



Crayon Hearts

Here is another terrific, hands-on activity from Family Fun Magazine. Making Crayon Hearts is a motivating, holiday-based activity that can be used to teach Mathematics (*Number Sense & Operations* and *Patterns, Relations, & Algebra*), Science & Technology (*Physical Sciences*), basic concepts, functional hand skills and social skills. It's also a good way to use up all your old, broken crayons!

You will need:

- Lots of old crayons
- Heart shaped cookie tins, or cookie cutters
- An assortment of work trays and bins
- Access to an oven
- Ziploc bags, or party bags
- Ribbons and tags (optional)



Remove paper wrapping from crayons and break into pieces. Heat the oven to 250 degrees. Fill each mold with crayon pieces and bake until the crayons melt, about 10-15 minutes. Remove from molds when cool.



There are multiple ways to structure this activity. You can teach it individually, or as a small group. You can have each student do all the steps, or focus only on the steps in the process that will meet a student's individual needs. You can set up workstations with student's working individually, or cooperatively at different tasks.

You can approach this activity as simply a fun, means-end activity for Valentine's Day, or use it

to target specific concepts and skills. For example, sighted students can work on *classification* and *color recognition* by sorting crayons into like-groups by color (*Physical Sciences / Properties of Materials and Matter*). Non-sighted students can work on *tactile discrimination* by sorting peeled crayons from crayons that still have wrappers, or peeled crayons from discarded wrappers. A student working on *number concepts* can count out X



number of crayon pieces into each mold. A student working on *continuing a pattern* can follow a pattern to sequence colors for filling each mold, e.g., first red, then pink, then green ... (*sequencing skills*). Breaking crayons into two pieces can be used to demonstrate the concepts of "whole" and "half". Filling the cookie tin in an organized left/right, top/ bottom progression can teach functional application of *spatial*

concepts and reinforce the concepts of "across" and "row." The tangible heart shape that results from melting the crayons can be used to teach shape recognition. In addition to building cognitive skills, you can use this activity to develop functional hand-skills. For example, if a student needs to work on *purposeful grasp and release*, assign him, or her the job of transferring crayons from the storage container to the work trays. If a student needs to work on using a *pincer grasp*, or using *one hand to stabilize and one to manipulate*, assign them the task of peeling the wrappers off of the crayons. A student who needs to work on *hand strength* could work on breaking crayons in half.

Creating a positive classroom environment through motivating activities can be a good way to engage students with behavioral issues. To encourage a student with behavioral challenges to participate meaningfully, try providing short, successful segments followed by a preferred activity. You might want to start with a simple, clearly defined *grasp and release task*, such as picking up X amount of crayons and dropping them into a bin. A student who has a hard time staying seated can benefit from alternating seatwork with the opportunity to move around. Put them in charge of posting advertisements for crayon hearts, collecting orders, distributing supplies, carrying the cookie tins to the kitchen, or bagging discarded wrappers and bringing them to a paper recycling area. If your student is tactile defensive, respect this, let them participate in the lesson by placing their hands



on top of yours (this technique is called hand-under hand) as you talk them through it. For some students, you might want to start by simply encouraging them to "reach out and touch" or "reach out and find" (e.g., a crayon). You might also try purposefully choosing a task that you know a student will like. If a student is attracted to sounds, they might like the sound a crayon makes when they snap it in two. For students who demonstrate anxiety with new experiences, try using desensitizing techniques to help them become more comfortable. Use modeling and prompting as needed, with plenty of positive reinforcement.

Once the crayon hearts have been baked and cooled off (you can use melting the crayons as an opportunity to incorporate *Physical Sciences / States of Matter*), package them individually into Ziploc bags (*one-to-one correspondence*) and attach a valentine greeting using appropriate mediums (*composition*). Come up with your own class slogans, or have a school-wide contest to see who can come up with the best slogan. If you need some help getting started, [Family Fun Magazine](#) came up with some of these imaginative ideas:

- You make my heart melt!
- I melt for you!
- Have a happy Valentine's Day, for crayon out loud!
- You color my world!

Deliver the crayon hearts to friends and relatives for Valentine's Day (*social skills*). Model a rote script, or program switches as needed (*language skills*) and role-play the social exchange so your students know what is expected. You could also set-up a Valentine's Day store and sell crayon hearts to teachers and students (*money skills*). Or, put up posters advertising them and take orders. Deliver them to classrooms, offices and neighbors...



Develop ELA skills by making follow-up experience-stories (*Language & Composition*). Use the student's own words, remnants of the activity (using left over materials), or pictures. You can also use your computer to make switch operated follow-up stories with

voice out-put and Mayer-Johnson pictures (or imported pictures of the actual activity) using an authoring software program, such as Intellipics Studio. If you don't have access to special education software you could make electronic books using PowerPoint.

Happy Valentine's Day!