



# Just Janie's News!

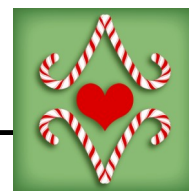
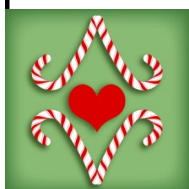
## December, 2010



I do not know where the time has gone that we have suddenly arrived to December! It seems like only yesterday I was wishing all of you a Happy New Year for 2010. Time flies when you are having fun, however, this can be a very stressful time of year when our lives feel out of control and the children seem to be totally out of control! The holidays have arrived sooner than we expected (even though it's always the same days every year!) and our expectations are way too high for ourselves or the children we reach and teach. So, with that in mind, here are some stress buster ideas to help your holidays be stress-less and more enjoyable. Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, Happy Kwanza and have a blessed and wonderful New Year!

### Stress-Less Holiday Tips From Janie's Point of View!

1. Try to have a positive attitude and count your blessings.
2. Don't worry-be happy! Try not to worry about things out of your control.
3. Keep a good sense of humor. Someday all of this will make great stories for the grand-kids!
4. Exercise...even if it is a relaxing walk around the block during your lunch break.
5. Breathe. Really...take 3 deep breathes 3 times a day. It's good for you and your blood pressure.
6. Sleep. Try to get eight hours of shut-eye a night. Drop the thermostat, take a warm bath, put on some cozy socks, turn off the TV, and then it's lights out.
7. Eat. Try to eat healthy, nutritious food and stay away from high fat, high calorie, sugar loaded fast food. Your mama was right-eat those fruits and veggies!
8. Drink. Water-8 glasses a day. Hot tea or hot chocolate are heavenly this time of year. Caffeine and sugar loaded soft drinks don't count!
9. Manage your time and your money. Learn to say no to others and yourself!
10. Remember the reason for the season and focus on that. The one with the most toys never wins in the end. Relax, focus and reflect on the good things in your life.
11. Share. We teach it to the children and we need to remember to share with those less fortunate than us. It's the right thing to do and it just feels good doing it.
12. Hug. Give lots of hugs and receive lots of hugs. Do you know you might be the only hugger in a child's life that gives good, safe, full of love hugs? Go hug a child....now!
13. KISS. Keep It Short & Simple. If you can find the simple button for anything in December, push it! Simple decorations, simple menus, simple schedules. Don't plan the most complex craft or cooking activity of the century for the children to do...keep it short and simple. The children will love you for it!
14. Read. Take time to read to the children. Snuggle up with quilts or blankets and read beautiful, calming stories about the season. Sometimes, I would rather read good children's books than adult literature...they are just more relaxing, simple and filled with wonder.
15. Love. Love the wonder of the season, love the children in your care, love your family, love your friends and most importantly, love yourself.



## INFANT/TODDLER PLAY: IT'S AN IMPORTANT THING!

Play is essential to early learning. Children need to be actively involved in their play in order to develop basic learning skills. Play is how our young children learn about themselves and their world. Quality play promotes close relationships. Quality play promotes language. Quality play promotes creativity. Quality play promotes physical development. Quality play promotes thinking skills. Quality play promotes social skills. Is the play you offer at your center or site quality? In this season of giving toys, here are a few tips from TRUCE (Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children's Entertainment).

1. A quality infant and toddler toy can be used in many ways, engages the senses, allows children to use their imagination and let's children make decisions about their play. Household objects that allow infants and toddlers to play creatively are small pots and pans, wooden spoons, clean laundry detergent tops, cardboard boxes, paper towel rolls, measuring spoons and cups, plastic tubs with lids.
2. Babies and toddlers learn by watching other children play. Provide opportunities for mixed age play experiences. Create a safe play space where children can move around freely. Too many toys can be overwhelming and make it hard for young children to focus or make choices.

### Play recommendations

**Infants:** Especially young babies, you—the teacher or parent—are their best toy! Simple rattles and soft toys are perfect. Good books include ones with one or two clear images per page and simple rhyming stories. Containers such as nesting blocks, shoe boxes, empty milk jugs and stacking cups are wonderful for dumping and filling. Soft blocks are fun to build up and knock down. Musical instruments, peek-a-boo toys and mirrors help master concepts like object permanence, action and reaction. Big household objects like a laundry basket are fun for pushing and pulling. Language is important as you talk about everything you do, see and experience.

