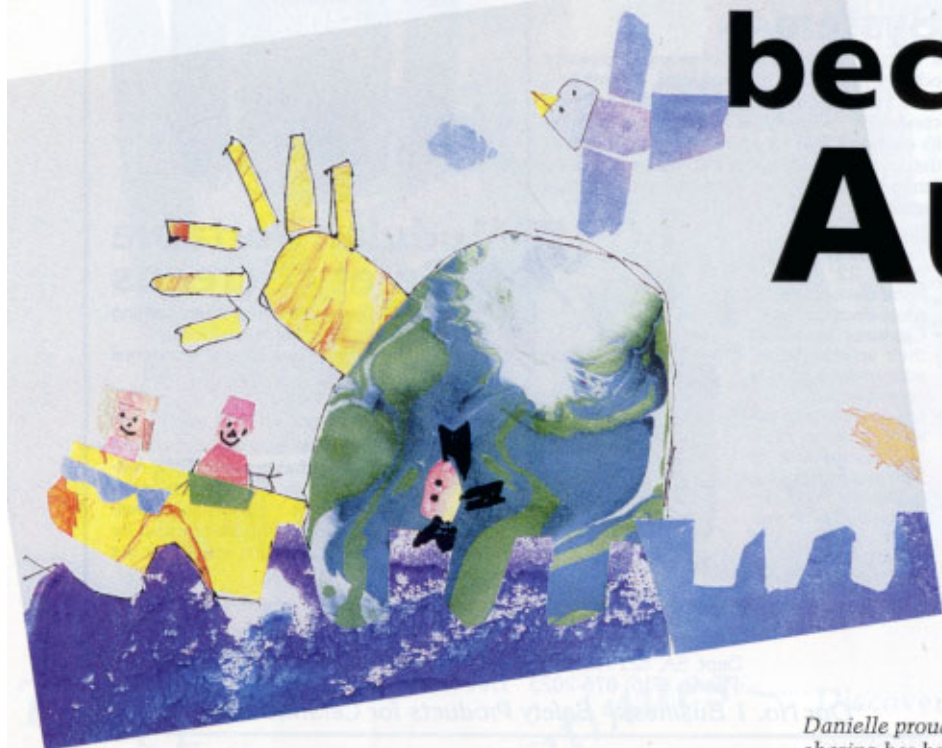
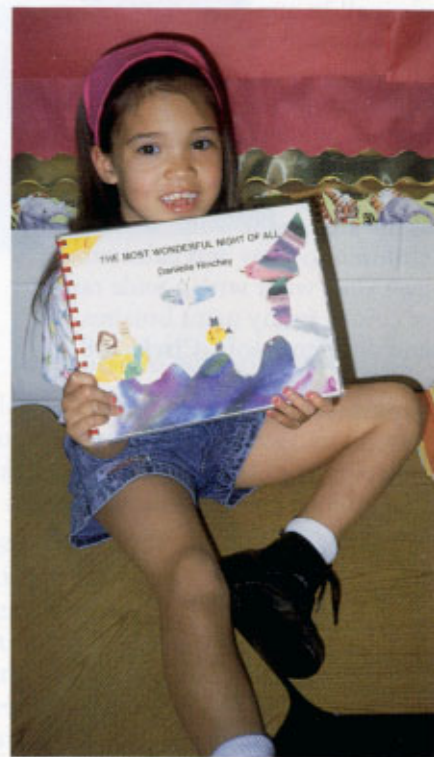


# When children become Author/



"Once there was a tall old hill. And there was a sun that always set behind the hill whenever me and my Dad came in our boat. I don't know why." Excerpt from "The Most Wonderful Night of All" by Danielle Hinchey, grade one, Stratham Memorial School.

Danielle proudly sharing her book with classmates.



"Y our stories are hidden inside your textured papers. It is your job as author/illustrators to discover them." As I share these final words, the eyes of the twenty-two children gathered around me grow wide. As if they cannot wait another minute, they flock to the plastic crate at the other end of the classroom to claim their portfolios of hand-painted textured papers. In a flurry of activity, the children eagerly spread out their papers on the floor for viewing.

Soon the classroom is transformed, carpeted with hundreds of colorful children's paintings. Now twenty-two children sit perched, each at the edge of their own patchwork carpet, their eyes transfixed by the many colors and textures, rhythms and designs of the papers they have created. Like the magic carpets in

tales of days gone by, these patchwork creations hold within them the mystical power to take each child to lands far away.

### Discovering the Story

Six-year-old Danielle's deep brown eyes wind their way through the colors and textures of her own lush carpet of hand-painted papers. Soon she finds herself in "the most wonderful night of all" inspired by the "swirling sunset" in her pink and purple marbled paper. Greg, a second grader, quickly meets face to face with a large magenta jellyfish that he discovers in the marbled paper he forgot to comb. The jellyfish has "purple dots that shoot out ink into the bottom of the sea." These are just the beginning...the seeds that children discover as they sail into the depths of their imagination.

