

A Free Valentine's Day Curriculum!

By Fran Wisniewski, Annette M. Hall, and Diane Flynn Keith*



Valentine's Day is on February 14th — and as a special treat, I wanted to give you a free Valentine's themed "curriculum" with activities your family will enjoy. You'll find links to free educational websites, as well as some links to books. (I used my Amazon affiliate to link to the books. If you make a purchase, Amazon rewards me with a small commission. That said, you can also take this list to the library and check out the books for free.) Let's get started...

Make and Exchange Valentine's Day Cards!

Do you know of a better way to say, "I love you" than with a homemade valentine? Try these fun ideas...

- **Stinky Valentines**—Make two hearts of equal size and shape out of red construction paper. Let your child decorate one side of each heart with stickers, glitter, markers, etc. Put the undecorated sides of the two hearts together. Using glue, tape or staples seal the edges around the hearts, leave a small opening. Spray some perfume or cologne on cotton balls. Put the cotton balls in between the hearts through the unsealed opening. Seal the opening. Now you have a "Stinky Valentine!"

- **Paper Plate Valentine People**—These little Valentine People are whimsical and lots of fun to play with, once you make them. Here's how:

- 1) Take a paper plate and draw a heart on it that takes up most of the paper plate. Cut it out. Use heart-shaped stickers to make eyes, nose, and mouth on the cut-out heart.

- 2) Next, take four narrow strips of red or pink construction paper (about 11" long) and fold them accordion-style. Attach them to the heart-shaped paper plate to make arms and legs.

- 3) Then, trace your child's hands and feet on red or pink construction paper. Cut them out. Attach them to the free end of the accordion-paper arms and legs.

These make fun Valentines to send to grandparents, and they look really cute suspended from the ceiling with nylon string for decorations. Make an entire family of Paper Plate Valentine People by varying the sizes.



Make Valentine Goodies for Every Meal!

Candy is often the predominant form of sustenance on Valentine's Day. Here are a few ideas to make every meal on Valentine's Day a celebration...



- **Valentine Pancake Breakfast**—Make whole-grain pancakes. Once they are cooked, use a heart-shaped cookie cutter to cut the pancakes into heart-shapes. Top with sliced strawberries, maple syrup, and a dollop of whipped cream or yogurt. Note: In a hurry? You can use whole-grain frozen toaster waffles too.

•**Heart-Shaped Sandwiches**—Use a heart-shaped cookie cutter to cut heart shapes out of sandwich bread. Spread with nut butter or cream cheese and strawberry jam.

•**Pink Mashed Potatoes & More**—You can tint regular food pink (with a drop or two of red food coloring) to make it more festive. Pink milk, pink cream of wheat, pink dip for chips and vegetables, pink mashed potatoes - your imagination is the limit!

Read Some Valentine's Day Books Young Children Love!

Some of these books include information about the origin and history of Valentine's Day, and others explore the sentiment and traditions of Valentine's Day.

[If You'll Be My Valentine](#)

by Cynthia Rylant

[The Best Thing About Valentine's](#) by Eleanor Hudson

[Queen of Hearts](#) by Mary Engelbreit

[Roses Are Pink, Your Feet Really Stink](#) by Diane deGroat

[Saint Valentine](#) by Robert Sabuda

[The Day It Rained Hearts](#) by Felicia Bond

[The Story of Valentine's Day](#) by Clyde Robert Bulla



A Valentine's Day Chocolate "Curriculum"

Chocolate has been around for over 2000 years. It didn't start out as a candy bar—it started out as a drink! What follows are some great links to websites where you can learn about the origin of chocolate, how it was used, when and where the first chocolate factory started, and much more! You'll also find some sweet activities that your family can do to extend the learning.

The Fascinating History & Science of Chocolate...

CLICK HERE: [Virtually Pick Cacao Pods & Process Cocoa Beans Into Chocolate!](#)

Take a virtual trip provided by the Field Museum and learn how to pick cacao pods and ferment and process cocoa beans into chocolate.



