

FABRIC CRAFTS



INTRODUCTION

Advanced Practical Life Activities involving fabrics provide elementary students with opportunities to be imaginative and creative and to make useful items. While making practical and decorative items from fabrics, yarns, and related material, students develop motor skills and hand-eye coordination. Students also learn to concentrate and to recognize patterns and shapes when engaged in these activities. As well, students learn that math skills such as careful measuring and adding are

important to obtaining pleasing results in their fabric projects.

Fabric crafts also help the students discover that hobbies add to the health and happiness of their daily lives. Students learn to occupy themselves in ways that refresh and relax mind, body, and spirit. While working on a craft such as corking, for example, students often become highly focused. They experience joy in the absorbing nature of work and self-expression, and experience satisfaction in the completion of their projects. Because some fabric projects are completed over days or even weeks, students also develop

patience and practice in completing projects step by step.

Fabric crafts can strengthen students' social skills. For example, students work together on certain projects such as the Friendship Quilt. Many of the hand-made items that students create in fabric crafts activities can be given as gifts on special occasions. For example, students may make friendship bracelets specifically to be given away to a special person. Students can use their fabric crafts in the Social Graces section near the end of this manual, where they learn to demonstrate concern and caring for others, in part, by giving gifts. If they choose, students can also donate their items to sell in the General Store, an activity in the Special Projects section near the end of this manual.

Tips for presenting Fabric Crafts activities

- Many students are developing a new set of skills when making items from fabrics. It is important that the teacher or adult helper always supervise students' use of sharp objects such as needles, pins, and fabric scissors.
- The initial steps in certain fabric crafts activities can be challenging for some students (e.g., corking). It is recommended that the teacher or adult helper assist students in getting started whenever necessary. Sometimes it is best to work with one or two students at a time.
- Fabric crafts can involve many steps. When demonstrating these steps, invite the students to participate as much as possible, one step at a time.

ACTIVITY 1

Making a Button-Buddy



Purpose

To follow steps and to develop fine motor skills and creativity while making a button figure.

Material

Tray containing: different colored pipe cleaners (two per button-buddy); basket containing big beads for the head (one per button-buddy); basket containing various medium-size buttons for the body (six per button-buddy), and large buttons for the hat (one per button-buddy); basket containing

pre-cut lengths of colored yarn for the hair; about 8 inches (20 cm) long; scissors; permanent marker.

Presentation

- Most Montessori teachers present this activity in Year 1.
- In advance, place all material on the tray and place the tray on a shelf.

PART 1: GETTING READY

- Announce that today students will have an opportunity to make a buddy out of buttons.
- Invite a student to bring the tray from the shelf and place it on the worktable or mat.
- Explain the activity: The students will make button-buddies from buttons, yarn, and other material.



PART 2: MAKING THE BUTTON-BUDDY'S HEAD

- Pick up one of the pipe cleaners from the tray and fold it in half lengthwise.
- Pick up one of the large buttons and place one end of the folded pipe cleaner through each hole in the button.
- Slide the button to the fold in the pipe cleaner. Explain that this is the button-buddy's hat.
- Invite the students to each select a large button and pipe cleaner, then to follow the previous steps to make hats for their button-buddies.

- Pick up one of the big beads and place both ends of the folded pipe cleaner (from below the hat) through the hole of the big bead.
- Slide the big bead along the pipe cleaner until it touches the large button (the hat). Explain that this is the button-buddy's head.
- Invite the students to each select a big bead, then to follow the previous steps to make heads for their button-buddies.



PART 3: MAKING THE BUTTON-BUDDY'S BODY

- Next, choose six medium-size buttons from the basket and slide them on the folded pipe cleaner below the large bead (the head). Explain that these six buttons are the button-buddy's body.
- Invite the students to follow the previous step and to make bodies for their button-buddies.
- Once all six buttons are on, twist the folded pipe cleaner twice and explain this will prevent the buttons from falling off.