Image-Making within the Writing Process is an innovative writing program that integrates visual imagery with the writing process. Originally developed as an illustrating component to a writing project, this program has grown in both vision and practice to honor the unique creative process of each young author/illustrator.

In this program, words and pictures are equally valued, and individual learning styles are respected—children are given license to create their stories in whatever way makes sense to them. This could mean making pictures first, writing words first, or weaving back and forth between the two. Interestingly, most children

# Illustrators



*"It was sunset. The sky was like a pink and purple rainbow, puffy like pancakes. It was a breezy night." Excerpt from "The Most Wonderful Night of All" by Danielle Hinchey, grade one, Stratham Memorial School.*

(even in the upper grades) choose to begin the process with a visual image. Fifth grader Amanda shares her experience: "At first I began by writing my words first like I usually do. But once I started making my collage pictures, I got lots more good ideas and my story kept changing. I realized that my story would be much better if I made all my pictures first."

## **A Pathway to Writing**

Differing from a traditional verbal approach to writing, Image-Making within the Writing Process gives children access to visual and kinesthetic modes of thinking. Through these alternate modes, the process provides an enticing pathway into writing for children with a variety of learning styles. The only thing

that remains constant is the vital role that visual imagery plays in their writing process.

Danielle, a first grader, chooses to begin by making her image first. Carefully setting aside her pink and purple sunset paper, she cuts the shape of a tall hill out of her green marbled paper and glues it onto a white page. She cuts an elongated sun shape from her yellow marbled paper, peels back the top of the hill and tucks her sun in behind it. "The sun is going down, behind the hill... it's going to sleep," she explains. Danielle's reason for creating the sun and hill first becomes apparent when she refers to her pink marbled paper which has become page two of her story.

"This is the most wonderful night of all," she shares again as her hand brushes across her paper. Aware of the swishing motion of her own

hand, she adds, "It is a breezy night. The sun is setting. The sky is all pink." It is apparent that in choosing to make the sun and hill first, Danielle is creating a pictorial preface to her story, providing the reader with a strong sense of beginning.

It is clear from watching Danielle's process that thinking through her ideas visually is essential to the writing of her story—she chooses to begin with pictures, she easily envisions her story, she takes care in designing the details of her collage images, her kinesthetic sense is awakened as she interacts with her papers.

After she has completed her first two collage images and has orally rehearsed the narrative several times, Danielle begins the arduous task of transcribing her story. Her written

## What is

### Image-Making within the Writing Process?

This innovative writing program integrates visual imagery throughout the various stages of the writing process. Students create collage books, and through a series of lessons that focus on the role of words and images in picture books, they discover that pictures can tell stories and words can paint pictures. They come to understand how words and pictures work together to tell the whole story. As a result, visual and verbal modes of thinking are equally valued.

Because the program recognizes children's diverse learning styles, they are not asked to complete their task in a certain order, but are given license to follow their own creative process. This offers them an opportunity to enter writing from a position of personal strength and enthusiasm.

The image-making process begins with the study of texture, and the study of the work of several popular collage author/illustrators such as Leo Lionni and Ezra Jack Keats. Following a discussion of illustration techniques used by the professionals, children begin a series of explorations to create their own textured papers. They are encouraged to explore a variety of techniques, including marbleizing, plastic-wrap printing, bubble printing, Plexiglas printing, watercolor on wet paper, watercolor and salt, sponge printing, splatter painting and straw painting. Over the course of two or three sessions, they rotate through a variety of stations ultimately creating about two dozen papers.

The children's papers are placed in individual portfolios and are used to awaken their imagination through free association. The children weave oral stories from the threads of ideas discovered within their textured papers.

Once the collages are complete, children learn to "read" their images, drawing detail and descriptive language from the colors, textures, rhythms and designs of their images. Whether image-reading occurs during the initial draft or the revision process, children's collage images offer tangible maps of each story idea.

To prepare these stories for "publication," children must edit their stories, and go through the final step of matching pictures and words. This step provides a last opportunity to recheck the stories for content, organization, sequencing, punctuation and grammar.

Story texts are typed by parent volunteers, then glued to the back of the collage. The books are spiral-bound with clear plastic covers, or they are laminated first, then bound. At Author/Illustrator's Celebration, each child has the opportunity to share the fruits of his or her labor.



*Chelsea pulling an uncombed marbled paper from the marbleizing tray.*

Ross' mind was full of ideas, he was having difficulty creating a bridge between his ideas and the blank piece of paper before him. When asked to share his story idea, his eyes lit up. He picked up a blue marbled paper.

