen Hands - freeze water in plastic gloves the night before. Peel off the gloves from some of the frozen hands, but leave others knotted shut. Observe the melting ice hands. **Frozen Bowl Hands** – fill the plastic gloves with water and tie closed. In the freezer, take a small plastic bowl and flip it upside down. Then lie the glove over the bowl and allow to freeze overnight. When you take the hand out it will be in a bowl shape, which is very fun for kids to explore in the water table!

Ice Block Designs – Put several ice blocks in an under the bed storage bin. Children sprinkle coarse salt on top of the ice blocks. (Explain that salt makes ice melt faster.) Children drip various colors of liquid water colors (food coloring could work, but it stains). Watch as tunnels of color are created as the salt melts through the ice block. Observe throughout the day.

Protecting an Ice Cube - each child is given one ice cube in a Ziploc bag with their name on it. “Our goal is to try to keep this ice cube from melting. Here are a bunch of things you can use to wrap your ice cube. All the cubes must stay in the classroom, but you can decide where to keep it. We will check our cubes in 30 minutes and again at the end of the class.” Discuss what makes good insulation.

Ice Block Stacking & Balancing - freeze a variety of sizes of ice blocks by using different types of recycled containers. Create a clean area that is flat, either on a table or on the ground. Children try to stack as many blocks as then can.

Freezing Explorations

Water freezes at 32F - on a large outdoor thermometer, mark a line at the freezing point. Above the line glue on a picture of a glass of water, and below the line glue on a picture of an ice cube. Observe water when it is warmer or colder than the line.

Freezing Water Race: Talk about how we've discovered that our warm classroom temperature melts snow. But how do we get water to freeze? What would be the fastest way that we could get a small cup of water to freeze solid? Take identical cups and mark a line at the same point on each cup. Fill the cup with water to that line. Choose four locations to place the cups. (Room temp, freezer, fridge, and outside -- or variations that your children brainstorm). Let sit for 1 hour and then observe. Why are there different amounts of ice/water? Allow to sit for longer and observe again.

Comparing Icicles and Snow - Discuss, "What's the difference between icicles & snow?" Brainstorm and talk about the different qualities. Ice is hard, snow is light and fluffy. Ask - "If we fill two identical containers, one with icicles and one with snow and bring them inside, will they both melt? Will one have more water?" Have kids **heap the container with snow** so they know it's full. Take indoors and observe.

"Snow has a lot of air, so there was much less water from the melting snow. {**Note- preschoolers likely won't believe you! So do this experiment multiple days**} Tip: Write this up in your newsletter and suggest trying it at home.

Expanding Bottle Experiment: fill a plastic soda bottle with water to the very top of the rim. In a second bottle, fill it half full with water and mark the water level with permanent marker. For both bottles, screw on the caps tightly and put into the freezer overnight. The next day, observe and discuss the changes. Talk about how when water freezes, it expands and takes up more space.

Flowers in an Ice Block: clean ½ gallon milk or orange juice containers and cut off the top. Have the children help you place silk flowers upside down in the container. Add water to about a half inch from the top. (If needed, secure the silk flowers down with tape so it remains submerged.) Place the container in the freezer or outside if it's below freezing. It may take two days for it to freeze solid. Take out and place inside a tray for children to observe.

Insulation experiments

“Blubber Experiment” - which would tie into a polar theme very well. I like to call this an Insulation experiment and make connections to the insulation that we have in our padded gloves, puffy stuff in our jackets, insulation in our house, and the thick walls of many of the kid’s water bottles. (Real life experiences & connections!)

Before the kids arrive, fill a large Ziploc bag with Crisco. Make sure that there is a thick layer on the bottoms and sides, then put in a second Ziploc bag down into the first. Seal the two bags together with duct tape. Explain to the kids that they are going to dunk their hand into a cooler of icy cold water. One hand will go into the insulated bag, and one hand will go into a plain Ziploc. (Using a bag for each hand helps them realize it’s the insulation that is different). Discuss, “How do your hands feel? Which is warmer? Why?”

Cold Hands Experiment -which gloves keep your hands warmer (knit vs. thermal/waterproof)? Have kids test diff pairs of gloves while we are outside. Start by having them keep on one of their own gloves and then put on one of my very thin knit gloves. Discuss the difference. Have them hold snow, how do they feel different?

