

Planning for Learning through



The Seasons

by Rachel Sparks Linfield and Penny Coltman

Illustrated by Cathy Hughes



Contents

2-3 Making plans

4-8 Using the Early Learning Goals

9-26 Spring

27-44 Summer

45-64 Autumn

65-80 Winter

* 81-82 Collecting Evidence of Children's Learning



About the book

This bumper collection offers a term's worth of planning on each of the four seasons: Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter. Each season is divided into themed weeks, in which every activity links to one of the Early Learning Goals, a guide to which you will find at the beginning of this book. In each topic you'll also find a skills overview, photocopiable pages to give to parents, a list of all the resources you'll need and ideas for bringing the topic together. So, whatever the time of year, you'll always have planned activities ready!

Published by Practical Pre-School Books, A Division of MA Education Ltd, St Jude's Church, Dulwich Road, Herne Hill, London, SE24 0PB

Tel. 020 7738 5454 www.practicalpreschoolbooks.com

© MA Education Ltd 2009

Front cover images from left to right: © iStockphoto.com/Nicole S. Young, © iStockphoto.com/Dale Hogan, © Dreamstime.com/Marzanna Syncerz

Back cover image from left to right © iStockphoto.com/Ashok Rodrigues, © Dreamstime.com/Thomas Perkins

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopied or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Planning for Learning Through the Seasons ISBN: 978-1-90457-597-9

Week 1

Detecting spring

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- Look at a large picture of a Spring-time scene (trees in blossom, Spring flowers, children playing outside). Discuss what children can do in Spring that they cannot do in Winter. Talk about how children feel in the Spring. What are their favourite activities? (PS4)
- Discuss festivals which children in the group celebrate during Spring. These might include Easter (Christian), Baisakhi (Sikh), Holi (Hindu), Passover (Jewish). Invite parents to come and talk to children about the celebrations. (PS13, 14)

Communication, Language and Literacy

- Read *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle. Make a group version based on children's favourite foods. (L1, 8, 13)
- In preparation for the Physical Development activity based on bulbs read *The Tiny Seed* by Eric Carle. Talk about the changes that took place. Discuss the differences between Spring and Winter and Spring and Summer. (L7, 8)
- Make a spring picnic role play area. Securely fix a tight string at ceiling height across a corner of the room. Cut across an unopened roll of green crepe paper every 1-2 cm. Without unrolling these sections encourage the children to help you to twist them. Then shake them open to make long twisty fronds. Dangle these from the string, packing them fairly closely, and introducing paler greens, pinks and whites. The end result is a weeping blossom tree which encloses an area. Place a picnic rug and tea set on the floor. Children love the feel of moving through the tree curtain to reach this special place. (L1)

Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy

- Use the group's version of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* to practise counting. Ask questions such as 'How many apples did the caterpillar eat?' (N2)
- With the help of children make a number frieze with a Spring theme: one blossom tree, two lambs, three baby rabbits, four eggs in a nest, five ducklings on a pond etc. On each picture display clearly the corresponding numeral. (N3)



Knowledge and Understanding of the World

- Choose a fine day to go for a Spring walk. Look for signs of Spring such as nests, leaves emerging from the earth, buds on twigs and minibeasts. Once back inside encourage children to describe what they saw and to record their observations in drawings and paintings. (K1, 2, 3)
- Use bulbs planted the previous term to show children how bulbs shoot and grow into plants. Explain that you are going to look at the plants each day. Make a timeline for the bulbs. Begin with a large display showing a plant pot and green shoots cut from sugar paper. Each week add other pots which show how the shoots have grown and the leaves and flowers starting to appear. (K2, 3)

Physical Development

- Mime being a bulb changing during Spring. Encourage slow, controlled movement. (PD1)
- Choose a nice day to use outdoor toys that were put away for the winter. Afterwards, encourage children to talk about the experience. (PD2, 4)

- Encourage children to be hungry caterpillars searching for food as they crawl and slither through hoops and larger apparatus with holes. (PD1)

Creative Development

- Use buds found in pot-pourri to make collages of trees in blossom. Encourage children to look at real trees in blossom (or use pictures) and to describe the colours and scent. (C1)
- Observe real daffodils. Encourage children to look closely at them, to count petals and leaves and explain that they will be making accurate models of the daffodils. Use egg cartons or bun cases for the trumpet, yellow card petals, green card leaves and green straws. Write children's names on the leaves before arranging them in a large vase. (C1)

Activity: Being bulbs

Learning opportunity: Moving with control and imagination. Listening to instructions.

