

A List of Wonderful (and Affordable) Art Materials for Schools

*Recommended by Teaching Artist Peggy Dills Kelter, and endorsed by
Teaching Artists Shelley Toon Hight and Sheila Ford Richmond*

Papers:

12" x 18" Construction Paper in black and white – Don't purchase any paper that contains "ground wood pulp." Look for the word "sulphite." It may not be good in wine, but it's good in inexpensive paper! This paper is great for printing!

18" x 24" Drawing paper – Purchase 60# or 80# paper for all painting projects except painted papers, where 50# is adequate. Once again, the word to remember in inexpensive drawing paper is "sulphite".

Tableau-This paper can be used like rice paper, but it's quite a bit less expensive. Made of hemp, it's also incredibly durable. Great for special collage projects.

Charcoal/pastel paper—Nasco sells a pretty good paper for an inexpensive price (19" x 25"). Make sure to buy the *heavyweight* if you plan to do any mixed media work.

Butcher paper—Insist that your school spend a bit more money for the best quality black and white butcher paper. It won't ball up, tear, or fall apart when painting on it.

Tyvek- My friends swear by this material, available for a song at local lumber yards. Great for big mural projects. Especially suited to acrylics.

***Tag Board**—Art educator Sandy Brooke highly recommends painting on white tag board. It won't buckle nearly as much as construction paper.

Brushes:

I could write an entire dissertation about good schools and bad brushes. Good brushes are too expensive for school budgets. However, here are a few tips when purchasing brushes:

***1/2" flat bristle** brushes are the workhorse of the classroom, so spend enough to get some that will last the year without disengaging from the handles. My set of Nasco "Pro-formance" sign fitches have held up quite well. If you have the money, spend it on better ones with ferules that won't wobble.

***Wash brushes** (also called "Rounds")—If possible, purchase these in addition to the above. Make sure to buy brushes that come to a nice point, not a clumsy blob. Use

these when using transparent paints or work that demands detail. A #8 or #10 is a good general size.

***Large brushes**—If you need to use larger brushes (over 1” wide) go to the hardware store. They’re much cheaper and perfectly adequate for painting large areas.

Paints:

***Tempera**—Buy only premixed tempera, not those horrid powders from our childhood! I usually use Artista II, although the company has recently been purchased by Crayola and the quality seems to have deteriorated some (filler and soap added; pigment reduced in the process). ***Make sure to have Turquoise, Yellow, Magenta, Black and White.** These are all the colors needed and they will encourage the students to mix colors!! If your budget allows, add red, brown, and blue to round out your palette. Pint bottles are probably best. The recycler in me wants to purchase gallons; the practical person reminds me the big jugs are a pain, and the paint usually dries out before it gets used up.

I’ve also experimented with Prang tempera paints, and think the colors are glorious. However, they are a bit more expensive than the Artista II paints. Once again, purchase the same colors as above.

Watercolors—If you can afford them, buy tubes of Grumbacher student grade watercolors. Once again, the primaries and black will suffice, although brown is a lovely addition. No need to get white. If you do buy these, you’ll also need those handy little white plastic palettes with individual vessels for mixing colors.

Liquid Watercolor – Best product is Sargent Watercolor Magic in **Turquoise, Yellow, Magenta, Black.**

If you can’t afford tube watercolors, make your own cake watercolors before spending money on those little sets of cake watercolors. Simply squeeze out small blobs of tempera on a Styrofoam plate and let sit until completely dry. They really work quite well for the budget minded watercolorist. Rinse them off after a painting session, and you can often reuse on another project. As an alternative, paint squares of drawing paper with thick tempera. Let dry. Simply wet a brush and pick up some of the dried paint on your brush, as you would use pans of watercolor.

Another cheap alternative to watercolor is to paint large pieces of tagboard with thick tempera. Let the boards dry, then cut into 3” x 3” squares. The kids wet these just as they would cake watercolors. They work magnificently, and there is no waste or clean-up. I call them “Magic Papers.” Great for working with primary, although I’ve used them with all ages.

Acrylics—If you can afford some, do include a few tubes. Good brands are Galeria, Windsor & Newton and Golden, although other brands seem fine too. I use them mixed with matte medium for wonderful glazing and collage effects.

Printmaking Supplies:

Printmaking is a great medium to work in with kids. The possibilities are endless. Here's what you'll need:

Scratch Foam—It looks like a meat tray, but it's flat and smooth. This fun material is easy to use, and much less bloody than the linoleum of our childhoods. Simply use a pencil to "carve" out your design. You can cut it easily with scissors or on a paper cutter. The scraps can be glued onto recycled cardboard to make still more plates.

Inks—You can use tempera, but Speedball water soluble printing inks work much better. I really like white ink on darker colored construction paper. The results are quite beautiful. When purchasing primary colors, buy yellow, magenta and blue (not turquoise – it's too green).

