

With Love and Spirit

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Are winter months too short or too long for you? Like anything else, the answer lies in the eye of the beholder. You might be the hibernating type. The type that stays home, wears a cozy sweater, drinks hot cocoa and takes long naps to avoid shoveling your car out. You might be a winter

sports fan, one who goes from skating around the pond, to conquering snowy mountains, to performing breathtaking tricks on your snow board. Or, you can be an Agri-Business Child Development (ABCD) child and embrace all of it!

At ABCD, the sole provider of Migrant and Seasonal Head Start services in New York State, children approach February with inquisitiveness, awe, excitement, and with relaxing activities, fun games, breaths of fresh air, warm food and open arms. There truly is no amount of snow or cold weather that can stop a child from learning, creating, experiencing and enjoying. Whether the environment permits outside adventures or invites indoor activities, all ABCD children, ranging in age from 8 weeks to 5 years old, experience the joys that winter can bring.

Highly qualified early childhood educators lead children in games and fun, as well as age appropriate activities and lessons that open up a

world of experiences on a daily basis. Are we going to count snowflakes today? Will we touch them and see how they melt with our touch? Can we talk about temperatures and how they make us feel? Will we leave boot tracks on the snow as we play follow the leader? Can we just sit and learn about Martin Luther King and start to recognize what abundant love is? The possibilities are endless.

I am a teacher, I immigrated to this great country years ago. Yes, this time of the year I miss the warm climate and pristine beaches that I used to call home on the other side of the Rio Grande. My knees might ache a bit more in the cold weather and I might not look very fancy in my warm crocheted hat, but all of that melts away when I see children enjoying everything that the month of February has to offer with unbounded gusto.

It takes but a second to see winter and its infinite potential through the eyes of a child. At Agri-Business Child Development winter is, like any other season, a time for fun, adventure and love. As a teacher I plan my days around the very specific needs of the children in my classroom. I individualize as much as I create common ground. I plan on using my well-defined curriculum but I am also free and flexible, and ready to capitalize on all sorts of teachable moments.

I want children to learn and grow as they respect and empathize. I want them to run and jump, sled and eat warm meals, wear gloves and sit calmly during circle time as they listen to stories. I want children to write their names with snowflakes made out of cotton balls, but, more than anything, I want children to understand the power of love.

It is never too early to speak to a child about respect, empathy, strength in love and compassion. It is never too early to speak of great leaders such as the Reverend King, Presidents Washington and Lincoln, and to celebrate their message. It is never too late to thank ABCD parents for their volunteering in the classrooms and to support their efforts in becoming more engaged in their children's education.

Winter is about living life, about nature, about love. Saint Valentine's Day is much-celebrated in ABCD centers and acts of goodness are reciprocated and multiplied – **Always**. I feel fulfilled when I can express my admiration for my colleagues, the children we serve and the parents we support.

This winter, I am proud to say, I have seen real love firsthand. I recognize daily, the love of immigrant parents who have brought their children to the U.S. for a better life. I admire the love it takes to put your family before you, and feel in my bones, the love of the DACA recipients for this country and the love we have for them. My hope is that as March looms, we will have one more reason to celebrate during these winter months; and that is, the right of those who have lived as good, solid members of our communities and helped foster a stronger economy in those communities, to live without fear, and with a more peaceful hope for their family's future. Wouldn't that lead us into a warm, sunny and loving spring!