

Collaborative Books #1

Creating Books to Share

WHAT? Collaborative book writing refers to a shared writing activity in which adults work with students who use AAC and are emergent writers to compose books to be shared with others. These books might be shared:

- a) In classrooms;
- b) With family members;
- c) On public sites, such as Tarheel Reader (<https://tarheelreader.org>).

WHY CREATE COLLABORATIVE BOOKS? These books offer multiple purposes including:

- Demonstrating the connections between speaking (including using AAC systems), listening, reading, and writing;
- Modeling the writing process;
- Supporting students in exploring their AAC systems to add to books;
- Creating reading materials for the individual(s) composing the books;
- Sharing books with an audience, and getting feedback.

WHO IS THIS FOR? This activity is especially powerful for students who are emergent or early conventional writers, including students who use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC). This can be done one on one or with a group.

HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN: This is a very brief summary. Ideally, students will first have had experiences with predictable chart writing (see Erickson & Koppenhaver, 2020, Chapter 5 and Hall and Williams, 2001). This tip supports students with composing texts that are not limited to predictable chart books.

Select a Topic to Write About. Work with students to select topics. Topics can include:

- Student interests
- Current topics of study
- High frequency words or phrases that students are learning.

Collaborate. The following examples share how two books were composed for Tarheel Reader.

Class Book. Students in Mr. G's classroom were emergent to early conventional writers, who were learning the process of writing by completing simple books about a topic they chose – spring. As they worked on their books, Mr. G asked them to help him remember the steps of their writing process. They reviewed photos of the process and helped him add words to describe what they were doing.



[The Spring Book](#)

One-On-One Book. Evelyn and I were practicing pronoun phrases. Her communication system (LAMP Words for Life on a Prentke Romich/Salttillo Accent device with eyegaze) makes creating pronoun phrases very easy (when you select a pronoun, many possible collocations are shown). Evelyn chose the pronoun she, and picked first phrase, 'SHE NEEDS.' From that, she chose the topic of going on vacation (offered from 3 ideas, plus 'something different'). For each page, Ev started with 'SHE' then used eyegaze to select a word that goes with it. For example, she chose 'SHE HAS' then we asked her to complete that thought and she chose 'MONEY.' In some cases, more support was given. For example, after the next 'SHE NEEDS' Ev was uncertain, so we asked her if she wanted to go to clothing. YES. So, we chose the clothing page and she selected 'SHIRT.' Now we asked, "What kind of shirt?" She chose 'LITTLE' and laughed! The pages about a swimsuit and pants were created in a similar way, again with laughter about the describing words 'SKINNY' and 'MAGICAL. More support was given to a closing for the story ('She needs to stop spending.') But all of the key collocations (pronoun phrases) were initiated by Ev, plus all of the clothing choices and each describing word. So, while this story was collaborative, the 'writer's voice' is clearly hers!



Share. Sharing these books is a huge part of the fun – and the learning! Ideally, identify the audience in advance (peers in this class or another, family and friends, social media). This helps students think about their audience as they write. For example, Ev wrote the book 'She Needs a Vacation' thinking about teens who are learning to read. I have worked with middle schoolers writing for a preschool and adults who are writing for a specific kindergarten class. Sharing through Tarheel Reader is especially powerful, as you can send the link to anyone, and hundreds of thousands of students with disabilities will have access to each story!

Read and Enjoy! Don't forget to read these books, online, in print format, or as PDFs, on your computer or tablet!

References.

Erickson, K. & Koppenhaver, D. (2020). [*Comprehensive Literacy for All: Teaching learners with Significant Disabilities to Read and Write.*](#) Baltimore, MD. Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Hall, D. & Williams, E. (2001). [*Predictable Charts: Shared Writing for Kindergarten and First Grade.*](#) Greensboro, NC: Carson-Dellosa Publishing Company, Inc.