CLICK HERE: [Meet The Creator of The Hershey Bar!](#)

Meet Milton S. Hershey and learn about his company's history. Take a video tour of the chocolate-making process. Get instructions for fun Valentine's crafts you can make with Hershey products.

CLICK HERE: [The Sweet Science of Chocolate!](#)

At the Exploratorium Museum online, you can watch a webcast and see how the ancient Aztec chocolate drink, "xocoatl" is made, while its history is explained. Listen as scientists describe why chocolate makes you feel good and how it affects our bodies.

Fun Chocolate Activities...

Take A Chocolate Taste Test: Experimenting With Flavors and Textures

Have you ever tried chocolate before it's been sweetened? It is not very tasty. But don't take my word for it. Have a taste test and find out for yourself. Note: Each of these tastes should be lined up in the order given to really appreciate the activity!

- **First Taste: Unsweetened Chocolate** – Serve shaved or cut into tiny pieces. Ask everyone to try a little bit. Most people will not like it, so have water close by to help wash it down!
- **Second Taste: Bittersweet Chocolate** – Serve cut or shaved; ask everyone to taste a little piece. Some people may like it, but keep the water handy!
- **Third Taste: Semi-Sweet Chocolate** – Some people prefer dark chocolate: others not so much.
- **Fourth Taste: Milk Chocolate** – This is the hands-down favorite. Be sure to have enough for everyone!



After everyone has tasted a piece of each kind of chocolate, talk about what type they prefer. Compare flavors and textures. Tip: Try different grades and types of chocolate for this yummy experiment. (For example compare Hershey's to Godiva or Scharfenberger.)

Create A Chocolate Candy Confection

The idea is to create a brand new chocolate candy confection, unlike anything on the market today, and give it an original name. Families can either work together or as individuals.



Step 1: Choose a name for your confection and decide what ingredients to put in it.

Here are some of the things you can add to your chocolate confection: Nuts, raisins, caramel, chips (butterscotch, peanut butter, toffee etc.), dried fruits, pretzels, cereal (crisp rice, granola, etc.), mint or orange flavoring, peanut butter, cookies, marshmallow, coconut, etc.

Step 2: Purchase all the ingredients that will be needed and create a recipe. Decide how the ingredients will be added and how the candy confection will look. Make a "prototype" or a sample model, so that everyone can taste it.

Step 3: Create a marketing campaign to sell it!

- **Writers:** Write an advertisement. Take a picture of your candy creation and include it in your ad campaign. Design a poster. Create a commercial or a skit about the candy. Have someone videotape it!
- **Musicians:** Write a tune or jingle about your candy bar to let everyone know how delicious it is. Write lyrics to your own music or set them to a well-known tune.



- **Artists:** Design a wrapper! Will it be a simple paper wrapper, an origami container, or something else? Will you design a picture or will words become the art? Will it include a nutrition label and a list of ingredients? It is up to you to decide.
- **Optional Activity:** Come up with a slogan for your candy creation. (For example: *M&M's melt in your mouth, not in your hands!*)

Step 4: Wrap It Up!

Invite friends and family over on Valentine's Day to see what you've created! Let them taste the chocolate goodies! **Idea:** Homeschooling support groups can do this as a project! Set a time and a place to allow participants to show their stuff and let everyone have a taste of the candy creations.

Choco-Lit

Read chocolate-themed literature! Here are some books that are about chocolate or have chocolate in the plot.

[Smart About Chocolate: A Sweet History](#) by Sandra Markle

[The Story of Chocolate](#) by C. J. Polin

[The Chocolate Touch](#) by Patrick Skene Catling and Margot Apple

[Chocolate By Hershey: A Story About Milton S. Hershey](#) by Betty Burford

[Chocolatina](#) by Erik Kraft

[Chocolate Fever](#) by Robert Kimmel Smith

[Charlie and the Chocolate Factory](#) by Roald Dahl

[Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator](#) by Roald Dahl

[Chocolate: Riches from the Rainforest](#) by Robert Burleigh



Happy Valentine's Day!

About the Authors:



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