

# ART & LITERACY: Tips from the Trenches (Musselwhite, 2008)

## Art and Literacy Connections

Numerous authors have noted the extensive correlation between art and writing (see Musselwhite & King-DeBaun, chapter 5 for a review.) This tip will consider how to integrate literacy opportunities into simple art activities.

### 12 Texts A Day: Art Directions

Did you know . . . 'good kindergarten teachers' (nominated-effective teachers) read from at least 12 different texts a day!! (Pressley et al, 2001). This is often NOT true in self-contained special education classrooms.

One simple way to infuse text into the lives of students with significant disabilities is to provide written art instructions on a chart. This is especially helpful for art activities that are similar from week to week. Below is a sample visual support with text.

**Marble Painting**

Pick your creature. 

Pick your paint. 

Pour the paint in the box. 

Get \_\_\_\_\_ marbles. 

Put the marbles in the box. 

Roll the .

**Art**



### NOTES:

Language was simplified, with emphasis on high frequency words (your, get, the), and easily decodeable words (pick instead of choose). Nouns that are difficult to decode were symbolized. Font is comic sans, as it is a simple font with easy-to-read letters (a, g). Color coding was used for parts of speech. Students add the # and color symbols to the chart.

## Mini Case Example:

*Kellie is the teacher in a self-contained classroom for students with autism spectrum disorders. She does art activities 1-2 times per week, and finds that her students enjoy the activities, and the families enjoy the results. However, she has been concerned that, because her students don't process spoken information well, they don't really understand what is expected of them. Also, she feels that art would be a good time to infuse written instructions. Kellie plans 'marble art' often, because students get to choose item they want to paint, the # of marbles, and the colors. This week, the classroom is studying oceans, so Kellie has made cutouts (using large BoardMaker™ symbols) of a crab / shark / octopus, etc. Students get to choose a creature, using speech, a communication device, or a choice board. They then affix the creature onto the bottom of a box. Next, students pick paint, marbles, etc. At each step, the teacher or aide points to the words & symbols as she reads the instructions. "Hmmm, what's next. Pick . . . your . . . paint." For some students, the chart is perfect, as it helps them with the concept about print, showing them that we read left to right, then sweep and go to the next line. However, for one group, the amount of text is overwhelming. For that group, Kellie uses the cut-apart strips, shown below. At the end, the whole group used the set of strips to re-tell what they did.*

## Too Much Information??

Try 1-at-a-time!!

Marble Painting

Pick your creature.



Pick your paint



Pour the paint



in the box.

## Art Extensions

**Labeling:** Typically-developing students routinely label their drawings. Often, the teacher or aide provides the label for students with disabilities. This is a great opportunity to support students in using their writing strategies to label their drawings. Samples are described below:

### Print Alphabet Flip Chart:

*Ethan uses a manual wheelchair and is learning to use a communication device with 2-switch step scanning. He is learning to write using a light tech alphabet flip board (Write to Talk CD [www.aacintervention.com](http://www.aacintervention.com) or Alternative Pencils CD, Center for Literacy & Disability Studies). His aide assists him with partner-assisted scanning. His aide does a fingerpainting, then models using the flip board to label it. Then she gives Ethan a turn. Ethan chooses the letter D. His aide asks him to help her - dog? Davy? Dad? Ethan smiles and nods to indicate yes. She writes a large D on the drawing, then asks Ethan if she can add the word Dad in parentheses. He agrees happily.*

### Alternative Pencil:

### Print Alphabet Flip Chart

(From The Center for Literacy & Disability Studies,  
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC)



### Labeler:

*Mariana is an 8-year-old who enjoys art activities. She knows most of her letters, but writing is very laborious, and difficult to read. For this activity, she uses a simple labeler from an office supply store. She loves the independence, and the fact that her words (and word attempts) are so readable.*



### **Tongue Twisters:**

Tongue twisters are a great way to 'make consonants meaningful' (Hall & Cunningham, 2007). Many authors suggest fun strategies for using tongue twisters (Erickson & Juliebo, 1998; Musselwhite & King-DeBaun, 1997). One more way to integrate tongue twisters is as an extension of an art activity.

*Ms. Chu's classroom has just completed a marble art activity for ocean creatures. Her students have chosen to paint dolphins, sharks, crabs, and fish. Afterwards, students are given the chance to make quick tongue twisters about their products. Partners use multiple strategies to let students. Two students are able to use their communication devices - for example, Jenna goes to the dictionary page and looks for 'f' words. Talisha's aide writes two words on post-its, labels each, and lets her pick. The resulting twister is written on the artwork in a color of Talisha's choosing!*

fat

furry

## Resources & References

Ericson, L, & Juliebo, M. (1998). *The Phonological Awareness Handbook for Kindergarten and Primary Teachers*. The International Reading Association.  
<http://www.ira.org/>

Hall, D., & Cunningham, P. (2007). *Month-by-month Reading, Writing, and Phonics for Kindergarten: Systematic, Multilevel Instruction for Kindergarten*. Greensboro, NC: Carson-Dellosa.  
[www.carsondellosa.com](http://www.carsondellosa.com)

Musselwhite, C. & King-DeBaun, P. (1997). *Emergent Literacy Success: Merging technology and whole language for students with disabilities*. Park City, UT: Creative Communicating.

Pressley, M., Allington, R., Wharton-McDonald, Block, C., & Morrow, L. (2001). *Learning to Read: Lessons from Exemplary First-Grade Classrooms*. New York: Guilford Press.

See Also:

<http://www.turnthepage.com/>

(the official website for Bev Bos!)