- Invite the students to follow the previous step and to twist their pipe cleaners twice.
- Pick up another pipe cleaner and twist it twice around the first pipe cleaner just under the “body button” that is second from the top. Explain that this second pipe cleaner forms the button-buddy’s arms. Hide the twist under the second body button.
- Invite the students to follow the previous steps and to make arms for their button-buddies.

PART 3: FINISHING THE BUTTON-BUDDY

- Pick up the scissors and trim about one-third of the length off each arm.

- Invite the students to follow the previous step and to trim their button-buddies’ arms.
- Explain that the two ends of the first pipe cleaner sticking out below the six buttons (the body) are legs, then make knees and feet by bending the legs slightly.
- Invite the students to follow the previous step and to make knees and feet for their button-buddies.
- Make elbows and hands on the button-buddy’s arms by bending the pipe cleaner that forms the arms in the same way as for the knees and feet.
- Invite the students to follow the previous step and to make elbows and hands for their button-buddies.



- Pick up the permanent marker and carefully draw a face on the button-buddy's head.
- Invite the students to follow the previous step and to take turns drawing faces on their button-buddies.
- Choose a few pieces of colored yarn from the basket and tie each one (using a knot) around the first pipe cleaner under the button-buddy's hat, leaving the ends to hang out. Explain that this is the button-buddy's hair. Trim the hair if necessary.
- Invite the students to follow the previous step and to create hair for their button-buddies.
- Encourage the students to make button-buddies on their own, whenever they choose.
- Remind the students to clean the work area, and to place all material back on the tray and return it to its proper place on the shelf when they are finished the activity.

Extension

- Make smaller and larger button-buddies by varying the size of the buttons and beads and the length of the arms and legs.

ACTIVITY 2

Sewing a Hand Puppet



Purpose

To follow steps, practice motor skills, and develop creativity by making a pattern and sewing a hand puppet.

Material

Tray containing: large needle and several straight pins in a pincushion; embroidery thread; fabric scissors; pencil; tacky craft glue.

Container of: Pre-cut rectangular pieces of colored felt (two per student, plus a few extra) about 9 x 12 inches (22.5 x 30 cm); sheets of white paper (one per student, plus a few extra) 8 1/2 x 11 inches (216 x 279 mm).

Basket containing trimming items (scrap pieces of fabric, googly eyes, yarn, from which to make eyes, ears, nose, mouth, whiskers, hair, paws, bow tie, clothes, etc.); permanent marker.

Presentation

- Most Montessori teachers present this activity in Years 1 and 2.
- In advance, place material on the tray and place the tray on a shelf. Place the basket of trimming material and the container of felt rectangles and sheets of paper on the shelf next to the tray.

PART 1: GETTING READY

- Announce that today the students will have an opportunity to sew something interesting with which they can create a funny and entertaining show.
- Go to the shelf and take one sheet of paper and two felt rectangles from the container, then place them on the tray. Bring the tray and place it on the worktable or mat. (For now, leave the basket of trimming material on the shelf.)
- Explain the activity: The students will each sew a hand puppet by first making a pattern on paper, cutting out fabric by following the pattern, then sewing and decorating the puppet.

PART 2: MAKING A HAND PUPPET

- Take the sheet of paper from the tray and place it on the worktable or mat.
- Place your non-dominant hand on the piece of paper, with the three middle fingers close together, and the thumb and little finger stretched outward (see illustration).
- Demonstrate how to take the pencil and begin to draw a very generous outline of your hand and wrist on the paper.
- Explain that the hand and wrist are just used as rough guides, and that the outline must be much bigger. (The outline should be large enough to nearly fill the paper). Tell the students that this hand outline will create a pattern for the hand puppet.
- Once the outline has been drawn, take the scissors and cut out the pattern of the hand.
- Remove the two pieces of colored felt from the tray and place them on the table.
- Place the paper pattern on one piece of felt, hold it down with one hand, then take the pencil in the other hand and trace the pattern on the felt. (If the felt is dark in color, trace the pattern with white chalk instead.)
- Trace the pattern on the second piece of felt.