**Toddlers:** Young toddlers enjoy baskets and buckets for dumping, filling and carrying. Open-ended toys such as boxes or blocks can become houses, caves and castles! Push and pull toys help develop large motor coordination and strength. Rolling and kicking balls are excellent social skill builders for cooperative play experiences. Sand and water play is soothing and sensory. Music and songs that encourage repetition, rhythm, movement and clapping build motor and language skills. Toddlers enjoy pots, pans, spoons and small brooms to mimic adult activities and play. Dress up clothes, food and kitchen toys inspire pretend play. Good books for younger toddlers include ones that focus on topics that interest them like animals, foods and faces with different expressions. The books should be simple visually. Simple puzzles, nesting blocks and shape sorters help toddlers learn to solve problems. Older toddlers are ready to explore and express themselves through art with large pieces of chalk, crayons, finger paint and collage materials.

**Infant and toddler toys to avoid:** Toy companies make you think you need special toys to help children learn. Remember they are in the business of making money! Toys to avoid are high tech toys and DVDs. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no electronic media before the age of two. These toys have been shown to actually interfere with a young child's developing brain. Avoid flashy toys with lights and sound; generally simple is better and avoid toys and other items based on TV shows or characters. These types of toys encourage consumerism, unhealthy food choices and limit your child's imagination.





## UPDATES TO THINK ABOUT!



Are you checking [www.myflorida.com/childcare](http://www.myflorida.com/childcare) regularly to know updates and changes in laws and regulations? Changes are happening quickly and the best way to know and understand these changes is to go to the DCF website. There is a new Affidavit of Good Moral Character form to download, information on the new changes for volunteers in your center/site, as well as information regarding webinars that are available for you to participate in.

The Internet is a must have tool at your center and site now as more agencies, including the Early Learning Coalition of Florida's Gateway, are using this as an avenue for information, updates and communication. In order to keep up with the latest information, you really must be connected.

A reminder that all workshops and trainings presented by the ELC-FG staff are available at [www.elc-fg.org](http://www.elc-fg.org). Click on 'Events' and the workshop announcements and registration information is right there. We have presented workshops recently where teaching staff were unaware that they must go to the website now to register. **DIRECTORS:** Please get this extremely important information to all your staff! You will not receive any announcements of any workshops except through the website and this is the only way you can register for the workshops. Staff are able to do this independently. Again, you must get connected to keep up with these changes!

As I announced in last month's newsletter, statewide changes are coming in the field of early childhood education and these changes will directly affect your center/site and your staff. What are you doing to get ready for the statewide environmental rating scale? What are you doing to get your staff ready for the professional development database and the Florida Core Competencies? Again, as mentioned last month, this information can be found at [www.floridaearlylearning.com](http://www.floridaearlylearning.com) and [www.flready.com](http://www.flready.com). and a new site with a download of the Core Competencies is located at <http://www.pbcregistry.org/resources/FloridaCoreCompetenciesforEarlyCareandEducationPractitioners20101020.pdf>.

I highly recommend you check these websites regularly to get the latest and greatest news

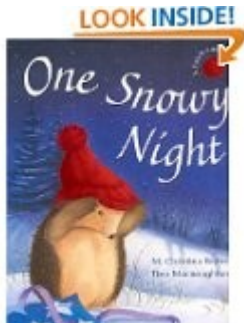
### A NOTE FROM YOUR PROGRAM SPECIALIST

It's a New Year! Starting in January, my technical assistance will be more center focused than child focused. As much as I love singing and reading to the children, I think it is important right now to help you get ready for the above state-wide changes with classroom environment tips and tricks, as well as curriculum audits and assistance. AWI is in the process of putting together a state-wide Coalition contract for 2011. One of the components will be the utilization of research based curriculum for all contracted sites. I want to help you move toward using a research based curriculum with domain focused lesson plans in place and classroom environments that will help you get ready for the rating scale. I can begin to help you now with ideas and suggestions in order to make these transitions smooth.

