

# PEAK Classroom Connections

*PEAK Connections: Creating a professional learning community for the early learning teachers in Pottstown to share ideas, improve instructional practices and implement researched-based best practices in the delivery of quality early learning experiences*



## PEAK News and Reminders

### PA Pre-K Counts

Work Sampling System data entry is due on December 15

### Revision of PA Early Learning Standards

The Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards (Infants-Kindergarten) have been revised as a part of the Standards Aligned System. The new standards include the Big Idea and Essential Questions for each standard area. Copies of the standards can be purchased or downloaded at [www.pakeys.org](http://www.pakeys.org). Click on the Career Development tab and go to Standards.

### 10 Teachers Needed to Help with Family Literacy Nights

Are you interested in working with a Pottstown School District kindergarten teacher on the Pottstown Family Literacy Nights beginning in January? Community teachers will partner with kindergarten staff to present information to families on how they can support literacy development at home. PEAK teachers who help with the events will receive some type of compensation (to be determined). If you are interested in being involved, contact Mary Rieck .

### Mobile Dentists Visiting Community Sites

Kathy has arranged for the Mobile Dentists to visit community partner sites in January to provide dental screenings, cleaning, fluoride and sealants. Please make sure your families complete the consent forms and return the completed forms to Kathy.

### Vision and Hearing Screenings

VNA Community Services will offer vision and hearing screenings in January at the community partner sites. Have families complete the permission forms and return to Kathy.

### Pre-K Counts Teacher Meeting

Pre-K Counts teachers will meet on December 15 at 4:00 at the Administration Building.

### December Family Activities

Healthy snacks will be featured at the December Snack Clubs with families tasting trail mix. Snack 'N Pack activities will begin in three classrooms with families making a yogurt parfait with their children.

Let Whitney know of special family activities planned for your classroom in December.

*Check the PEAK online calendar for more events—[www.peakonline.org](http://www.peakonline.org)*



### **Contact Information:**

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[www.peakonline.org](http://www.peakonline.org)

# December Finger Plays and Rhymes—Early Learning Standard: Literacy

## Standard 1.1.5 Learning to Read Independently/Fluency

### Where Is Santa

**Sung to: "Where is Thumbkin"**

Where is Santa? Where is Santa?  
Here I am! Here I am!  
Merry, Merry Christmas  
Merry, Merry Christmas  
Ho Ho Ho! Ho Ho Ho!

### 5 Little Christmas Trees

Five little Christmas trees  
Standing all alone  
Their hearts were very sad  
'Cause they hadn't found a home.  
Then chop went the ax  
And down fell the tree  
And off they went with a happy family!  
(continue from 4 to 1 Christmas trees)  
No little Christmas trees  
Standing all alone  
Their hearts were very happy  
'Cause they all found a home!

### I'm A Little Pine Tree

**Sung to: "I'm A Little Teapot"**

I'm a little pine tree- as you can see,  
All the other pine trees are bigger than  
me.

Maybe when I grow up-then I'll be  
A great big merry Christmas tree!

### Let's All

**Sung to: "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,  
& spread Christmas cheer.  
*You can change the clapping to other activities.*

2. Jumping
3. Twirling
4. Stretching
5. Bending Ask the kids for other ideas.

### The Lights on the Tree

**Sung to: "The Wheels on the Bus"**

The lights on the tree go blink, blink,  
blink,  
Blink, blink, blink, blink, blink, blink.  
The lights on the tree go blink, blink,  
blink  
All Christmas Day.

*Other Verses:*

The presents at the house go rattle,  
rattle, rattle, etc.

The mom at the house goes bake,  
bake, bake, etc.  
The dad at the house goes snore,  
snore, snore, etc.  
The grandma at the house goes hug,  
hug, hug, etc.  
The grandpa at the house goes kiss,  
kiss, kiss, etc.

### Christmas Fingerplay

I am a Christmas tree growing up tall,  
(stretch)  
But when I first started, I was this small  
(crouch).  
Then I grew bigger and had branches  
this wide, (stand slowly, arms out).  
And I made pine cones with seeds hiding  
inside. (fold hand for pine cone)  
The wind shakes my branches, (shake  
arms).  
And down those seeds fall, (flutter fingers  
downward).  
To make new little pine trees for tinsel  
and balls. (point hands together for tree,  
opening slowly to form ball shape).