- Once the same pattern has been traced onto both felt rectangles, cut out both hand-shapes with the scissors by carefully following the traced outlines.
- Place one felt shape on top of the other, so they match. Demonstrate how to pin the two felt shapes together using straight pins.
- Cut out shapes for ears for the hand puppet from the leftover felt rectangle, then demonstrate how to pin an ear between the two layers of felt (see illustration). Pin on the second ear.



- Cut a piece of embroidery thread approximately 30 inches (75 cm) long, then remove the needle from the pincushion and thread the needle.
- Demonstrate how to tie a knot in the end of the thread, then make a second knot over the first one in the same manner. Explain that a strong knot keeps the thread from pulling right through fabric when sewing.



- Demonstrate how to sew the pieces of felt together: Pull the thread through both pieces of felt on one side of the puppet near the bottom, about 1/3 inch (.8 cm) from the edge. Make a running stitch by pulling the needle in and out of the fabric, creating stitches of equal length around the outside of the puppet (see illustration). Explain that the bottom of the puppet must be left open for a hand to go inside.
- Once the hand puppet has been stitched together, tie a knot at the end of the stitching, cut the thread, then stick the needle back into the pincushion.

- Remove the straight pins from the puppet and stick them into the pincushion.

PART 3: FINISHING THE HAND PUPPET

- Invite a student to choose one side as the face side of the puppet, then to mark with the pencil where a pair of eyes would go on the face.
- Bring the basket of trimming material from the shelf, then choose two googly eyes from the basket.
- Attach the eyes to the felt (using the pencil marks as guides) with tacky craft glue.

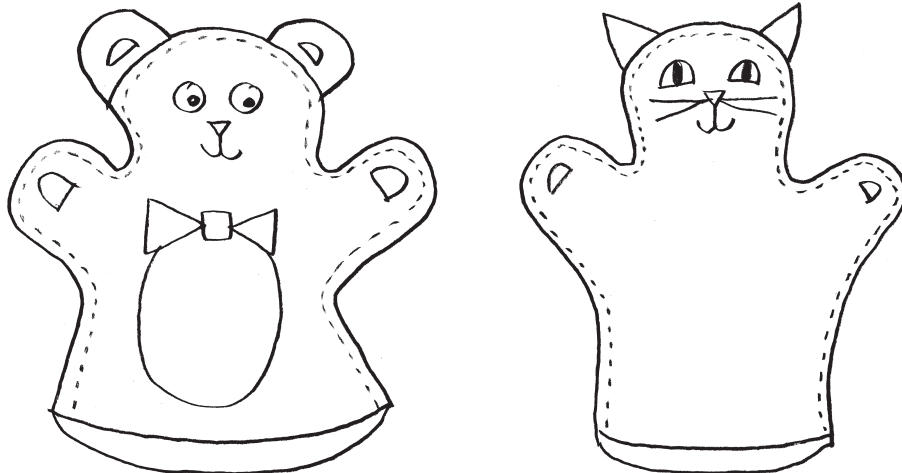
- Glue on some paws, hair, eyes, ears, whiskers, clothes, bow tie, etc. using scraps of fabric and other materials from the basket. The permanent marker can be used to draw a mouth.
- Ask the students to demonstrate the finished product and give it a name (e.g., Spot the cat).
- Invite the students to make hand puppets on their own, whenever they choose. Supervise and assist as necessary.
- Remind the students to clean the work area, place the material back on the tray, and return the tray to its proper place on

the shelf when finished the activity. Also remind them to place the basket of trimming items back on the shelf next to the tray.

Extension

- Create a puppet show, rehearse it, and invite guests.
- Make hand puppets of animals being studied in Natural Sciences.
- Use puppets to act out an event studied in History.

