Potted Chocolate Pudding

This clever recipe from Martha Stewart Living/ Kid's Activities looks like it is just a fun, means-end cooking lesson, but you can easily adapt it to teach a wide-range of levels, concepts and hand skills. For example, you can approach it on a purely sensory level; you can use it to build vocabulary and generate language; reinforce basic concepts; teach sequencing skills; encourage composition and reading; or develop productive hand-skills. You can expand on the activity by selling the finished product at a student store to build money concepts. You can even integrate the recipe into a larger unit on plants. However you choose to approach this activity, remember to encourage communication and social skills by structuring in opportunities for choice making and peer interaction.

You will need:

- One package of instant pudding per student
- Two cups of cold milk per package
- One box of chocolate teddy grahams, or chocolate wafers
- Sprigs of mint
- Bowls
- Assorted trays and bins
- Whisks, or forks for mixing
- A rolling pin (optional)
- A spatula or spoon
- Ziploc bags
- Clear plastic cups, or glass pots if you can find them
- Latex Gloves (if making
Beat the pudding mix and two cups of cold milk with a whisk for two minutes (follow the directions on the box of pudding mix if it differs from these directions). Pour into clear plastic cups, or glass pots. Let the pudding sit for five minutes to set. Crush enough teddy grahams to make a layer of ground "cookie dirt" for each cup. Sprinkle on top of the pudding.

Insert a sprig of mint into the top of each cup to simulate a plant.

Consider breaking this activity down into a series of prep-stations. For large groups, divide the class into small groups and set up multiple prep stations. Set up a box-opening station (one hand to stabilize, one to manipulate); a counting station (count out a series of 10 teddy bears to a bag); a crushing station hand strength (use a rolling pin, or pound the cookies with your fist, or the heel of your hand to crush them); a pouring and measuring station (fill a series of containers with 2 cups of milk). Assign students to stations that reinforce skills they are working on. For instance, if a student is working on hand strength, put them at the box opening station, or the crushing station. If a student is working on counting to ten, assign him or her to the counting station. A student working on pouring, or measuring could be assigned to the pouring station. For students who have tactile defensiveness, or whose goal might be to simply follow a one-step direction, pair them with another student and instruct them to "reach out and find" (e.g., a box of pudding), or "pick up" the box of pudding for his or her partner to open.

After the prep work, you could re-organize the workstations assembly line-style. Place direction cards at each station using the appropriate medium for your
students (Braille, large print, Mayer-Johnson pictures, photographs, tangible symbols, or a switch programmed with auditory directions), along with the material for that step. For example, the first station would be stocked with individual bags of chocolate pudding mix, a series of assorted bowls and a wastebasket. The direction card at this station would tell the student what to do. For example:

1. Open the bag
2. Empty the contents into a bowl
3. Throw away the empty bag

You could have students move individually down the assembly line, stopping at each station to complete a step in the process, or you could assign a student to each of the workstations, and pass the pudding along the assembly line from peer to peer (*communication and social skills*) until it is assembled.

You could also encourage independence by having each student collect his or her own ingredients from the prep stations using a checklist (*organizational skills*) and follow a recipe (*reading*) to make the pudding independently from start to finish (use the appropriate medium for your students). For a more structured approach, set students up with individual trays containing pre-measured ingredients. Provide step-by-step auditory instructions (*following directions*). Remember to break the steps down into a sequence of one-step directions and clearly label each action. Wait for students to complete each step. Provide as much assistance as needed, use plenty of positive reinforcement, and provide a running commentary on what everyone is doing to encourage a sense of group.

If you want to make cooking your theme for the day, spread the components of the activity out over the course of the day. If you have the opportunity, take a trip to the grocery store and buy the ingredients with the money from your last project (*money skills & community experience*). Go to a garden store and buy mint plants. Plant mint plants from seed (this can generate yet another themed project!). Make posters (*composition*) advertising a Potted Pudding Sale and distribute the posters (use an adapted checklist) around the school or the neighborhood. Sell the Potted Puddings you made (e.g., for a quarter each) in your classroom; a table in the lobby, or a lemonade-type stand on the sidewalk (*money concepts*). Limit sales to quarters only. Have a change table for students to *trade* dollars for quarters so they have the correct amount. Take orders from staff or neighbors who can't come to the sale and assign a student the job of delivering them (with supervision!).

Make follow-up experience-stories (*composition*) to document the cooking activity. Let the students write their own stories, or scribe what they dictate. For nonverbal students with no vision, or limited vision, help them make a book using objects from the activity (e.g., the empty pudding box, a bag of teddy grahams, a sprig of mint...). Build in choices. Let them decide what they want to include by
choosing from among the things you used in the project (for example, put the remnants on a tray and ask them to choose which one they want to talk about first). Use your computer to make switch operated stories with voice output and Mayer-Johnson pictures (or import pictures you took while making the Potted Puddings) 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.

Enjoy!