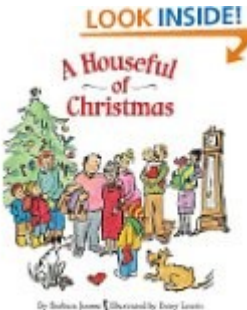


### December's Focus on Literacy

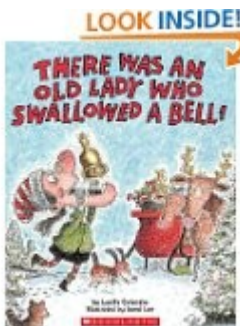
Here are some book suggestions to share in your classroom during the month of December. The weather is cooler now, so add some quilts or blankets to your Library/Reading Center where the children can snuggle up with a good book...better yet, you snuggle up with them and enjoy the seasonal reading together. Literacy-it's a good thing!



**One Snowy Night** by M. Christina Butler and Tina Macnaughton. Little Hedgehog turns a red woolly hat into the best Christmas present ever for his friends. This is a wonderful story about sharing and has a very happy ending!



**A Houseful of Christmas** by Barbara Joosse. One big huge family has one big huge Christmas and then they get snowed in. Bet you will recognize some of your own funny family members as you share this book with the children.



**There Was An Old Lady Who Swallowed A Bell** by Lucille Colandro. This old lady's appetite never gives up! The children will be amazed as she swallows everything from a bell up to the reindeer! This is great for some Christmas hilarity and smiles!



**Who Will Guide My Sleigh Tonight?** By Jerry Pallotta & David Biedrzycki. So many unbelievable animals come to Santa's rescue in this book from snakes to dolphins, but in the end, it is the reindeer who Santa really needs. The illustrations in this book will have you and the children chuckling along with Santa!

**Creative Arts and Christmas Crafts!**

**Have a jolly, holly time with these cute ideas for Christmas. Remember-keep it short and simple so you and the children don't get stressed. It is the process not the project that makes art truly creative. Let the children do all of the painting, cutting and pasting. I am a strong believer that your classroom trees should be decorated only with child-created ornaments so they can be proud of being true artists!**

**Applesauce Ornaments**



**Supplies:**

**1/2 cup cinnamon      1/2 cup applesauce      2 tsp. glue      cookie cutters**

**Let children measure and mix all ingredients together. Roll out onto waxed or parchment paper and cut with cookie cutters. Decorate with glitter or cookie sprinkles. Poke a hole in the top of the ornament with a drinking straw. Let air dry for 2-3 days, turning at least once per day. When dry, tie yarn or raffia through the hole for hanging. They smell great-but are not for eating!**

**Handprint Santa Card**



**Supplies:**

**Red construction paper, green construction paper, red-black-pink tempera paint, googly eyes**

**Let the children cut Santa-hat shapes from the red construction paper and glue onto a green construction paper card. Use white paint to paint the child's hand and print on paper 2" below hat. Let children dip fingertips into white paint and print dots for hat trim. Dip fingertips in pink for cheeks and black for mouth. Glue on googly eyes. What a jolly fellow!**

**Pine Branch & Pine Cone Art**



**Supplies:**

**Red, green tempera paint  
Aluminum pie plates  
Shoe box with tight fitting lid  
White paper  
Glitter**

**These are great outdoor activities. Go on a field trip and collect pine needles and pine cones. Gather pine needle bundles and tape with silver duct tape. Place red and green paint in aluminum pie plates. Let the children dip their pine needle bundles into the paint and swish on the paper like brush painting, sprinkle lightly with glitter. When dry, cut into large ornament shapes and use for tree decorations.**

**Now, take the shoebox and place a white piece of paper in the bottom. Add several dollops of red and green paint to the paper. Place a pinecone into the box, cover the lid and shake, shake, shake. Remove the lid and paper, sprinkle lightly with glitter and let dry. Use large pieces of black construction paper to frame these masterpieces and display them proudly in your classroom or give to parents as gifts.**

### Songs of the Season!

I get so many requests for song and finger play ideas this time of year! So, here are a few of my favorites. Hope you learn a new one and teach it to the little ones. Merry Christmas and happy singing!