Puppet Examples:



ACTIVITY 3

Making a Simple Friendship Bracelet



Purpose

To follow steps and practice skills involving memory, pattern and shape recognition and fine motor movements while making a knotted bracelet from colored thread; to practice social skills by giving the bracelet to someone special.

Material

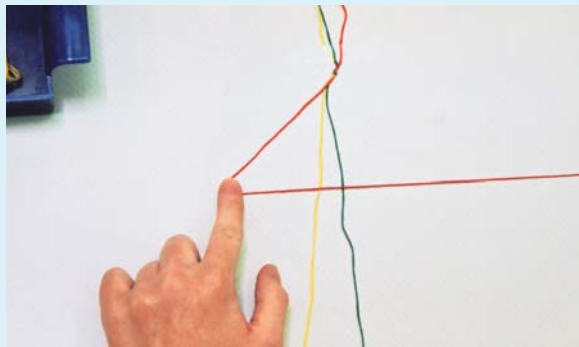
Tray containing: embroidery thread in three different colors; adhesive tape; scissors.

Presentation

- Most Montessori teachers present this activity in Years 1 and 2.
- In advance, place all material on the tray and place the tray on a shelf.

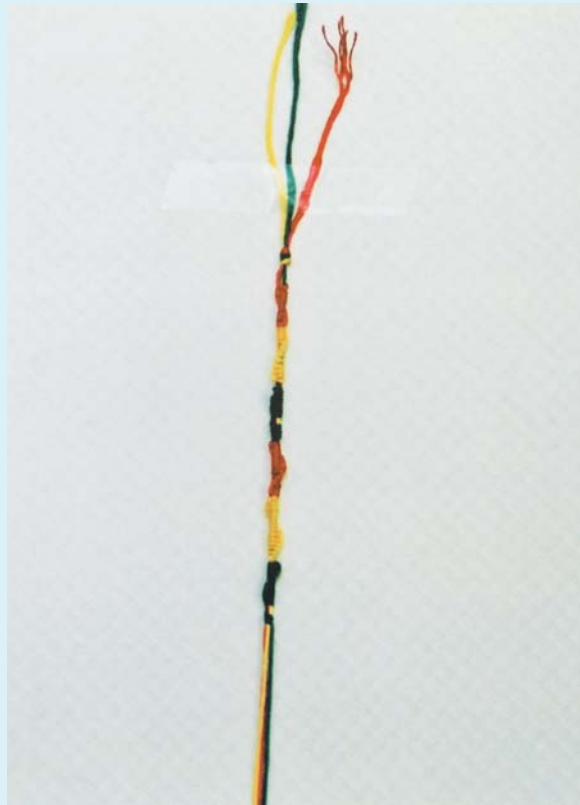
PART 1: GETTING READY

- Announce that students will have an opportunity to make a beautiful bracelet with colored thread.
- Bring the tray from the shelf and place it on the worktable or mat.
- Explain the activity: The students will make a beautiful bracelet from colored thread that they can give to a special person, and for this reason it is called a friendship bracelet.



PART 2: MAKING THE FRIENDSHIP BRACELET

- Invite a student to stretch out her/his arm. Demonstrate how to measure a piece of embroidery thread the length of the student's arm. Cut the thread with scissors.
- Measure and cut two more lengths of different colored thread in the same way, then lay the three pieces of colored thread side by side (vertically) on the table.
- Join the three threads by tying them together in a knot about 2 inches (5 cm) from the top end of the three pieces (see illustration).
- Remove a piece of adhesive tape and place it over the threads just above the knot, then stick the tape to the table (this will hold the threads in place on the table).
- Separate the three pieces of thread against the table, and hold the piece of thread on the right in your right hand.
- Bring the thread from the right to the left over the other two pieces to form the shape of a number "4." Hold the "point" of the 4-shape with left index finger (see illustration).
- With the right hand, take the end of this same thread and bring it back toward the other two threads lying vertically on the table, then tuck the end underneath these two threads. Pull this thread through with the right hand, creating a knot, and slide the knot to the top.
- Continue as above, creating a 4-shape with each piece of thread, pulling the right end of the thread under and through the two vertical threads each time, and sliding the knot to the top.
- Continue in the same manner, inviting students to take turns making several knots each (assist if necessary) until the three threads become a length of knots forming the friendship bracelet.



