

Low-Cost Adaptive Tools & Strategies for Visual Art Teachers

Tip Sheet Summary of Presentation by Kristin Mohan for the 2020 ABLA Assembly

Troubleshoot art-making roadblocks for students with disabilities, create free or low-cost adaptive tools, and leave with adaptive strategies and additional resources to explore.

Art teachers teach *everyone*--often in large classes and on a limited budget. We are adept in-the-moment innovators, adapting our strategies to meet the needs of every student as they grow and evolve. This presentation and tip sheet will expand your “tool kit” of adaptive tools and strategies to support students with disabilities.

Please see the presentation slides for images of all tools and strategies described here.

LOW-COST ADAPTIVE TOOLS & STRATEGIES: **Improving Access to Meaningful Art-Making for All**

Handles & Grips- Adapt the shape & size to support individual needs and preferences.

- **Tennis balls** widen and soften a grip.
- **Milk jug handles** hold art-making utensils while offering a variety of secure grips.
- **Model Magic** can be used to create customized grips.
 - This is best for a student with their own set of materials.
- **Store-bought rubber pencil grips** provide a variety of grip options for small utensils.

Stabilizers- Anchor materials to ensure independent & appropriate access..

- **No-slip shelf paper/liner** can be placed on a tabletop as a stabilizing base for other materials.
- **Spring clamps** ensure no-slip surfaces, paper, or other flat materials stay on the art-making surface.

- **Fast food/grocery drink trays** hold multiple cups, tools, and/or materials. A great painting material stabilizer!
- **Velcro** can be used to attach a tray, paint/water cup, etc. to a tabletop.
- **A homemade easel** can be constructed for ~\$15 using four thin 18” pieces of pine, a bolt and wingnut, two short nails, and 12-18” of chain.

Art Making Materials- Reimagine processes that create roadblocks.

- **DIY wide-based crayons** can be made by removing paper from crayon scraps and melting them at a low temperature. You can find instructions for this process online.
- **Tempera paint cakes** make color contamination easy to clean up. Simply wipe the paint off the top.
- **A glue sponge** makes applying just enough glue easier. Students can tap glue onto their material directly or use their finger as an applicator.
- **Bingo dabbers** allow for color application with a simple motion and repetition.
- **Nitrile or rubber gloves** create a barrier to encourage students with tactile sensitivity to interact with wet, cool, or sticky materials.
- **Ziploc bags** create a barrier to encourage students with tactile sensitivity to interact with wet, cool, or sticky materials. Students can mix paint or interact with clay through the sealed bag.

Visual & Communication Supports

- **Visual schedules with Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) images** should be created with PECS images the student is familiar with, providing an appropriate number of images at a time. Visual schedules set expectations for how students will spend their class time while promoting independent task/schedule management.
 - Laminate visual schedule template and images with a portable laminator, cut them out, and attach them to a template with velcro.
- **Visual reinforcement of time limits**, such as a web timer or Time Timer© supports independent pacing.
- **Simple “Yes/No” and “I like it, I am not sure, I dislike it”, and “I Feel” visuals** promote choice and expression.
- **Documenting your instruction through photo stills or video recording** allows for

review and supports students working to complete a task on an adjusted timeline.

Make Abstract Concepts Concrete

- **Provide examples that evoke the senses**, translating concepts into actions, postures, proximity, textures, images, etc.

TIPS & RESOURCES

- **Communicate with your students directly.** They are the experts!
- **Consult your school or district-designated occupational therapist (OT) and your colleagues in special education.**
- **Join Art Education Groups Online.**
 - Special Needs in Art Education (SNAE) Interest Group–
Join the Facebook Group: <http://bit.ly/SNAEfbpage> and view their adaptive tool favorites
 - Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Division of Visual and Performing Arts (DARTS)--Join the Facebook Group: <http://bit.ly/CECfbpage>
- **Follow fellow art educators and search these hashtags on Instagram:**
 - #adaptiveart
 - #adaptedart
- **Collaborate with your professional learning community (PLC) to make adaptive tool and strategy kits.**

Questions? Email Me!

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