#### Christmas Moves (tune of We Wish You A Merry Christmas)

Let's all do a little clapping, let's all do a little clapping  
Let's all do a little clapping and spread Christmas cheer.

2. Let's all do a little jumping
3. Let's all do a little twirling
4. Let's all do a little stomping
5. Let's all do a little snapping
6. Let's all do a little sitting.



#### S-A-N-T-A (tune of BINGO)

I know a man with a long white beard  
And Santa is his name-o  
S-A-N-T-A, S-A-N-T-A, S-A-N-T-A  
And Santa is his name-o.

He slides down the chimney with a pack on his back  
And Santa is his name-o.....

Eight little reindeer pull his sleigh  
And Santa is his name-o.....



#### Old St. Nicholas Had A Tree (tune of Old MacDonald)

Old St. Nicholas had a tree  
Ho-ho, ho-ho, ho!  
And on that tree he had some horns.  
Ho-ho, ho-ho, ho!  
With a toot, toot here, and a toot, toot there  
Here a toot, there a toot, everywhere a tooty-toot-toot.

Continue with:  
Lights-flash, flash  
Drums-boom, boom  
Bells-ring-a-ling  
Candy Canes-yum, yum



December 2010						
Sun	Mon	Tue	We	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

I will be out of the office for a little Christmas break December 27-December 30. If you need immediate assistance during this time, please call 386-752-9770 and ask for the Program Department.

There is still room in the First Aide Class on December 4. Call Mary Gamble at 961-0127 to register.



### HOLIDAY CLOSURES



The Early Learning Coalition office will be closed on **Thursday, December 23 and Friday, December 24** for Christmas and on **Friday, December 31** for New Years. I hope you have a wonderful Christmas and a blessed New Year.



### STANDARD DOMAIN FOCUS OF THE MONTH!

Cognitive Development and General Knowledge: Shows understanding of and uses several positional words. This is a great month to have fun with positional words. Make stick puppets with little elf pictures. Give each child a stick puppet and have them sing this song to the tune of "The Farmer In the Dell" while placing the elf in, out, up, down, here, there, low and high. You can also use this activity to talk about opposites.

The elves are up (place them up), the elves are down (place them down),

The elves are dancing all around the town.

The elves are here (place them forward), the elves are there (place them behind you)

The elves are all dancing everywhere.

The elves are in (place them in your hand), the elves are out (pull them out of your hand)

The elves are dancing all about.

The elves are low (sing in a low voice), the elves are high (sing in a high voice)

The elves are all waving bye, bye, bye.



### Cooking Activity of the Month

Nothing says “Christmas” like homemade sugar cookies. Children love the mixing and measuring (math activities-yea!) and the decorating (fine motor skills and creative arts-wow!), not to mention the tasting and eating (physical health-oh, yeah!). Here’s a really good recipe for sugar cookies. Spend one day doing the mixing and measuring, refrigerate the dough overnight and the next day do the cutting, decorating, baking and tasting. For the toddlers, give them a graham cracker square and a dollop of vanilla frosting. Let them frost their cookie using wooden craft sticks and sprinkles. Have fun making Christmas memories with the children...they will love you for it!

#### SUGAR COOKIE DOUGH

3-1/2 cups all purpose flour

1/2 tsp salt

1 cup unsalted butter, softened

2/3 cup sugar

1 large egg

1 Tbsp light corn syrup

1 Tbsp vanilla extract



In medium sized bowl, mix the flour and salt. In a large bowl, cream the butter and sugar, stir in the egg, then the corn syrup and vanilla extract. One third at a time, add the flour mixture until thoroughly mixed. Pat the dough into two disks, wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 1-2 hours. If it is too firm, soften at room temperature for 5 minutes.

Preheat oven to 375. Roll one disk of dough between two pieces of waxed paper or plastic wrap to about 1/4” thick. Remove the top sheet and cut out cookies with cookie cutters. Using a metal spatula, transfer the shapes to baking sheets lined with parchment paper. Bake 8-10 minutes or until cookies start to brown lightly around the edges. Remove from oven and cool on wire rack for 5 minutes. Using a metal spatula, transfer the cookies to racks to cool completely. Frost and decorate as desired.

Makes 12-50 cookies, depending on size of cookie cutters.

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