## Parents as Partners

Help parents beat the "what did you do in school today?" blues – encourage them to ask their children open-ended questions! Fill parents in on an event coming up or something special their child did that day, however brief. It is important that parents stay informed of the day-to-day activities of the program. This way, they are better equipped to communicate. You may also need to model using open-ended questions in front of parents – this may be a new strategy for them. A simple, "Tell me about your special stuffed animal, Johnny" at drop off may motivate a parent when they see how their child opens up to respond.

*(Adapted from Family-Friendly Communication for Early Childhood Programs)*

### Snowman Soup

**Assemble in a gift bag or small zipper food storage bag:**

- 1 individual pack hot chocolate mix
- 3 chocolate kisses
- 10-15 mini-marshmallows
- 1 small candy cane (for stirring)

*Make a gift tag with the following poem:*

Was told you've been real good this year.

Always glad to hear it!  
With freezing weather drawing near,  
You'll need to warm the spirit.  
So here's a little Snowman Soup  
Complete with stirring stick.  
Add hot water, sip it slow.  
It's sure to do the trick!

### Cinnamon Ornaments

- 1 tablespoon ground cloves
- 2 tablespoons water
- 3 tablespoons white glue
- 3/4 cup applesauce
- 1 cup cinnamon (buy in bulk at a spice or health food store)

Mix all ingredients together until dough has a clay-like consistency (add one or two more tablespoons of water if it is too dry). Next, dust a work surface with cinnamon and roll out the dough to 1/4 inch thick. Have children cut out ornaments using holiday cookie cutters. Help children poke a hole in each ornament with a straw, then let ornaments dry on baking racks. String with ribbon. Makes approximately four dozen two-inch ornaments.

# Fun Playdough for December

## Gingerbread Play-Dough

1 cup flour  
1/2 cup salt  
2 tsp. cream of tartar  
1 cup water  
1 tsp. vegetable oil  
Spices--Cinnamon, Allspice, Ginger, Nutmeg  
\*Green and Red food coloring to make Brown (optional--the spices usually give the dough a good brown color.)

Mix the dry ingredients. Experiment with the spices until you get a scent and color that you like. Mix water and oil together first and then add them to the dry ingredients and stir.

In a pot, cook the mixture for three to five minutes on low/medium, stirring constantly. The dough will start to pull away from the sides of the pot and stick together in a large ball. Take it out of the pan when you see a VERY faint brown skin on the dough one each side.

Take the dough out of the pan and knead the dough until it becomes soft and smooth. Allow the dough to cool and then store it in an airtight container.

**Total time to make dough: 10 minutes.**

## Sparkly Peppermint Playdough

2 cups water  
2 cups flour  
1 cup salt  
4 teaspoons cream of tartar  
4 tablespoons oil  
4 tablespoons peppermint extract  
glitter

Mix all ingredients in a heavy saucepan. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon, until mixture thickens and pulls away from the sides of the pan.

Form dough into a ball, sprinkle with glitter, place on waxed paper, and cool completely. Store in Ziplock bags.



# Living Healthy on Less

You don't need a pricey gym membership to keep fit. For general health, physical activity is recommended. That includes any bodily movement that results in energy expenditure. Good health does not require a gym.

Here are some suggestions to keep physically fit inexpensively:

- Buy a pedometer. This simple device which can be bought for less than \$20 can spur more activity. Studies find that just by wearing the pedometer, people walk one to two extra miles a day.
- Get a jump rope. It's a less expensive device that can really get your heart rate up. You can achieve a comparable workout to what a gym would give you.
- Buy a bicycle trainer. This equipment turns a regular bike into a stationary bike and can be tucked away when not in use. For \$100 or less you can have a stationary bike with a bike you've got laying around.
- Use your own body weight, or cheap alternatives, as resistance. Do push-ups, sit-ups and body weight squats. Heavy cans of vegetables, bottles filled with water or sand and inexpensive elastic bands can provide weight resistance.
- Purchase an exercise ball for less than \$40. You can do all sorts of exercises using these balls: push-ups, crunches, squats etc.
- Purchase an exercise DVD for less than \$20. There are a wide variety of instructional DVD's for yoga, Pilates, aerobics and strength training.



