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# Producing Memorable Cloth-Bound Books in the Classroom

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## Producing Memorable Cloth-bound Books

by

Karin J. Keith, Amy Horton, Abby Roach, Jamie Milam, and  
Edward J. Dwyer

### Abstract

*The authors propose that producing attractive cloth-bound books in the language arts classroom is an enjoyable, academically sound, and memorable experience for both students and teachers. Detailed instructions provide guidance for producing books for a variety of purposes. The book can be useful in a variety of learning environments. In addition the instruction can provide an enjoyable and productive experience in reading procedural text.*

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### Why Make Cloth-bound Books?

Gardner (2004) powerfully demonstrated the need for involving as many modes of intelligence as can be integrated into the learning environment, and persuasively challenged the long held contention that “intelligence is a single entity and people are born with a certain amount of intelligence” (p. 29). Gardner further contended that it is essential that educators/leaders, through engaging positive intervention, actually enhance intelligence. Reading and producing visual representations related

*Reading and producing visual representations related to reading, in light of Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences, especially encourages linguistic intelligence, “facility in the use of spoken and written language” (p. 31).*

to reading, in light of Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences, especially encourages linguistic intelligence, “facility in the use of spoken and written language” (p. 31). Spatial intelligence and the personal intelligences, intrapersonal and interpersonal, described by Gardner are also engagingly facilitated through strategies involved in producing the cloth-bound books described herein. In addition, Gardner described “naturalist intelligence” (p. 36) as intrinsic and intuitive ability to discern what is in nature, literature, and art, which, we

believe, is also encouraged by production of decorative cloth-bound books. We have found, as Gardner determined, that the different intelligences interact and overlap in the production of cloth-bound books. In this light, Gardner determined that learning to read is enhanced by contributions from all of the areas of intelligence including, for example, “bodily-kinesthetic intelligence” (2004, p. 35). Although not referred to as a separate area of intelligence, research in visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile approaches to learning (VAKT) through the foundational research of Fernald (1947) and the subsequent research of many others, including Tierney, Readence, and Dishner (1995), appears to be strongly connected with reading achievement for some students. We concur with researchers cited above in that we have observed how positively children react when engaging in the producing cloth-bound books.

From an empirical scientific perspective, neurologist turned classroom teacher, Willis (2008),

*Gardner determined that learning to read is enhanced by contributions from all of the areas of intelligence including, for example, “bodily-kinesthetic intelligence” (Gardner p. 35).*

determined that children learn best when they are actively and creatively involved in their learning. This researcher concluded that active/affectively oriented learning increases dopamine, a brain chemical, which enhances learning through a sense of well-being. Further, in this light, Hruby (2009) concluded that while neurophysiologists “envision the brain as an evolved and developing biological system for actively negotiating actual environments” (p. 193) and “cognitive psychologists envision the mind/brain as an information processing system” (p. 193) both neurophysiologists and cognitive psychologists agree that learning environments must be developed which encourage productive, creative, and positive involvement within a world full of information. Hruby concluded that there is much to be learned about both physiologically oriented and cognitively oriented brainpower. While there is still much to be learned, we believe that both Hruby and Willis (2009) would strongly agree that engaging activities enhance cognitive functions and impact

positively on the brain and; consequently, encourage a sense of well being that contributes to learning effectively and efficiently. The following, we believe, is a substantial contribution in this light.

### **Producing Cloth-bound Books**

#### **Materials:**

- 1. Heat-N-Bond (Ultra):** This product is used to affix cloth to cloth or to other substances. It is available in craft and sewing stores as well as in large department stores. A roll is usually 5 yards long and 17 inches wide.
- 2. Mat Board:** This heavyweight poster board can be found in art supply stores, bookstores, and picture framing establishments. Frame shops sometimes have high-quality scrap mat board.
- 3. Heavyweight cardstock (110 lb.):** This paper, generally used to cover reports, comes in packages of 8.5” by 11” sheets in a variety of colors. Regular copy weight (24 lb.) is too flimsy and will not work well. White paper is good for pages while plain colored cardstock is good for the backing page.
- 4. Cloth:** We often use cloth called Keepsake Denim because it affixes smoothly, is attractive, and provides a good base for a cover photograph. There

are, however, many bright and themed patters on cloth that would work well. On the other hand, avoid broadcloth or other thin fabrics.

