

Design your Art Program to Say YES to the MESS!

RATIONALE AND RESPONSIBILITY:

In our current electronic media-centric school environments, students have less opportunity than ever before to engage in hands-on activities. Portable media and assorted other electronic devices have taken precedence over the use of manipulative materials in the daily structure of learning activities. Even art education has often become media-centric. In addition, outside of the school environment, kids are spending more time with portable electronic devices and video games, and are therefore spend free time engaged in tactile and manipulative play.

Because of this, I believe it is more important than ever before that art programs for kids be designed to provide rich and regular opportunities for the tactile and kinesthetic experiences that students are otherwise lacking. In fact, I believe it is **our responsibility** as visual arts educators to design and organize our programs to provide these tactile/manipulative experiences for our students, despite the myriad of challenges often posed by challenging teaching environments and schedules.

⇒ *No Complaints; No Excuses – Instead, Find Solutions* ⇐

DAILY SCHEDULING, CURRICULUM CHOREOGRAPHY, ORGANIZATION *and* CLEANUP

DAILY SCHEDULING and CURRICULUM CHOREOGRAPHY

- Be proactive – if possible volunteer to help with schedule design. Document clearly what works best – for example, scheduling classes of the same grade level in sequence, transition time between classes, and offer reasons why it will benefit of other teachers/staff.
- Plan how you arrange your curriculum to maximize use of classroom storage and drying space, and minimize overload. Having all grade levels using one media may seem like a great idea and easy to prep for, but perhaps that will stress your stress your storage and drying space. Often it's better to alternate who is using wet/dry/3-D materials.

⇒ *Making Cleanup Easy* ⇐

PAINTING PROCEDURES *for* EASY CLEANUP

- Before you paint: The secret of The Frame: Best trick EVER!
 - Keeps tables cleaner
 - Gives unpainted 'handles' for easier painting transport to drying location
 - Keeps paintings from rolling
 - Provides a lovely frame to decorate or leave blank
- Table covering or placemats, versus table washing; pros and cons

- Paint distribution ideas and storage
 - Central paint distribution
 - Limited color distribution
 - Kids move, paints stay
- Paint palettes for mixing colors – magazine pages, TV dinner trays, plastic palettes
- The Ugly Sponge and the Three W's (Wipe, Wash, Wipe); clean paintbrushes = clean water
- Pouring and storing – disposable versus re-usable
- Paintbrush cleanup at end of class
- Alternative (and often disposable) painting tools – Q-tips, cardboard scraps, small sponge squares on clothespin handles, pencil erasers.
- Do you use paint pumps? Use pencil toppers to keep pumps from clogging

PAPIER-MÂCHÉ PROCEDURES *for* EASY CLEANUP

- Dip your fingertips in the 'goo', NOT the paper strips! Prevents goeey drippy messes; promotes faster dry time.
- Cover tables completely with newspaper; roll up the mess at the end of art time.
- Store papier-mâché goo (mixed Art Paste) in large margarine/ Cool Whip tubs; use directly from the tubs. Cover and put away at end of class. No cleanup needed.
- Have students write their names on a slip of paper to stick on project at end of class prior to cleanup. Leave name tags on a counter or clean location.
- Hand cleanup is fastest with sponges, either in sink, or in a bucket/bowl of water.

PLASTER BANDAGE PROCEDURES *for* EASY CLEANUP

- Designate and separate tools & materials only for plaster bandage: old scissors, water tubs (margarine/Cool Whip containers), and plastic TV dinner dishes, and store separately (in a box, on a tray, or whatever works for you).
- Cover tables completely prior to beginning work.
- Cut plaster strips and place in TV dinner dishes in center of work area; this will prevent unused strips from getting dripped on and ruined.
- Place water containers of warm water closer to students.
- At end of work time, gently pour off all water, but do NOT rinse or wash bowls. Return bowls, dishes, and water containers to designated storage area. Have a large container to collect unused cut plaster bandage.
- Gently roll table coverings from outside to inside, containing all plaster dust inside. Discard.
- If necessary, dust the plaster dust from tables.
- Bonus: kids will appreciate it if your designated storage area also has a container of hand cream.

OTHER POTENTIALLY MESSY MATERIALS

- Collage, weaving, yarn, fibers, etc; anything that involves use of multiple materials
 - Individual Ziploc bags to store yarn, papers, beads, and so on, for work-in progress.
 - Centrally locate materials for easy access; consider how students select what they need.
 - Set limits to how much a student can take at a time.
- Oil pastels – cover work areas to keep clean, and clean up any messes (including hands) with baby wipes, or cloths dipped in baby oil.
- Charcoal and chalk pastels – cover tables with something disposable, to roll inward and discard; NO blowing of chalk dust tolerated. Take paper to garbage to gently shake off excess dust. Have baby wipes or hand-wash stations (soapy water bucket/bowl with rags) ready.
- Elmer's Glue-All
 - One solution (not mine) is the 'glue sponge'.
 - A dot's a lot?
 - Table covering versus table washing

⇒ *Bonus: Sometimes you have to 'let it go' and make a mess!* ⇐

- **MESSY FUN #1: Non-objective pastel chalks on wet bogus paper**
 - Soak bogus paper in sink prior to student arrival.
 - Demo briefly.
 - Students write name on wet paper, then flip over directly on table.
 - Color completely with chalk pastels, drawing on the wet paper, using black last.
 - Use musical motivation; perhaps for Kandinsky-inspired 'improvisations'.
 - In next art class, coat with Mod Podge or similar acrylic gloss, painting over one color at a time beginning with black to avoid smearing of colors.
- **MESSY FUN #2: Marbling with shaving cream and liquid watercolors**
 - Squirt shaving cream directly on table within taped frame; smooth with cardboard scrap.
 - Dot surface with liquid watercolors and marble gently with a plastic fork.
 - Place paper (name side up) onto shaving cream.
 - Remove paper; and squeegee off shaving cream with cardboard scrap.
 - All cardboard scraps go right into garbage.
 - Squeegee shaving cream off table at end of class; use leftover residue to clean table.
- **MESSY FUN #3: Shredded paper papier-mâché clay**
 - Pour some hot water into bag of paper from a paper shredder, and soak overnight to soften.
 - Pour in a batch of mixed Art Paste, and some Elmer's Glue-All; use hands to mix well.
 - Give hunks to kids to knead, and have them make into pancakes to become hunks of 'cave wall'. Insert paper clip into wet pancake to make hanging loop.
Or use it to repair broken papier-mâché parts. Or come up with other ideas! It is like cement!
- **MESSY FUN #4: And of course, Jackson Pollock-style collaborative paintings.** Good luck....