Winter Clothes Experiment – fill two identical jars with very hot water and put the lids on. Wrap one jar in a bathing suit. Wrap the second jar in a fleece shirt, hat, scarf, and jacket. Ask the kids, which jar is dressed for winter? Put both jars outside for one hour. Bring the jars back indoors and compare the temperatures. Which jar was most protected from the cold?

Frozen Habitats: Safari Limited has an Artic Toob set that contains: igloo, polar bear, arctic rabbit, arctic fox, huskies, caribou, harp seal, beluga whale, walrus, eskimo and musher. Freeze a large pan of water and then allow the children to play with the figures in this frozen habitat. (Fisher Price used to make a Little People Polar Set that includes a penguin, a polar bear, a walrus and an ice cave but it no longer seems to be available).

Add books to enhance a winter science center. Nonfiction books for preschoolers include titles such as *Polar Animals* (Scholastic Reader Level 1) by Wade Cooper and *Who Lives Here? Polar Animals* by Deborah Hodge.

Ice Block Igloos - the night before freeze 3 different sized bowls with water. In the water table, turn the igloos upside down. Add the Artic Toob miniatures for kids to explore.

Online Resources:

See links that are written into the lesson plans & notes too!

My personal blog (which will be more active this winter) <http://naturelovingkids.blogspot.in/2011/01/hibernation-games.html>

"No Two are Alike" / Snowflake Prints <http://www.teachpreschool.org/2011/12/exploring-things-that-are-not-alike-in-preschool/>

Solid, Liquid, Gas using a melting snowman! <http://www.frugalteacher.com/2011/09/life-cycle-of-snowman.html>

Snowflake Puzzles - <http://www.teachpreschool.org/2011/01/snowflake-puzzles-in-preschool/>

Ice - <http://www.gettingmessywithmsjessi.com/2012/01/ice-adventures.html>

Homemade Window Clings (shaped like snowflakes) would be a great craft for older children. <http://familyfun.go.com/crafts/glittery-window-clings-674868/>

Snowman Songs - <http://www.everythingpreschool.com/themes/snowmen/songs.htm>

Winter Theme Ideas and free printables - <http://www.pre-kpages.com/winter/>

Snowy Day Lap Book printables - http://www.homeschoolshare.com/b4_resources_snowy_day.php

Winter Word Cards (great for the writing center) <http://prekinders.com/2010/01/winter-word-cards/>

Free Winter Printables for preschoolers - <http://www.1plus1plus1equals1.com/WinterFunTotPack.html>

Winter Water Cycle - <http://www.2teachingmommies.com/2012/01/winter-water-cycle.html>

Lots of great winter center ideas from <http://www.2teachingmommies.com/search/label/Winter>

Make some virtual snowflakes at <http://snowdays.popularfront.com/>

Ice Cream Snowmen - <http://teaching2and3yearolds.blogspot.com/2012/01/ice-cream-snowmen.html>

Mixed Up Snowman Snack - <http://www.gourmetmomonthego.com/2010/12/ive-been-crazy-busy-lately-and-it-has.html>

Booklist for Winter Studies

The science behind snow & winter:

Anderson, Maxine. ***Explore Winter!***
Bentley, W.A. and W.J. Humphreys. ***Snow Crystals***
Branley, Franklyn M. ***Snow is Falling***
Callaghan, Jean Davis. ***No Snow for Seth***
Cole, Joanna. ***Plants in Winter***
Cassino & Nelson. ***The Story of Snow: The Science of Winter's Wonder***
Drake, Jane and Ann Love. ***The Kids Winter Cottage Book***
Edison, Erin. ***Snow***
Glasser, Linda. ***It's Winter!***
Hernandez, Christopher. ***Learn about weather: Snow***
Martin, Jacqueline Briggs. ***Snowflake Bentley*** (Caldecott Medal Winner)
Schweninger, Ann. ***Wintertime- Let's Look at the Seasons***
Stewart, Paul. ***A Little Bit of Winter***
Stone, Tanya Lee. ***Living in a World of White- Where Survival Means Blending In***
Taylor, Barbara. ***Hidden in the Snow***
Yankielun, Norbert. ***How to Build an Igloo & Other Snow Shelters***

Snow, snowmen, and other not to miss winter stories:

Baker, Keith ***No Two Alike***
Ball, Victoria. ***Bear's Very Snowy Day***
Briggs, Raymond. ***The Snowman***
Buehner, Caralyn. ***Snowmen at Night***
Butler, M. Christina & Tina Macnaughton. ***Snow Friends***
Cartwright, Stephen & Heather Amery. ***The Snow Storm***
Cheng, Andrea. ***Lemon Sisters.***
Child, Lauren. ***Charlie and Lola: Snow is my favorite and best***
Cocca-Leffler, Maryann. ***Let it Snow***
Coleman, Michael. ***A Silly Snowy Day***
Cuyler, Margery. ***The Biggest, Best Snowman***



Ehlert, Lois. ***Snowballs***
 George, Jean Craighead. ***Dear Rebecca, Winter is Here.***
 George, William T. ***Winter at the Long Pond.***
 Hest, Amy. ***A Snowy Surprise***
 Hoban, Julia. ***Amy Loves the Snow***
 Hudson, Cheryl Willis. ***What Do you Know? SNOW!***
 Judge, Lita. ***Red Sled***
 Keats, Ezra Jack. ***Snowy Day***
 Littledale, Freya. ***The Snow Child***
 Lotz, Karen E. ***Snowsong Whistling***
 Maestro, Betsy. ***Snow Day***
 Mammano, Julie. ***Rhinos Who Snowboard***
 McKie, Roy & P.D. Eastman. ***Snow***
 Medearis, Angela Shelf. ***Here Comes the Snow***
 Morgan, Allen. ***Sadie and the Snowman***
 Moss, Miriam. ***The Snow Bear.*** (forest animals make a snow bear for little bear cub)
 Nelson, Steve & Jack Rollins. ***Frosty the Snowman***
 North, Carol. ***Frosty the Snowman***
 O'Donnell, Elizabeth Lee. ***Winter Visitors.*** (counting book of animals sneaking into a girls home)
 Preller, James. ***Wake Me in Spring.***
 Plourde, Lynn. ***Snow Day***
 Pulver, Robin. ***Axle Annie***
 Rylant, Cynthia. ***Poppleton in Winter***
 Schechter, Deborah. ***Cold Rose***
 Scherer, Jeffrey. ***One Snowy Day***
 Schertle, Alice. ***All You Need for a Snowman***
 Smith, Dick. ***Winter Wonderland: Sleigh Bells Ring, Are You Listening?***
 Stringer, Lauren ***Winter is the Warmest Season.***
 Waddell, Martin. ***Owl Babies.***
 Voskoboinikov, Valery. ***The Icicle***
 Walters, Catherine. ***When will it be Spring?***
 Weinberger, Kimberley. ***Winter is Here***
 Yolen, Jane. ***Owl Moon.***



Bears and animals in winter:

Alborough, Jez. *Where is Teddy?*

Arnosky, Jim. *Every Autumn Comes the Bear*. (also includes pictures of ravens, bobcat, raccoon, chickadees, deer, bunnies, fox, & grouse. Simple text make it a great preschool read aloud.)

Bancroft, Henriette and Richard Van Gelder. *Animals in Winter*.

Benjamin, Cynthia and Jacqueline Rogers. *Footprints in the Snow*.

Berger, Melvin & Gilda. *What do Animals Do in Winter? How Animals Survive the Cold*

Bland, Nick. *The Very Itchy Bear*

Boring, Mel. *Rabbits, Squirrels, and Chipmunks*.

Brett, Jan. *Annie and the Wild Animals*

Brown, Tom. *Nature Observation & Tracking*.

Burns, Diane and Linda Garrow. *Tree, Leaves, and Bark (Take Along Guides)*

Carle, Eric and Bill Martin, Jr. *Brown Bear, Brown Bear What Do You See?*

Coleman, Michael. *A Silly Snowy Day*

Crossingham. *What is Hibernation?*

Denslow, Sharon Phillips. *In the Snow*. (chickadee, sparrow, cardinal, crow, squirrel, bunny, mouse & possum. Very simple text and engaging illustrations.)

Fisher, Ron. *Animals in Winter*.

Fleming, Denise. *Time to Sleep*.

Galdone, Paul. *The Three Bears*

Graham-Barber Lynda. *The Animals' Winter Sleep*

Hall, M. *Hibernation*.

Henkes, Kevin. *Old Bear*.

Holmer, Marilyn F. *Beaver Stream* (very informative, beautiful illustrations)

Kosara, Tori. *All About Hibernation*

Krauss, Ruth. *The Happy Day*

London, Jonathan. *Froggy's Best Christmas* (froggy, beaver, turtle & bear get to experience their first Christmas since they woke up from their winter naps.)