Early Learning Goal: Physical Development. Children should move with confidence, imagination and in safety.

Resources: *The Tiny Seed* by Eric Carle.

Organisation: Whole group in a large space.

Key vocabulary: Bulb, shoots, bud, flower.

What to do: Talk to children about Spring being a time of new life. Remind them of the signs of Spring they saw on their walk. Show children the pictures in the book for the part of the story relating to Spring and talk about what is happening.

Explain that the children are going to be bulbs, turning into shoots, growing buds and finally bursting into flower. Talk about the kinds of shapes children will need to make themselves into.

Ask children to be a bulb (tightly curled up), a shoot (long and thin), roots growing under ground (wiggle toes), in bud (clenched fist), in flower (open hands, tall and stretched). As children try each stage praise those who make controlled, clear shapes.

Talk to the children about how plants grow over time and that things happen gradually. Repeat the mime but this time tell the story of the bulb, encouraging children to listen to the details and to change gradually and smoothly.

Activity: Making nests

Learning opportunity: Recognising features of nests, selecting materials and building nests.

Early Learning Goal: Knowledge and Understanding. Children should find out about and identify some features of living things, objects and events they observe. They should build and construct with a wide range of objects, selecting appropriate resources and adapting their work where necessary.

Resources: Pictures of common birds and birds' nests; old nests; a range of materials for making nests including made and natural materials.

Organisation: Small group.

Key vocabulary: Twigs, grass, moss, nest, soft, safe, warm.

What to do: Show children either pictures of birds' nests or examples of old nests. Remind them that they should never touch or disturb a nest which is in use. Explain that the old ones are no longer used by the birds.

Talk about the types of birds that might have lived in the nests. Look closely at the nests, the materials they are made from and how they are made. If nests were seen on the Spring detecting walk, talk about them.

Show children a range of materials they might like to use to try making a nest. Encourage them to think about a particular bird. How big is it? Where might it build its nest? What materials would it use? Show children how twigs can be bent into a nest shape.

Ask the children to make a nest. If old nests or natural materials such as twigs and leaves are used remind children to wash their hands thoroughly after finishing the activity.

Display

Display the tree collages on a notice board. Place the nests on a table in front of the board. On another board begin the bulb timeline display described above. Place the vase of model daffodils and growing plants nearby. Begin a display of the books read during the week and the group's version of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. As the topic progresses invite children to find other books for each week's theme.

Week 1

Detecting summer

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- Go on a walk to detect signs of the summer. Before you go, talk about the importance of staying together, listening to instructions and being sensitive to the environment. (PS5, 8)
- Use a camera to record your walk. When the photographs are developed the children can work collaboratively to make a large book about the walk. (PS8)

Communication, Language and Literacy

- Encourage children to talk about the things they like to do in the summer. Look at pictures of people outside in the summer. Talk about the clothes people wear and what they are doing. (L1, 3, 8)
- Start to build a word bank of summer words. Scribe words suggested by the children on large pieces of card or stiff paper (for example, ice-cream, sun, hot, seaside). Ask children to draw pictures by the words to illustrate them. (L12, 17)

Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy

- Make ladybirds by painting small pebbles or red plastic lids from plastic milk bottles. Vary the number of dots on the ladybirds from one to six. Play simple dice and estimation games (see activity opposite). (N1, 2, 3)
- Show the children a large, safe thermometer, such as those from educational suppliers. Talk about how thermometers are used to measure how hot or cold something is. Introduce the word 'temperature'. Link to experiences children may have had in having their temperature taken. Show how the thermometer has numbers on it, and that the bigger the number is, the hotter the temperature. What is the temperature of the air in the room? (N3)

Knowledge and Understanding of the World

- Go on a minibeast hunt, encouraging children to look closely in small places, such as under a stone. Talk about why they need to be careful as they search. Explain that they are like giants in the world of tiny creatures and any disturbance, especially handling, should be avoided. (K1, 2, 3)



- Begin a sunny day chart to talk about in Week 3. Ask children each day how hot or sunny it is. Record this with sunny faces. If it's very hot, use either more suns or vary the size of the sun. (K3)

Physical Development

- Make marble minibests and use them to go round card tracks (see activity opposite). (PD7, 8)
- Enjoy playing with bats and balls. (PD7)

Creative Development

- Encourage children to think about the sounds they hear during the summer: lawn mowers, ice-cream vans, insects buzzing, birds singing, sea sounds or perhaps even a thunderstorm. Recreate these sounds using percussion instruments and body sounds. (C1, 3)
- Provide the children with large sheets of paper, brushes, paint or bright pastels and encourage them to make a picture of themselves carrying out a favourite summertime activity. (C1, 2, 5)

Activity: Ladybird games

Learning opportunity: Counting to six.

Early Learning Goal: Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy. Children will be able to recognise and use numbers to six.

Resources: 24 ladybirds made from red plastic milk bottle lids or painted pebbles (four ladybirds with one dot, four with two dots, and so on); four A4-sized leaves made from green felt; a dice numbered one to six; a dice numbered 0, 1, 1, 2, 2, 3.

Organisation: two to four children seated at a small table or comfortably on the floor.

Key vocabulary: How many . . . ? Count, ladybird, leaf, one, two, three, four, five, six.

What to do: Show the children the ladybirds. Encourage them to work together to sort them into sets according to the number of spots. Ask children how many are in each set. Explain the rules and play one of the games below.

Give each child a leaf. Use the 0 to 3 dice. Check that children recognise and understand the numbers. In turn children shake the dice, pick up the number of ladybirds and place them on a leaf.

Give each child a leaf. Use the 1 to 6 dice. In turn children shake the dice and collect a ladybird with the same number of spots. The aim is to collect one for each number one to six. If children throw a number they have already collected they do not pick up a ladybird.

Put out six ladybirds. Ask children to count them. Spread them out. Ask how many there are. Count to show there are still six. Ask children to close their eyes. Take two of the ladybirds and hide them under a leaf. Ask the children to open their eyes and say how many are hiding. Help the children to count the four they can see and to work out that two are under the leaf. Repeat by hiding other numbers.

Activity: Marble minibeasts

Learning opportunity: Using scissors with control and regard for safety. Controlling speed and direction of marble minibeasts through a maze.

Early Learning Goal: Physical Development. Children will be able to handle small equipment and tools safely and with control.

Resources: A ready-made marble minibeast; for each child a plastic drinks bottle lid; a marble; a piece of card about 10 x 10cm; a pair of scissors; felt pens or crayons; double-sided sticky tape; a pre-drawn maze on stiff A4 card.

Organisation: Up to six children seated around a table.

Key vocabulary: Minibeast, names for minibeasts made by the children.

What to do: Let the children look at the ready-made minibeast. Show them how it is made and suggest they make their own. A minibeast is cut from card and stuck to the top of the lid with sticky tape. Place a marble under the lid and invite children to take their creatures for walks.

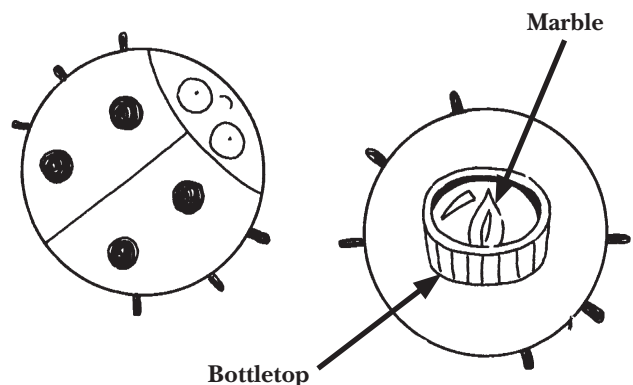
Introduce children to the mazes - a simple route drawn on card with a start and finish. Show how the minibeasts can be steered along the routes. Encourage children to persevere!

Display

Start a summer wall display by making a background of grassy green with occasional sponge printed leafy trees. As the topic progresses children will enjoy adding cut-outs of themselves carrying out various activities, or can add items which will personalise the display to your area. Examples might include a feature of a local park, familiar characters or buildings. Display the children's illustrations of summer activities, with suitable captions dictated by the children.

