

# Clay All Day!

Clay is an amazing tool to enhance any STEAM curriculum. Whether as a sealant for a straw-bottle rocket (stayed tuned for that one!), as an infinite art supply, or as teaching model, this month's activity celebrates all things clay!

Kids are surprised when the clay is hard at room temperature. Fresh from the packet, **brainstorm** ways to heat up this medium. The **friction** from hands, along with the **kinetic energy** of the muscles, and most of all - **PATIENCE** - these **forces** will soften the clay into doable fun! Read on to see how it can be a **self-soothing tool**, **educational resource**, or easy and eternal **artistic enjoyment**.

## Mathematics

Fractions are one of the more abstract concepts for students. Start with a model before introducing symbols and numbers. Manipulating clay is about as hands-on as you can get!

### Materials

- Clay (not playdough)
- Bench scraper or knife
- Dental flossers (individual with a handle)
- Kitchen tools (pizza cutter, butter knife, cookie cutters, jars)

### Method

**Adults** - cut the hard clay into sticks the same size. One cm is ideal for the flosser's length. These **rectangular prisms** (or cubes if all sides are equilateral) are the foundation for the fraction concept. They now represent candy bars, chocolate, cookies...oh my!

**Kids** - work the clay with your hands to create the desired shape. **Circles, squares, rectangles...**

Show the child how the flosser can **create lines** as well as **cut through** the sticks. Explore the concept of a **fair share** (preK-1st), **equivalent fractions** (2-3rd), and **adding and subtracting equivalent fractions** (4-5th).

Use the questions listed on this page to initiate conversations. Remember to have fun with kitchen tools to add **artistic embellishments**. Please share your pictures at [www.joanruddimanedd.com](http://www.joanruddimanedd.com) or on Facebook @JoanRuddimanEdD.

## Emotional Regulation

Children need explicit instruction to help them learn and label their emotions. While some intuitively pick up self-soothing strategies, other children benefit from being shown and encouraged to use methods and tools.

**Bored?** Clay is an easy on-the-go toy. Zip it up in a resealable bag. Bring two colors and see how long it takes to create a new hue!

**Angry?** First, assist the child in taking 3 deep breaths. Then demonstrate how to tighten and relax the hands\*. Offer a piece of sour or minty gum (kid's preference) and introduce the clay. Create something that reminds you of a happy memory. \*The progressive muscle relaxation is great for adults too!

**Excited?** Over-stimulated kids will self-soothe by creating a sole focus. Find your student a comfortable place to sit. Use the energy to create characters, creatures, nature! Use your imagination as the destination!

Help me chop up this Choco-bar, so that 3 friends can get a even-sized bite...

I still have one third of a cake... How can I cut it to give half to you?

Leftover pizza, yay! Let's enjoy this half of a pepperoni pizza. What is half of this half pizza?

I have one and a half cookies. How can I equally share this with you?