

Hello District 31 Families,

Regardless of what holiday(s) you celebrate, Winter Break is a wonderful opportunity to spend time with those you love. Below are some inclusive ideas for celebrating together. If you have questions about anything you've read here, please feel free to reach out. Wishing you and yours a fantastic holiday season.

Kindly,  
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### Prepare Your Child for Gatherings

- If you don't know what foods the host is serving or if you know your child doesn't like those foods, bring some of your child's preferred meal items or snacks.
- Allow your child to warm up to others on their terms. Please don't force affection.
- Let them wear what they are comfortable in.
- Bring some preferred objects/toys for your child to play with.
- Have realistic expectations. Sometimes staying for one great hour is better than pushing it to three hours that might end poorly.
- If communication is challenging for your child or if their skills are developing, bring their form of communication. This might be an iPad with a communication app, low tech communication boards (printed), a [switch](#) with pre-recorded messages, pictures/[visuals on a ring](#) (paid resource). *Ask your child's teacher what communication tools would be best for a holiday gathering or to use at home over break.*
- Consider writing a social story about attending a party.
  - [Christmas Social Stories](#) (free resource)
  - [Saying Hello](#) Social Story (free resource)
  - [Hanukkah](#) Social Story (free resource)
  - [Understanding Kwanzaa](#) (paid resource)
  - [Understanding New Years](#) (paid resource)
  - Write your own social story with [this resource](#)

### Adapting Games

- Wondering how your child might spin the dreidel or play a board game with the family? Consider this [dice roller](#) which has a removable top for changing out items inside.
- Having a hard time holding all the cards at once? Check out this [card holder](#).
- If small dice are tricky, consider an oversized game such as [Yahtzee](#) or [Jenga](#).
- Build game pieces up with playdough or clay to make them larger and easier to grasp.



- Velcro is a multipurpose tool that can help make many games accessible. Consider using velcro for making checkers pieces multisensory or to hold pieces down to the game board.

- An alternative to hide and seek is “Hide the Object.” This ensures all players can play and not have to squeeze into tight or dark spaces.



- If you’re playing tag, consider using pool

noodles as an extension of your arm. Or if your child uses a wheelchair for mobility, zip tie a noodle to their armrest.

- If you’re playing volleyball or ping pong, consider using a balloon instead of a ball. It slows down movement but is so much fun!
- Use BUBBLES! [Bubbles](#) are a hit at any age and are enjoyed by many.

### Gift Giving

- Teach and remind your child that giving is just as nice as receiving. Sometimes we give gifts but don’t get any in return. That’s okay.
- Consider gifting [switch adapted toys](#) for children who are switch users or have limited mobility.
- Make and gift a sensory bin with items from the Dollar Tree. Fill a [plastic shoebox](#) with dried beans or [rice](#) then bury [plastic bugs](#), [small vehicles](#), [fidgets](#), or [squishies](#). The possibilities are endless by walking up and down the aisles. If you have a child likely to put items in their mouth, you can take Toasted O’s (like Cheerios) and put them in the blender to make a fine sand. Then fill the shoebox with larger items such as [toy balls](#), Disney [Tsum Tsums](#), [colorful dinosaurs](#) or other items that are not choking hazards.
- Looking for fun sensory friendly gifts? Consider a [weighted stuffed turtle](#), a [fidget set](#), a [Hoberman sphere](#), [chewy necklace](#), [soothing sounds sound machine](#), or a [dinosaur ceiling projector](#).

### Accessible Places to Visit

- If you are looking for an accessible ice rink, consider [McCormick Tribune Ice Rink](#). Wheelchairs, both electric and manual, are allowed on the ice.
- Check out the [Top 10 Accessible Places in Chicago](#).
- Visit an animal shelter.. [Heartland Animal Shelter](#)’s new facility will be ADA compliant. Give some love to the dogs and cats who are looking for affection... or even bring one home.

### Activities to do at Home

- [This link](#) will take you to art activities for those with motor disabilities.
- [Accessible Chef](#) has pre-made visual recipes as well as a visual recipe maker.
- [Pinterest](#) has lots of great ideas for lots of great activities.