Minibeasts cut out of card and coloured with crayons

Underside of card ladybird



Week 1

Detecting Autumn

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- Encourage children to care for their environment. Discuss the need to be 'gentle giants' and not tread on minibeasts, to take care of plants and to leave places we visit as we would wish to find them. When on a walk, look out for areas where we need to take care. If appropriate, talk about the country code. (PS4,9)
- Work collaboratively to make an Autumn display of items collected on the Autumn walk and paintings of signs of Autumn. (PS2 ,8)

Communication, Language and Literacy

- Talk about changes the children saw on their walk which describe Autumn. Encourage children to use descriptive vocabulary for their observations. (L12)
- Show children pictures of a scene in Summer and Autumn. Ask children to compare trees, weather, people's clothes and so on. How many changes can the children spot? (L2)
- Read an Autumn poem such as 'Misty' in *Out and About* by Shirley Hughes (Walker Books). Use this as the stimulus to write a group poem beginning with the words 'Autumn is.....'. Scribe the children's ideas on separate large pieces of paper. Ask children to illustrate their 'line' and make a big book poem. If appropriate ask children to write their names on the book cover. (L4, 12, 15, 18)

Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy

- Make a pelmanism-type game in which children can match the numbers of autumn leaves, squirrels, acorns and conkers. Use numbers up to five. Encourage children to count aloud the objects on the cards. (N1, 2, 3)
- Adapt counting songs and rhymes for Autumn (see activity opposite). (N1)
- Cut out 30 conkers from brown card. With a small group take it in turns to roll a dice and collect conkers. The 'squirrel' who collects the most conkers is the winner. (N6, 9)

Knowledge and Understanding of the World

- Go outside and collect safe signs that Autumn has arrived (eg acorns, conkers, twigs with no leaves).



- Look under stones. Are there any minibeasts? Inside discuss what happens to some creatures which hibernate such as squirrels and frogs. (K1, 2)
- In preparation for Week 2 bake some harvest bread (see activity opposite). Encourage children to describe what they see, smell and, where appropriate, taste. (NB Children with coeliac disease may not eat bread which contains gluten.) (K2, 3)

Physical Development

- Encourage children to make shapes with their bodies like animals going into hibernation. Ask them to scamper like squirrels and as you count to 10 they should slowly curl into a tiny ball ready to sleep for the winter. (PD1)

Creative Development

- Use powder paints to make paintings of Autumn. Encourage children to mix Autumn colours. (C3)
- Start a collaborative display of a tree in Autumn. Leaves can be made by drawing around children's hands on Autumn coloured paper and cutting them out. (C2, 3)

Activity: An Autumn finger rhyme

Learning opportunity: Developing a familiarity with numbers one to five.

Early Learning Goal: Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy Children should say and use number names in familiar contexts.

Resources: None.

Organisation: Whole group.

What to do: Use a 'carpet time' to learn and enjoy this rhyme. After each verse count the fingers which the children are holding up to reinforce number awareness.

- 5 red squirrels bushy and sweet, (hold up fingers of one hand)
- Are looking for some nuts to keep, (Hand in front of eyes - looking all around)
- One red squirrel climbs a tree (Mime climbing)
- Shuts his eyes and falls asleep, (Pretend to be asleep)
- So that leaves four red squirrels (clap, clap, clap, clap, then hold up 4 fingers ready for next verse)

Activity: Baking bread

Learning opportunity: Describing experiences using a variety of senses.

Early Learning Goal: Knowledge and Understanding of the World. Children should find out about... events they observe. They should look closely at similarities and differences... and change.

Resources: See recipe.

Organisation: Small group.

Key vocabulary: Bread, flour, water, yeast, sugar, salt, dough, knead, rise, bake.

What to do:

Recipe: For a dozen rolls:

3 teaspoons of dried yeast
600ml (1 pint) warm milk
900g (2lb) strong flour
2 teaspoons salt

Sprinkle the yeast on the milk and leave in a warm place for 15 minutes until frothy.

Put the flour and salt in a bowl. Make a well in the centre and pour in the yeast and milk mixture. Mix well to make a dough.

Turn onto a lightly floured surface and encourage the children to knead it well for several minutes. Put the dough in a clean bowl.

