SWEET TALKER

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There's all kinds of candy afoot on that American holiday called Valentine's Day (today). The most famous, if not tastiest, might be those little sugar hearts with little sayings printed on them. The idea is almost as old as love itself: during the 1700's American colonists would scratch messages like "Be Mine" onto candy to give to their sweethearts. But in 1860 the New England Confectionery Company figured out how to print them with a machine, so now they could make zillions of them at once. NECCO still makes all the candy hearts today – 8 *billion* of them every year – using the same recipe and machines from over 100 years ago! That's a true sign that love is everlasting.

Wee ones: If you have 2 "Be Mine" hearts, 2 "I'm Sure" hearts, and 3 "Yes" hearts, how many candy hearts do you have?

Little kids: If you give out 15 candy hearts today and get 22 from other people, how many more do you have than you started with? *Bonus:* Unbelievably, it takes 11 months to make the 8 billion candy hearts needed today. If we count back from today, in what month did they start making them? (Hint: 12 months is exactly a year.)

Big kids: NECCO has to make 100,000 pounds of candy hearts every day to keep up. Including weekends and holidays, how many pounds did they make in November? *Bonus:* The machine rolls the dough into sheets, then cuts heart shapes out, in sets of 3 rows with what looks like 32 hearts in each row. How many hearts pop out of each 3-row set?