McPhail, David. *Big Brown Bear*.

Meadows, M. *Hibernation Station*.

Messner, Kate. *Over & Under the Snow*. (includes information on: red squirrels, shrews, deer, deer mice, voles, shoeshoe hares, bullfrogs, beavers, red fox, chipmunk, black bear, and bumblebees.)

Moore, Eva & Joanna Cole. *The Magic School Bus Sleeps for the Winter*



Moss, Miriam. ***The Snow Bear***
 Murray, Marjorie Dennis. ***Don't Wake Up the Bear!***
 Numeroff, Laura Joffe. ***If You Give a Moose a Muffin***
 Rosen, Michael. ***We're Going on a Bear Hunt.***
 Rustad, Martha E.H. ***Foxes and Their Dens.***
 Salas, Laura Purdie. ***Do Polar Bears Snooze in Hollow Trees? A Book about Animal Hibernation.***
 Schaefer, Lola. ***Deer.*** (Great pictures, clear language that answers kid's common questions about deer.)
 Schechter, Deborah. ***Winter is Here*** (emergent Level A reader)
 Souci, Daniel San. ***North Country Night.***
 Tagliaferro, Linda. ***Bears and Their Dens.***
 Waddell, Martin. ***Can't You Sleep Little Bear?***
 Walters, Catherine. ***Time to Sleep Alfie Bear.*** (Set in the summer but a great book to share if you are learning about bears)
 Wilson, Karma. ***Bear Snores On.***
 Wright, Maureen. ***Sneeze, Big Bear, Sneeze!***
 Yolen, Jane. ***Sleep, Black Bear, Sleep.*** (black bear, frog, bat, snake, turtle, gopher, skunk, badger, beaver, mouse, toad, & chipmunk)

Animal tracks:

Arnosky, Jim. ***Wild Tracks!*** (amazing book with fold out pages of life sized tracks)
 Arnosky, Jim. ***I See Animals Hiding.***
 Benjamin, Cynthia and Jacqueline Rogers. ***Footprints in the Snow.***
 Dendy, L. ***Tracks, Scats, and Signs.***
 Dodd, Anne Wescott. ***Footprints and Shadows.***
 Dorros, Arthur. ***Animal Tracks.***
 George, Lindsay Barret. ***In the Snow: Who's Been Here?***
 George, Lindsay Barret. ***In the Woods: Who's Been Here?***
 Hulbert, Laura. ***Who Has These Feet?***
 Hodgkins, F. ***Who's Been Here? A Tale in Tracks.*** (includes tracks from: cat, turkey, moose, skunk)
 Jones, Jennifer. ***Who Lives in the Snow?***
 Judge, Lita. ***Red Sled***
 Levine, Lynn and Martha Mitchell. ***Mammal Tracks and Scat: Life-Size Tracking Guide***
 Miller, Dorcas. ***Track Finder: A Guide to Mammal Tracks of Eastern North America.***
 Selsam, Millicent E. ***Big Tracks, Little Tracks.***



Sams, Laura. ***Stranger in the Woods - Photographic Fantasy.***

Lawlor, Elizabeth P. ***Discover Nature in Winter (Discover Nature Series)***

Stall, Chris and Steve Whitney. ***New England Animal Tracks.***

Wilson, Karma & Jack E. Davis. ***Moose Tracks!***

Yee, Wong Herbert. ***Tracks in the Snow.*** (A great story to introduce young children to tracking. A girl follows tracks around her home and discovers that they are her own tracks from the previous day.)

Polar theme:

Berger, Melvin & Gilda. ***What Polar Animals Eat***

Black, Sonia W. ***Follow the Polar Bears.***

Canizares, Susan & Daniel Moreton. ***Arctic Winter, Arctic Summer***

Canizares, Susan. ***Who Lives in the Arctic?***

Martin, Bill & Eric Carle. ***Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear?***

Winter clothing theme:

Brett, Jan. ***The Hat***

Brett, Jan. ***The Mitten***

Butler, M. Christina. ***One Snowy Night***

Butler, M. Christina. ***One Winter's Day***

Kellogg, Steven. ***The Missing Mitten Mystery***

Neitzel, Shirley. ***The Jacket I Wear in the Snow***

Tresselt, Alvin. ***The Mitten***

