

WRITING: Writing for Tarheel Reader

WRITING: Writing Stories for Tarheel Reader (Musselwhite, 2011)

WHAT

Tarheel Reader is an amazing, accessible website with over 20,000 books easy books that can be read aloud at the site or downloaded for later reading, or to send home with students. You can set up your favorites, as shown below.

Which book would you like to read?



Stinky Armpits



Alex's Dinosaur



New York City



Our Field Trips



Tattoos



Mr. Potato-head's Big Adventure!

An important part of this website is that teachers, therapists, and others can write books for or with students with disabilities. The link to this website is: www.tarheelreader.org

Writing Books With Students Who Have Disabilities

This tip will cover tips for writing books **with** students who have disabilities. The website provides suggestions for writing books. They give a link to the Beginning Literacy Framework by Erickson, Musselwhite, and Ziolkowski. Please take time to download and read that framework **before** beginning the writing process. That will support your students in writing books that are useful for other students with disabilities. You will need to register at the website **before** beginning to write. Please be sure to do that, to avoid frustration!



The Beginning Literacy Framework™

Helping Educators:

- identify, create and modify text for beginning readers
- meet literacy goals of students with significant disabilities in their earliest stages of literacy

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Tips for Writing Tarheel Reader Stories

How-to tips are provided at the Tarheel Reader website when you write your book. The tips in this document are about ensuring that the **process** of writing the books is as successful as the **product** - the finished book!

Plan ahead: Materials Needed

Materials needed will depend on your classroom. Here are materials that we have found useful:

- **Interactive Whiteboard:** Permits all students to see the book as it is created
- **Communication Devices:** Be sure that all devices are charged and ready
- **Light Tech Communication Displays:** For some classrooms, it will be helpful or even necessary to have access to light tech displays for students who do not have devices with sufficient language
- **Access to the Alphabet:** ALL students must have access to the alphabet, whether by writing, using a portable keyboard, communication device, or a light tech alphabet such as the Alpha Board or an alternative pencil (Hanser, 2009).
- **Write On Whiteboards:** Whiteboards and markers are extremely helpful for students who have the ability to write

Plan Ahead: Think of Text Features

Certain sets of pictures can lead to supporting text features such as:

- **Predictability:** For one story, we used the predictable carrier phrases, He is or They are
- **Rhyming:** Rhyming does not need to be added in all stories. However, it is one feature that supports emergent literacy. We were able to use rhyming for our story, *Lions in Action* in the form of sitting / hitting; smelling / yelling. We had pre-selected a number of pictures that might lead to developing rhyming. When students chose words that rhymed, we commented on that with great excitement.
- **Repetition:** Consider repeating phrases, or having an engaging repeated line for your story, to enhance practice.

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Plan ahead: Student Goals

Think ahead regarding goals for each student during the writing process. For example, during a recent story writing session with middle schoolers in a self-contained classroom, we targeted a range of goals, in writing the Tarheel Reader story, *Lions In Action*. The chart on the following page shows strategies for 5 students in the group (names changed), communication systems for whole words or phrases, and alphabet access, plus goals for each student.

Lions in Action
Mrs. James Class and Caroline Musselwhite
9 pages



Student	Communication	Alphabet Access	Goals
Ashley	Eco with Head Mouse	Alphabet page on Eco	He is / They are (2 hits) Spelling initial letters of actions (smelling, etc)
Ellen	Vantage Lite direct select	Alphabet page on Vantage	Review He is / They are Add ing to verbs
Deliah	Verbal	Whiteboard with marker	Spelling all verbs, using AlphaBoard if needed Learning 'ing' rule
Julie	Verbal	Whiteboard with marker	Writing initial letters for all words, using AlphaBoard
Robbie	Vantae Lite Direct select	Alphabet page on Vantage	He is / They are (2 hits) Spelling first letter for verbs
Penny	Light tech displays	Alphabet Flip Board from Hanser's alt pencils	Looking for actions to add to story (on LT displays) Finding initial letter for words, from flip alphabet

Resources & References

Hanser, G. (2009). *Writing with Alternative Pencils: A CD*. This CD is available from the Center for Literacy and Disability Studies. It includes over 30 alternative pencils, from eye gaze to print flip charts to onscreen switch keyboards to custom IntelliKeys overlays.

<http://www.med.unc.edu/ahs/clds/available-for-purchase-1/available-for-purchase>