Cover with a clean tea towel and leave the dough in a warm place for about an hour until it has doubled in size.

Divide the dough into pieces for the children to use. They could make it into animal shapes, such as hedgehogs or crocodiles.

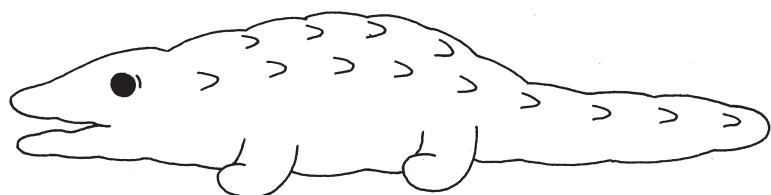
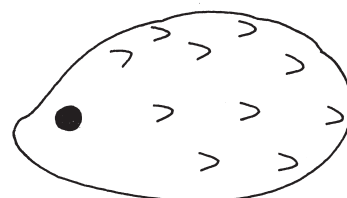
Leave the finished 'rolls' in a warm place for about half an hour before baking.

Bake at 230°C mark 8 for ten minutes, then 200°C, mark 6 for ten minutes. Cool on a rack.

As the children make the bread ask a variety of open-ended questions, encouraging children to use as many senses as possible. What does the flour feel like? Does the smell of yeast remind you of anything? What differences can you see after the dough has been left to rise? What can you smell as the bread bakes? What do you think of its taste?

Display

Cover a table with an Autumn coloured cloth. Display an Autumn picture in the centre. During the week add objects collected by the children which indicate the coming of Autumn. This display will be ongoing throughout the topic, gradually changing as themes progress. Display the collaborative 'Tree of Hands' in an area to which other trees can be added as seasons change.



Week 1

Detecting Winter

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- Look at a large picture of a Winter scene (trees with no leaves, people dressed in warm clothes, people skiing and skating). Discuss what children like to do in Winter. Talk about how they feel in the Winter. What are their favourite activities? What do they do when it is dark in the evenings and they cannot play outside? (PS2, 3, 5)
- Discuss festivals which children in the group celebrate during Winter. Invite parents to come and talk to children about the celebrations. (PS6)

Communication, Language and Literacy

- Make a collaborative big book about Winter (see activity opposite). (L11, 19)

Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy

- Choose a Winter theme for a display to reinforce awareness of a chosen number. For example if the number chosen is five, make a display showing the numeral 5, and a variety of collections of five objects: snowflakes, snowmen, winter hats, robins and so on. Involve different groups of children in creating each collection to contribute to the display. (N1, 2, 3)
- Use a collection of Winter objects or pictures to reinforce positional language (see activity opposite). (N12)

Knowledge and Understanding of the World

- On a walk look for signs that Winter is coming/has come. Show the children that some trees no longer have leaves. Look under stones for any remaining minibeasts. Look for birds and talk about ones which have flown away until the Spring. (K1, 2)
- In small groups go outside and ask children to pick out wintry scenes. Help the children to take photographs with a digital camera. (To maintain interest try to have them printed quickly!) (K1, 2, 9)

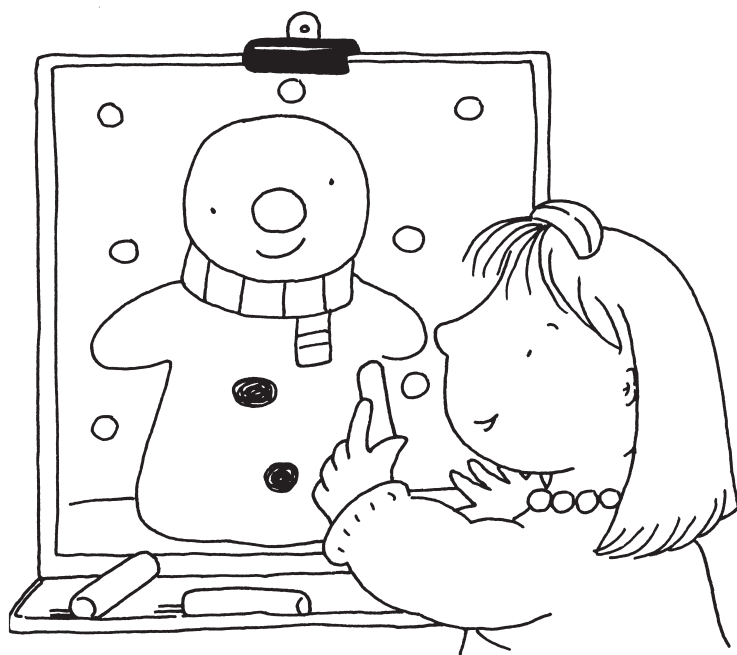
Physical Development

- Pretend to be very cold. What can we do to get warm? Play an action game based on a traditional favourite: 'Simon says keep warm by..... running

on the spot, clapping, stamping, blowing on hands, rubbing hands, rubbing toes' and so on. Encourage children to listen carefully - remember that if the instruction does not begin with 'Simon says', it should be ignored! (PD 1, 2, 4)

Creative Development

- Use runny paint to 'blow' winter trees. Show the children how to use a brush to place a large blob of runny paint at the bottom of a piece of paper. Provide each child with a straw and show them how to hold the straw at a low level, almost horizontal and blow the paint along. Changing the direction of the blowing will produce forks in knobbly branches as the Winter tree grows. (C2)
- Prepare pictures for a group Winter book. (C5)
- Use blue, white and black paint to make as many shades and tones as possible. Ask children to cover a 30 x 30cm piece of paper. When completed mount the squares together to form a Winter patchwork. (C3)





Activity: The object line

Learning opportunity: Developing and reinforcing the use of positional language within the context of Winter.

Early Learning Goal: Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy. Children should use everyday words to describe position.

Resources: A collection of objects associated with Winter, such as a paper snowflake, a scarf, a plastic robin, a mitten and a toy snowman. A selection of Winter pictures mounted onto A4 cards (if possible one per child).

Organisation: Whole or part group, carpet-time activity.

Key vocabulary: Positional language such as 'next to', 'between', 'behind', 'in front of'.

What to do: Show the collection of Winter objects to the children. Talk about each one and make sure that the children are familiar with them.

Place the objects in a row. Use positional language as you talk about the line. 'The snowman is next to the robin. The scarf is between the snowflake and the mitten.' Use questions to encourage children to use the same language. 'What is next to the scarf?', 'What is between the snowflake and the snowman?'

Give each child a prepared card to hold and ask the children to stand in a row. Ask them to describe their positions. 'Who is next to the Snowman picture?' 'Who is between the reindeer and the bird table?'

To extend the activity, see if children can move into the right places 'Can you make the snowman be between the cracker and the woolly hat?' Ask the children to stand in a line, one behind the other, so you can include the language of 'in front of' and 'behind'. This can become quite demanding: 'If the snowman and the scarf change places, who will be next to the reindeer?'



Activity: A Winter book

Learning opportunity: Drawing and writing about their own ideas as children work together to make a book.

Early Learning Goal: Communication, Language and Literacy. Children should use their phonic knowledge to write simple regular words and make phonetically plausible attempts at more complex words. They should

use a pencil and hold it effectively to form recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed.

Resources: A big book; blue sugar paper; chalks; hair-spray or commercial fixative spray; larger paper; card; staples or a needle and wool.

Organisation: Whole group introduction followed by small group work over the following days.

Key vocabulary: Book, cover, page, words, pictures, title, author.

What to do: Look at some big books. Show the children where the author's name is and talk about the cover. As you read the book draw attention to the illustrations. Explain to the children that they are going to work together to make a big book of their own. Each child is going to draw a Winter picture which will become part of this special book.

Working in small groups, provide each child with a piece of A4 blue sugar paper and chalks with which to draw. Encourage children to talk about their experiences of Winter and to develop their own ideas about what to draw. Scribe a sentence at the bottom of each picture to record the ideas expressed. To prevent the chalks from smudging, take the pictures to a separate, well ventilated area away from the children, and spray with hair-spray or fixative.

Mount the pictures onto larger pieces of paper and staple or sew them together to make a book. Encourage children to help in preparing a front cover with title and group authorship.

Display

Display the Winter book, inviting children and group visitors to enjoy reading it.

Use the collection of winter objects to form the basis of a wintry interactive display to which children can contribute. Use labels to reinforce the positional language developed in the activity.