

*Dear Family,*

**In my class today** I made a cave for a hibernating animal.

**Did You Know?**

- Many animals change their bodies or their behavior to adapt to the winter weather. Many animals grow new, thicker fur to keep out the harsh wind and cold. Some animals have difficulty finding food in the winter, so they migrate or move to other places where the weather is warmer and food is more plentiful. Many animals hibernate for part or all of the winter to conserve energy. Some animals sleep in the winter but are not true hibernators. They can wake up to eat and then go back to sleep. Winter sleepers like to burrow into caves, hollowed out trees, and rock crevices. They may rake leaves, twigs, and other plant materials into their den to form a nest. Bears, skunks, raccoons, and opossums are animals that sleep in winter but are not true hibernators.
- An animal that truly hibernates goes into a deep, deep sleep during the long, cold winter. When animals truly hibernate, they do not eat at all unless they are awakened. The animal's body temperature drops and its heartbeat and breathing slow down. Sleeping all winter takes preparation, and animals that hibernate begin preparing in the fall. They try to put on as much fat as possible because they will not be eating during the winter. Groundhogs, chipmunks, and bats are examples of animals that hibernate.

**Ask Your Child:**

- Tell me how you created your cave.
- Describe the different ways animals get ready for winter.
- Explain the difference between a true hibernator and a winter sleeper.

**Activities To Do With Your Child:**

- Take a winter walk to look for animals that are active in the winter. Look on the ground for animal tracks in the snow or mud. Keep track of the number of squirrels you see as you are walking. Look for hibernating insects in the crevices of tree bark, under dead logs, piles of leaves, and any places that provide shelter.
- To demonstrate how an animal conserves energy in the winter, you and your child could listen to each other's heart rates. Then jump up and down and hop in place for several minutes. Listen to each other's heart rates again. Ask your child if your heart rate was faster or slower after the exercise. Discuss how resting takes much less energy than movement.

**Vocabulary To Use With Your Child:** prepare, hibernation, migrate, adapt, cave, behavior