PART 3: FINISHING THE BRACELET

- When the bracelet seems long enough for a child's wrist, remove the tape and gently lift the bracelet off the table.

- Place the bracelet around a student's wrist and see if it is long enough. If the bracelet is long enough, complete it by tying a knot with all three threads. If it is not long enough, tape it back to the table and make more knots.
- When this first bracelet is finished, invite the students to make friendship bracelets on their own, whenever they choose. Encourage the students to make their friendship bracelets for a special friend or family member.
- Remind the students to clean the work area, and to place all material back on the tray and return it to its proper place on the shelf when they are finished the activity.

Extension

- Make a bracelet using four different colored threads (the process is the same as when using three threads, except students will make the 4-shape with one thread over top of the other three threads).
- Experiment with thread colors and textures used (e.g., string or wool).
- Weave in small buttons or beads.

ACTIVITY 4

Making a More Complex Friendship Bracelet



Purpose

To practice skills involving memory, pattern and shape recognition, following instructions, and fine motor movements while making a knotted bracelet from colored thread; to practice social skills by giving the bracelet to someone special.

Material

Tray containing: embroidery thread in three different colors; adhesive tape; scissors.

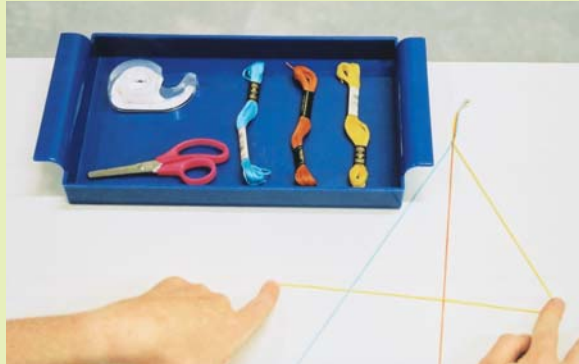
Presentation

- Most Montessori teachers present this activity in Years 1 to 3.

- In advance, place all material on the tray and place the tray on a shelf.

PART 1: GETTING READY

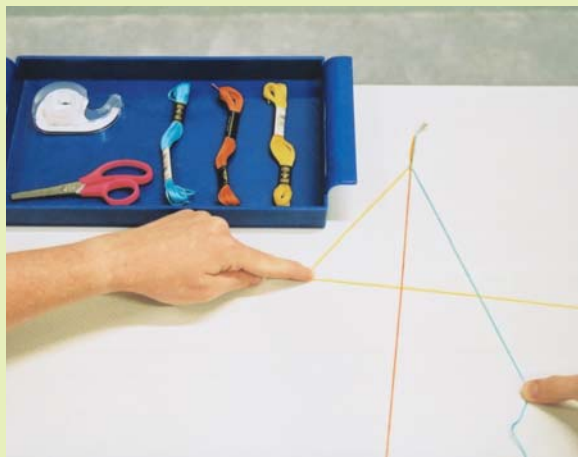
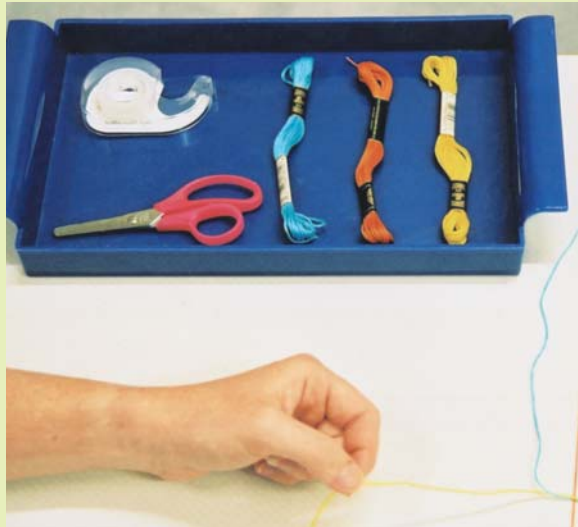
- Announce that students will have an opportunity to make a different type of beautiful bracelet with colored thread.
- Bring the tray from the shelf and place it on the worktable or mat.
- Explain the activity: The students will make a friendship bracelet with a pattern different from the bracelet in the previous activity. Students can give the friendship bracelet to a special person.