"I think I found something," he said, bringing the paper just inches away from his face, "a thing with two eyes and a mouth." After staring into the goading face of his discovered creature, Ross grins, "I know what my story is called: 'Do You Know What an Animal Is?'" He elaborates: "I'm gonna try to find all kinds of strange things to be animals. The animals that do exist, don't exist... the strange animals are the real ones."

As Ross shares his ideas, he picks a plastic-wrap print and begins cutting around a second discovered creature. "It's a Frost Cackelor. He's ferocious. He doesn't like being disturbed while he's making his ice. He spits out ice from his mouth after he swishes water inside his mouth. Inside his mouth is very, very cold." Picking up a textured paper created by blowing paint through a straw, Ross points to a few spindly shapes, "Here's some Spider Walkers. They come in different shapes and sizes."

Grappling with their unique postures as he turns the page at different angles, he announces, "They can walk, fly or swim...and here's a Paint Plucker (pointing to a splatter painting). It spits out paint. It's a

words come painfully slow. Like many first graders, she struggles to sound out each letter of each word as she labors to put her thoughts down. Fortunately, her ideas are firmly secured to her paper in the collage images she has created. As she writes, she keeps her pictures close at hand, referring to them often to remind her of her thoughts.

### Every Child is Different

We need only observe Ross to understand the vital role that visual imagery can play in children's ability to create and give shape to story ideas. On the first day, after Ross looked at his textured papers, he looked lost and forlorn as he hung on the back of his chair watching the other children plunge immediately into story-making. Although

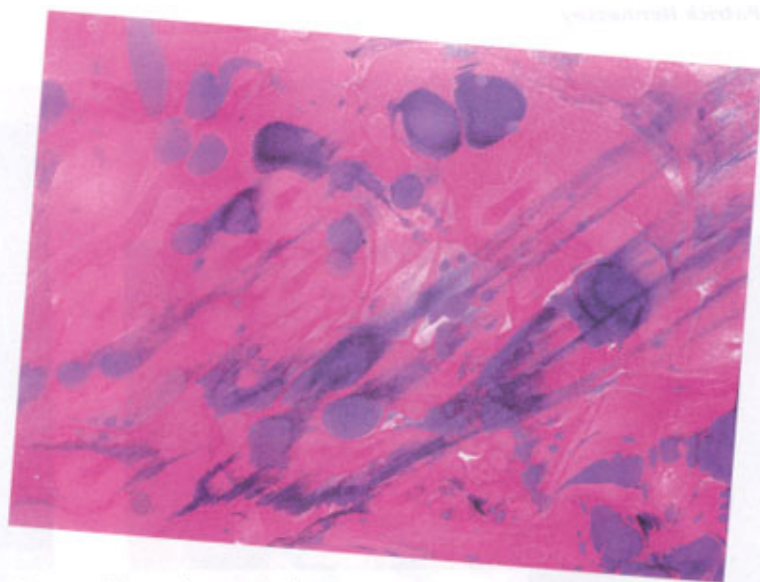
kind of animal artist. It likes splattering paint and it uses its tail to form the paint into pictures. Sometimes it paints on animals to camouflage them and it can turn itself into different colors by squirting paint all over itself. At the end, I'm gonna have the Paint Plucker camouflage all the strange animals so no one can see them." His eyes twinkle, "People will only see regular animals!"

Whether children readily share thoughts aloud in a stream of consciousness, or sit silently rehearsing their stories, it is clear that the image-making process offers children the stimulation of rich visual input as well as the visual, tactile and kinesthetic experience of building their stories out of collage images. This visual and kinesthetic mode of thinking, coupled with the lengthy rehearsal time the process provides, makes writing not only accessible to children, but also totally engaging. Because the children have the opportunity to discover and rehearse their story ideas through alternate modes of thinking, when they choose to put words on paper, they are no longer working with a typical first draft. They have rehearsed, developed and revised their stories in their minds, before their pencils begin to scratch the surface of their writing paper.

### The Plot Thickens

The integration of visual imagery into the writing process does not end here. Once the collage images and text are complete, children are taught how to "read" their images. They learn how to use the colors, textures, rhythms and shapes as a springboard for eliciting detail and descriptive language.

From observing this rich process, it is not surprising that recent findings from a two-year study through the Laboratory for Interactive Learning at the University of New Hampshire have documented that students of the image-making process exhibit dramatic improvement in writing abilities, particularly in areas of plot development, descriptive language and imagination. Nor is it surprising that research has documented that



*"It seems like we're caught in a meteor shower. I go outside. Huge rocks like pumpkins hit me from all sides. It's raining rocks."*

these children gain fuller power of expression through the lively interaction between visual imagery and the written word.

Statistical analysis aside, the outstanding books created by these youngsters speak for themselves. As first grader Melissa exclaimed upon seeing her finished collage book for the first time, "I can't believe that a child actually made this book!" ▲

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*Bryan in the midst of creating a bubble print.*



*"Then a tornado appears! It rocks around in circles through the clouds. Then it disappears!"*