**5. Patterns for cutting cloth and Heat-N-Bond** can be made from mat board. The patterns designating measurements provide guidelines for cutting.

**6. A long-arm stapler:** This is a stapler with a wider range for stapling than the typical desk top stapler. The shorter reaching stapler can be used, but requires bending book pages.

**7. Irons:** Typically, one clothes iron is needed for every five people making a book. Small travel irons are very efficient and take up little space in the bookmaking kit or on shelves. Many people readily donate their older irons.

#### **Preparing Materials for Making Books:**

**1.** One longer and one shorter piece of Heat – N- Bond are needed for each book. For the longer piece, cut Heat-N-Bond into pieces 8.5” by 11.25”. One roll of Heat- N- Bond (5 yards by 17 inches) will yield 32 pieces. A cut file folder or piece of mat board works well for making a pattern: cut at the 11.25” mark and then fold the piece in half and

cut again to get two 11.25" x 8.5" pieces.

For the shorter pieces, cut pieces of Heat-N-Bond that are 8.5" by 5" and draw a line vertically across the 17" band of the Heat-N-Bond. The cut section will be 5"x17" and can be cut in half to produce two 8.5"x5" pieces.

Again, patterns can be made using mat board or file folders.

**2.** Cut the mat board into 4.5" x 5.5" pieces. The two pieces needed to make the book cover can be cut on a sturdy paper cutter. As mentioned above, picture framing shops often have scrap pieces of mat board that can be cut for use a book covers.

**3.** Cut the heavyweight paper into 8.5" x 5" pieces using a standard paper. One package of 250 sheets will yield 500 pieces.

**4.** Cut the cloth into 9" x 12" pieces. Cloth is usually sold by the yard with a width of 45 inches, so a typical yard of cloth will yield 15 pieces. The 45-inch width yields five 9" x 36" pieces, which are cut into thirds for three 9" x 12" pieces. It is important to note, however, that if there is a pattern flow that favors one direction, cut the cloth so that the flow favors the 12- inch direction. This

will provide a natural view of the figures on the pattern when the book is in its normal position.

**5.** Cut the plain white cardstock into 8.5" x 5" pieces. Trim one inch off the 11" side of the paper and then cut the paper in half which yields two 8.5" x 5" pieces.

### **Assembling the Books:**

**Step 1:** Lay the cloth with the brighter side down on a hard and clean surface. Be sure to put a paper bag or piece of mat board under the cloth to protect the surface of the table. (See Appendix for photographs.)

**Step 2:** Place the large (11.25" x 8.5") piece of Heat-N-Bond paper side up on top of the cloth. Leave an even border of cloth around the Heat- N- Bond approximately one-half inch wide.

**Step 3:** Using a warm clothes iron, press the Heat-N-Bond, and gently lift the paper off. This leaves the adhesive on the cloth.

**Step 4:** Place two 4.5" x 5.5" pieces of mat board on the cloth equidistant from the top, bottom, and sides. Be sure to leave a space approximately one- half inch between the pieces of mat board so that the finished book will close properly. When the mat board is placed,

gently press the mat board with your hand to keep it from sliding.

**Step 5:** Fold over one of the corners of the cloth and place it at a right angle on the corner of the mat board. Then press it with the iron. Make all the folds tight, not leaving excess cloth around the edges of the mat board. Using the warm iron, gently press the cloth onto the mat board. The heat of the iron will cause the Heat-N-Bond to affix the cloth to the mat board. Avoid touching the Heat-N-Bond directly with the iron. Repeat this procedure until all four corners are affixed to the mat board. Then, fold down and press the sides and ends of the cloth. The book cover is now completed!

**Options:** Covers can be varied. If plain fabric is used, fabric paint can be used to decorate the cover further or Heat-N-Bond can be put into the shape of another piece of fabric to be affixed to the cover. This is how numbers and names get on sports jerseys.

Photos or drawings done with crayons, colored pencils, or markers can also be put on the cover. To do this, use a glue stick to tack the picture to a paper frame made of a piece of heavy weight paper such as that used for the backing page. (The frame is centered and then tacked

to the cloth cover using the glue stick.

The frame is not necessary but adds a nice touch.) Then affix the picture to the cover with a piece of self-adhesive laminating film. We use pieces cut from individual laminating sheets that are sold in boxes of 50 in office supply stores.

These sheets require no heat or tools to apply and work very well. Each sheet should cover the picture, the frame, and about a half-inch border.

**Step 6:** Take approximately three pieces of plain white cardstock (5" x 8.5") described above and fold them together crisply in the center. This produces a booklet of 12 pages.

**Step 7:** Crisply fold the heavier (8.5" x 5") cover stock paper in half. It is better to fold it separately from the pages to ensure a crisp fold. This provides the backing page for the book. Then place this piece with the six pages already folded.

**Step 8:** Slide the pages, which now include the backing page, into the long-arm stapler, and staple three times along the fold. A teacher we know uses her portable sewing machine instead of a stapler and this works very well.

**Step 9:** Take the cover, completed earlier, and centrally place the shorter

(8.5" x 5") piece of Heat- N-Bond on the inside of the book cover. Be sure equal amounts of the Heat-N-Bond are on either side of the center fold in the book cover. As before, heat and remove the paper.

**Step 10:** Place one side of the backing sheet and book pages directly over the Heat-N-Bond and then put an extra piece of plain white copier or other plain paper over one side of the backing page. Then, using a warm iron, press one side of the backing sheet paper down and affix it and the book pages to the book cover. The white paper placed over the backing page while ironing prevents the possibility of scorch marks or residue from the iron marring the backing page. When one side of the backing page is affixed, do the other side the same way.

It is preferable to prepare the pages before assembling the book. If errors are made, the pages can be thrown away. An author can use a paper clip to hold the pages together while working on the book. This keeps the pages in

order but also makes it possible to easily replace a page. Some children like to prepare blank, cloth bound books to be used as journals and/or diaries.

### **Conclusions**

The procedures described above can be followed easily and produce wonderful, long- lasting books. In this

light, we must add a story. A 28 year-old teacher, we'll call her "Ms. Kelly", in one of our graduate classes said she made one of the books described herein when she was in seventh grade. We asked her to bring it to class if possible. She said the cloth-bound book of poems she had made was kept on the mantle above the fire place in her parents' home. Ms. Kelly, now an

experienced third grade teacher, said she had to convince her parents that she would be careful not to lose it or let it get damaged in any way.

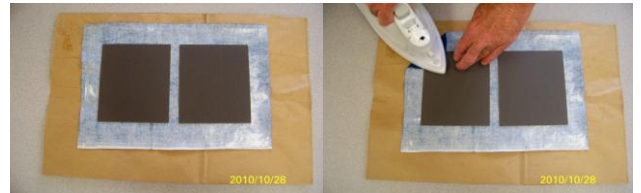
We feel strongly that producing cloth-bound books as described herein

*We feel strongly producing cloth-bound books as described herein presents learners with highly positive opportunities for both affective and academic experiences in enhancing literacy competencies.*



presents learners with highly positive opportunities for both affective and academic experiences in enhancing literacy competencies. We believe activities such as producing cloth-bound books are more important than ever, given the emphasis on high-stakes testing found in nearly all schools today (International Reading Association, 1999). We have completed these activities with hundreds of students. We have observed what Csikszentmihalyi (1998) described as flow, wherein intrinsic motivation is fostered through a state of harmony within the learning environment. Tangible products and active engagement are especially important in this, the digital age. In this light, Jackson (2008) determined that there is less and less permanence in the lives of individuals in this, the digital era. Fostering positive classroom climates through activities such as those described above in an action oriented framework contribute enormously to both academic learning and social development while encouraging the building of a community of learners.

## Appendix



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