# Holiday Activity Ideas

## Decoration Match

Cut out tree shapes from construction paper and glue various colored shapes on them randomly. Laminate the trees and extra matching shapes. Have the children place matching shapes on the trees.

## Colored Gifts

Gather a collection of small boxes and wrap in solidly colored paper. Cut out a variety of shapes from construction paper in colors to match the boxes. Have the children place the colored shapes in the matching boxes.

## Greeting Card Puzzles

Laminate or cover with clear contact paper a variety of seasonal greeting cards. Cut

the cards into three or four puzzle pieces. Have the children put the puzzles together. Younger children may need background paper to use in fitting the cards together.

## Sorting Real Objects

Gather a variety of small objects representing the holiday season (little trees, mice, drums, horns, animals—check a craft store for ideas). Store the objects in a box. Have the children pour out all the objects and sort them by categories. After they have sorted the objects, have them line each category up in rows. Which category has the most objects? Which has the fewest objects?

## Pine Branch Painting

Collect short pine boughs to use as painting tools. The tools can be placed at the easel or used with a shallow pan of tempera paint at the tables.



## Magnetic Painting

Place a cookie sheet on two stacks of blocks about 4" tall. Place a piece of paper on the cookie sheet. The child will put several metal washers in red and green tempera paint and transfer them to the cookie sheet using the spoon. Press a magnet on the bottom of the cookie sheet. By moving the magnet, the student will move the washer along the paper and make designs.

## Quick Transition Ideas

- **Yarn Matching:** Hand out pre-cut pieces of colored yarn to children. The children meet at the circle and match their yarn pieces. Yarn pieces can be stored in a zip-lock baggie.
- Put on a **STORY SHAWL** when it's time to gather for Story Time, walk about the room for children to see & use your "Story Time" voice.
- Use butterfly netting to make a **BUTTERFLY WING**. Be a quiet butterfly.
- Use socks or hose stuffed with batting to create a **Quiet Ball**. Use to gain attention of the children.
- **Binoculars:** Made with toilet paper tubes. "I'm looking for my friends...Are you in our circle?"
- For children who all talk at once: A **TALKING STICK**: Make a beautiful stick with a wooden dowel. Spray-paint it gold and decorate attractively with ribbons and similar items. "You can hold the Talking Stick when you talk."
- Create a **GENIE BOTTLE**: Using spray painted and glittered bottle, (blue bottle with silver or gold glitter is great!), put story names onto strips of paper. Have children pull out a strip to determine which story will be read!
- Make or purchase a toy microphone. Put on funny sunglasses and "Calling all stars! Movie star \_\_\_\_\_, is at the table (or circle)!"
- **Classroom Fishing:** Create fish out of green or multi-colored laminated paper. Hide the fish around the room, ask children to find the fish, bring them to the circle and place in your fishbowl.

- **Discovery Apron:** Wear a bib apron that has pockets on the front. Store your "secret" for the day in the pocket. "Come and see what my special secret of the day is! Inside you can place anything...consider a small plastic animal, an item from nature, a new tape of songs, just use your imagination!"
- Make a hand puppet with a cheap knit glove (soft and expandable): Glue on pom-poms and chenille stems to create a spider, or a lady-bug. Use your glove to entice children to you. You can also make each finger a different colored pom-pom, add google-eyes and say: "Mr. Orange is calling you!"
- **Introductory Activity:** Use cardboard to cut out a circle about the size of a pizza. In the middle, place a spinner, and divide the "pizza" into marker drawn "slices". Attach photos of the children you have cut into pepperoni shapes and taped to the 'pizza'. Have children spin the spinner, then name their new classmates!

*Merry Christmas and Happy New Year*

*Mary, Emily, Whitney and Kathy*

