

Gifts from the Heart

"Gifts from the Heart" encourages students to think about the importance of giving joy rather than material goods to other people. When we take time to be thoughtful towards others, we often receive and promote peace within ourselves and others. During the holiday season, encourage students to give a gift from the heart to someone or some group that has made a difference in their lives.

Some suggestions:

- **Create personalized coupons:** With your students, brainstorm ideas for gifts they can make (rather than purchase) for their family members. (IOU coupons are especially appreciated.)
- **Make Cards:** Dedicate an art class to making cards of thanks.
- **Write letters:** Take this opportunity for a lesson on letter writing. Ask students to write a letter of thanks to someone.
- **Donate:** Bring in used toys and books and hold a sale. Donate the funds collected to a local charity of shelter.
- **Bracelet Campaign:** Start your own bracelet campaign. Teach students to make friendship bracelets using embroidery floss or yarn. There are numerous websites with detailed instructions but many students will likely know how to make these bracelets. Ask these students to give workshops for the others.



Here is one example:

<http://friendshipbracelets.wordpress.com/2008/07/17/summer-project-friendship-bracelet-making/>

Organize a gift-making day with the entire school.

Where Christmas is celebrated, many teachers help children make gifts for to take home to family members.

- Set up stations with the necessary materials to create simple, hand-made gifts using everyday materials. The following page shows a few examples of simple gifts children and youth can make.
- Decorate plain brown paper to make wrapping paper.
- Add a gift-wrapping table.

BANDAGES FOR THE SOUL

Surprise someone with words of wisdom. Create a "first-aid kit for the spirit." Fill a small cardboard box with inspirational sayings and notes of encouragement and love on paper shaped like Band-Aid strips.



HANDY COASTERS

Make coasters by tracing the students' hands on felt or cardboard. If possible, laminate the cardboard hand cutouts.

NO-SEW SACHETS

Collect scraps of fabric. For each sachet, place 2 matching fabric squares back-to-back and glue the edges together on 3 sides. (White craft glue is best.) Spread the glue close to the edges to prevent fraying. Once the glue is dry, fill the sachet with about 1/2 cup of potpourri. (Pine needles, fir needles... whatever you have that smells good!) Glue the open edges together and let the glue dry.



TALKING STICKS

Ask each student to bring in a stick. (Approximately 30-40 cm long) Decorate these sticks to make family talking sticks. Talking sticks originate with aboriginal people who used them in meetings. Only the person holding the stick could speak.

PAINTED STONES

Paint stones and coat them with Varathane or some other shiny, durable finish.