PART 2: MAKING THE FRIENDSHIP BRACELET

- Invite a student to stretch out his/her arm. Demonstrate how to measure a piece of embroidery thread the length of the student's arm. Cut the thread with the scissors.
- Measure and cut two more lengths of different colored thread in the same way.
- Lay the three pieces of colored thread side by side (vertically) on the table.
- Demonstrate how to tie the three threads together in a knot about 2 inches (5 cm) from the top end of the threads.
- Tear off a piece of adhesive tape and place it over the threads just above the knot, then stick the tape to the table (this will hold the threads in place on the table while making the bracelet).
- Demonstrate how to separate the three pieces of thread against the table, and hold the middle thread taut, pointing straight downward. Tear off another piece of tape, then stick the tape to the bottom of this middle thread to secure it to the table.
- Hold the right thread in your right hand. Bring the thread to the left over the middle thread by forming the shape of a "backward 4." Hold the "point" of the backward-4-shape with right index finger (see illustration).
- Pick up the left thread in your left hand and hold it at an angle over top of the thread that formed the backward-4-shape, so that the threads form triangles on either side of the middle thread (see illustration).
- Take the thread on the left side. Pass it under the thread forming the bottom of the triangle on the left, and under the middle thread.
- Pull both threads (left and right) outwards, thereby creating a knot at the top of the bracelet.

- This time, reverse the previous steps: hold the thread on the left in your left hand. Bring the thread to the right over the middle thread by forming the shape of a proper number “4.” Hold the “point” of the 4-shape with left index finger.
- Pick up the thread on the right in your right hand and hold it at an angle over top of the thread that formed the 4-shape, so that the threads form triangles on either side of the middle thread.



- Take the thread on the right side. Pass it under the thread forming the bottom of the triangle on the right, and under the middle thread.
- Pull both threads (left and right) outwards, thereby creating a knot at the top of the bracelet.
- Continue making knots in this manner, each time alternating the side on which the 4-shape is made. Invite the students to take turn making several knots each, assisting them if necessary, until the bracelet is the desired length.



PART 3: FINISHING THE BRACELET

- When students and teacher agree the bracelet is long enough, remove both pieces of tape and gently lift the bracelet off the table. Demonstrate how to tie a knot with all three threads to complete the bracelet.
- Invite the students to make friendship bracelets on their own, whenever they choose. Encourage the students to give their friendship bracelets to someone special.

- Remind the students to clean the work area, and to place all material back on the tray and return it to its proper place on the shelf when finished the activity.

Extension

- Change the pattern in the bracelet by taping down a different colored thread in the middle every inch (2.5 cm) or so.

ACTIVITY 5

Sewing a Friendship Quilt



Purpose

To follow steps and practice the hand-eye coordination and motor skills needed for sewing.

Material

Tray containing: darning needle and several straight pins in a pincushion; embroidery thread in assorted colors; fabric scissors; fabric paint; tacky craft glue; pencil or chalk.

Basket containing: Pre-cut felt rectangles 9 x 12 inches (23 x 30 cm) in different colors, two per student; pre-cut fabric squares 3 x 3 inches (7.5 x 7.5 cm), four per student.

Presentation

- Most Montessori teachers present this activity in Years 1 and 2. This activity can take place over several days.
- In advance, send a note home asking parents to donate scraps of colorful fabric such as cotton to be used for the friendship quilt.

- In advance, cut the donated fabric scraps with pinking shears (zigzag scissors) into 3-inch (7.5-cm) squares, enough for four per student.
- In advance, place items on the tray and place the tray on a shelf. Place the felt rectangles and the fabric squares in a basket on the shelf next to the tray.

PART 1: GETTING READY

- Announce that students will have an opportunity to make something beautiful using cloth and a needle and thread.
- Go to the shelf and choose two felt rectangles and four fabric squares from the basket, place them on the tray, then bring the tray to the worktable or mat.
- Explain the activity: The students will sew a colorful quilt, which is called a friendship quilt because a group of friends make it together.

PART 2: SEWING THE FRIENDSHIP QUILT

- Take the felt rectangle from the tray and place it on the worktable, then choose one of the fabric squares and place it on one of the corners of the felt rectangle.
- Remove two straight pins from the pincushion and hand them to you.
- Demonstrate how to pin two sides of the fabric square securely to the felt rectangle, by placing the pins approximately 1/2 inch (1.25 cm) from the



edges of the fabric square. Remove two more pins, then pin the other two sides of the fabric square to the felt.

- Choose one color of embroidery thread, and with the scissors, cut off a piece of thread that is about 16 inches (40 cm) long.
- Demonstrate how to tie a knot at the end of the thread, and thread the other end through the eye of the darning needle.
- Demonstrate how to begin sewing around the edge of the small square, about 1/3 inch (.8 cm) from the edge. Pull the needle through one corner of the felt rectangle and fabric square, being sure the knot is on the underside of the felt.
- Demonstrate how to make a running stitch by pulling the needle and thread up and down through the fabric in a straight line (the same stitch used for the hand puppet).

- Demonstrate how to tie a knot on the underside of the felt once the fabric square is sewn on, then cut the thread and stick the needle back into the pincushion.



- Remove the straight pins from the fabric and stick them back into the pincushion.
- Pin and sew on the remaining three fabric squares on the other three corners of the felt rectangle, and tie knots on the underside of the felt after each square is sewn on. Use different colored thread for each square, thus giving students more practice threading the needle and tying knots.
- Explain that this rectangle with four fabric squares sewn on it will be just one piece of the friendship quilt.
- Bring a new felt rectangle from the shelf, this time choosing a different color.

- Trace your hand on this felt rectangle, using a pencil or chalk, then using the scissors cut out the hand pattern.
- Glue it in the center of the piece of the friendship quilt with tacky craft glue.
- Write your name in fabric paint on the piece of the friendship quilt (see following image).
- Place the friendship quilt piece in a safe place to allow the fabric paint to dry.
- Encourage the students to make their own personal piece of the friendship quilt, as demonstrated.
- Agree on a day by which everyone will have their pieces completed, so that the students can move to the next step in sewing a friendship quilt.
- Remind the students to place all material back neatly on the tray when they are finished, and then to put the tray in its proper place on the shelf. Designate a storage area for all the completed pieces, and ask the students to place their pieces in this area.

PART 3: FINISHING THE FRIENDSHIP QUILT

- Once the fabric paint is dry, invite the students to bring their pieces to the work area. Explain that all the completed pieces will be sewn together to make the friendship quilt.

- Invite the students to lay their completed felt rectangles on the work area, so that they join like a patchwork quilt.
- Demonstrate how to pin the rectangles together, then sew the rectangles together using an overcast or a zigzag stitch. Sew small sections of the quilt together at a time, or the quilt may become hard to manage. (It is recommended that the teacher pin and sew the quilt pieces together.)
- Remind the students to clean the work area, place the material back on the tray, and return the tray to its proper place on the shelf when they are finished the activity.
- When the quilt is finished, invite the students to display the quilt in a special place in the classroom for everyone to see.



Extensions

- Choose a theme for a friendship quilt that relates to a story that students have been reading in Language Arts.
- At the end of the school year, take the quilt apart and give each student his/her own piece as a keepsake.