



Branch Room Newsletter, January, 2018

Happy New Year! Can you believe it's already the year 2018? We are excited to get this year off to an amazing start! December was quite a busy month for us not only in the Branch Room, but the whole Growing Tree School as well. As we began our festive month, we were introduced to a cute little "Elf on the Shelf" who would become a daily visitor to our classroom. After much thought, team work, class discussion and voting, as a class we decided our elf's name would be.....Snowflake Lobster Bob! Strange name, you say? Not for our classroom! Each day Snowflake Lobster Bob would make an appearance. Whether it was hiding in our poinsettia or helping paint ornaments, searching for him was the highlight of our mid mornings. As a class we discussed the rules that Snowflake Lobster Bob had encouraged us to follow. Throughout the month, (and every month) our Brancher's focused on making safe, positive and conscience decisions inside and outside of the classroom. I think it's safe to say that Snowflake Lobster Bob was pleased to hear and see such great friendships choices in our classroom!

December was full of Christmas sights, sounds and science. We practiced our scissor skills, gluing techniques, and even present wrapping at a variety of different stations set up throughout the month. Our first art activity we participated in was creating Christmas paper chains! This is an activity whether young or old, you remember making these! At our morning circle time, we discussed patterns. What is a pattern? We came up with the thought that a pattern is, "Something that repeats itself". With that determined, each child was able to come up with their very own pattern as they glued their colored paper links together. We also conversed about different names for patterns. Yes, we can pattern using names of colors, such as red, green, red, green. But, the Brancher's also learned that you can pattern using the colors as letters. So, the red and green pattern, became an A and B pattern. It was fun to hear the students talk amongst one another about different patterns that they could create during their stations. Patterns may be a simple activity, but this is a great introduction to mathematical skills and will benefit each Brancher as they move up to the Blossom class and beyond!

We put our fine motor skills to the test at the "Wrapping Station". At this station you would find: wooden blocks of all shapes and sizes, wrapping paper and tape. Each student was able to choose their block "present" of choice as well as wrapping paper. Once those 2 items were picked, the next step was to create a beautiful wrapped present. We first demonstrated how to wrap a present, then let each child

take the reins. Simple words were used as we constructed our wrapped gifts. Tape, fold in, tape, fold, down, tape, fold up, were the words heard repeatedly at that station. With repetition, each student was able to problem solve on their own or with a partner as to what step was to come next. I have to say, that we have some pretty amazing gift wrappers throughout our class! This is good information to have, for future holidays!

Through the month of December, we brushed up on our shape knowledge. As one of our activities at the "Creation Station", we built Christmas trees using just a few magnetic shapes. We discovered that a square looks similar to the base of the tree, trapezoids stacked up on top of one another look like the body of the tree and a single triangle at the very tippy top, makes up the top of the tree. Once each tree was created the students were asked to trace around each shape. Though this activity was challenging, with determination and concentration, the Christmas trees turned out beautiful and shape tracing has proven to be yet another skill each Brancher can say that they have learned! After the first step of the Christmas trees was done, each student was asked to outline their pencil work in black marker, to make their tree really "pop", and then they were able to color their tree as they pleased. Once the amazing art was done, the description came next. What is it to describe something? I asked each Brancher to close their eyes. As they did this, I described what my Christmas tree looks like. "My tree is big and green. I have gold, silver and red ornaments on my tree. Can you picture my tree in your head?" As each student opened their eyes, they said yes with excitement! As we continued this activity, each Brancher was asked to describe their Christmas tree to me as I wrote down their description. When each friend finished their Christmas tree and description, we gathered all of the pages and created a book to share with the class. It was awesome to see each child beam with pride as their page was read at circle time! So many fun science activities and art projects quickly filled up our month.

As we begin not only a new month, but a new year, we need to be sure to bundle up and be prepared for the weather that January brings. Please double check your child's cubby to make sure he/she has proper clothing. Hats, gloves, snow suits and boots are a few things to help stay warm while we play outside! Accidents happen occasionally here and there, also double check your child's cubby for clothing to change into if an accident does arise, such as underwear, socks, pants and a shirt.

As this newsletter comes to an end, Ms. McKenzie and I would like to thank each and every one of you for making this year so wonderful. Your thoughtfulness has been greatly appreciated! We feel very fortunate and honored to be a part of your child's life as well as educators, and we are looking forward to this new year of learning and adventures!

Baby....it's cold outside! The month of January in the Branch classroom will be full of snow science in our winter wonderland!

Happy New Year!

Ms. Heather and Ms. McKenzie