Brayers—A few good quality hand brayers will take care of a whole class. Once again, Speedball makes a good product. Look for the words "soft rubber" when purchasing brayers. A 4" size works for most projects.

Rubbing Sticks—Wonderful, inexpensive plastic tools for helping kids get good, dark prints. Highly recommended.

Plexiglass—Get a few scraps from the local glass store to use for rolling out ink. They're smooth, and they wash up quickly. They should be at least 8" square.

Plasticine Clay—Also called modeling clay, this is a great medium for making simple stamps. Really good for younger artists.

Safety-Kut—This incredible product goes by lots of brand names. Essentially, it's a large piece of white eraser, as smooth as butter. Using simple linoleum cutting tools, your students can make their own wonderful rubber stamps. Not as inexpensive as Scratch Foam, but definitely worth the investment. One sheet goes a long way.

Rubber Stamps—Don't discount pre-made rubber stamps as a wonderful artistic medium. There's so much you can do with them, including impressing clay with stamped images, mixing up different stamps to make new and original designs, etc. I think purchasing a rubber stamp alphabet should be a requirement of all teachers. They are so fun, and lead to lots of spontaneous poetry and delightful wordplay.

Createx Monoprint Water-based Colors—This medium is great for doing monoprints. Once again, Sheila Ford Richmond is a great source for teaching printmaking using this material with Arches 88 pre-wet paper.

Drawing Materials:

* **Pencils**—Drawing pencils are different than the ones your kids bring to school. If possible, buy a set of Design drawing pencils in a medium weight (HB.) Sanford Draughting Pencils are another good choice, somewhat softer than the Design pencils.

Pens—Pentel Sign Pens are a great workhorse pen. They're cheap, they're permanent (essential when doing mixed media) and they don't mush down. Sharpies work well too, but the smell may bother some children.

Erasers—I recommend two kinds: Staedtler Mars plastic erasers are great for major messes, far superior to Pink Pearls. For an eraser that you can also use as a drawing tool (lifting out color for highlights, etc.) kneaded rubber erasers can't be beat. You have to teach your students how to use these – they're forever pretending they're either clay for modeling, or projectiles for firing.

Charcoal—A package of vine charcoal, medium weight is a great addition to your art supplies. Kids can draw with this, and eraser by simply brushing away with a rag or a hand. It frees kids up when drawing.

* **Oil Pastels**—One word ways it all. Craypas. Sakura's product is far superior to all the other comparably priced oil pastels. The colors are better, the pastels consistently smooth. A 12-color pack provides plenty of colors for mixing.

Chalk Pastels—Prang Pastellos seem to be the best on the market for the price. The colors are nice, and the chalks neither too soft nor too hard.

Colored Pencils—I'm a colored pencil snob. I think all the bargain brands are terrible. Spend the money and buy a set of Berol Prismacolors. The difference in quality is remarkable.

Miscellaneous Supplies:

Glue—I am totally sold on UHU glue sticks (yellow barrel, purple stick inside). These are so much higher quality than any other comparable glue stick. They last quite a while, and the purple coloring helps kids see where they put down the glue.

If you need to use white glue, Elmer's (but **not** Elmer's school glue) reigns supreme in my mind. If you can afford it, make sure to buy some acrylic matte medium for gluing collages. It's a wonderful material. Apply with a brush and apply pressure to dry.

Tap N' Glue tops are a great addition to primary classrooms. They replace the regular white glue tops. When pressed, they distribute the perfect-sized drop of glue. No more puddles!

***Low-Tack Painter's Tape** – This tape is great for masking off edges when using charcoal or water colors. The tape creates a clean, crisp white frame on the paper.

For painting, go to your local food supplier and buy a package of plastic portion cups with lids. You can squirt paint into them, then cover after a painting session. Much less wasteful, and easy for clean-up.

Always have a bag of rags handy for painting, pastels, etc. I think towels or old t-shirts work best.

Recommended Suppliers:

***Bella's Beads** – 541-386-1446 This is a local store located in Hood River at 1235 State Street. Michelle Bell, the owner, would love to work with the schools.

Nasco is a good catalog, but be sure to call them and find out how to set up a “freight free” account. If I fax in orders, get a quote back, and then place my order, I don't pay freight. Since the freight can add 15% to your order this is worth the extra step. The number is (800) 558-9595 ext.111

Dick Blick is also a good supplier. Once again be wary of freight.

Daniel Smith is a wonderful mail order catalog for fine art supplies. Their prices are good, but the freight charges are often high. (800)426-6740.

Art Media offers all educators a 10% discount anytime you buy materials. Plus, 3 or 4 times a year they have 25% off sales, and extend the sale at a 20% savings rate for educators until the end of the sale month (various locations throughout Portland). Their toll-free number is (800) 990-3364.

Utrecht Art Supplies, in The Pearl in Portland – have public school discounts. 503-417-8024

C2Fn also good prices, in Beaverton (503) 643-9050

Your Additional Notes: