

Tips for Teaching Artists

Are you preparing to enter a classroom for an artist residency or another creative project? This resource is intended to provide some quick tips for artists and other classroom visitors.

Adapting to School Culture

School culture may have changed significantly since you were a student! Ask your collaborating teacher about the culture at your particular school.

- No matter how much planning goes into a unit, **school schedules often change at a moment's notice**. Be prepared, be patient and be flexible!
- Know the **names and roles** of Education Assistants (EAs) or other adults in the classroom. Ask them how they can help you in delivering your lessons.
- Anticipate some **diversity in the student's abilities, skills and interests**. Consider the needs of English language learners as well as students with special needs.
- Be mindful that most schools are **nut-free and scent-free** zones.

Classroom Management Techniques and Tips

While classroom management will generally be the responsibility of the teacher, having a few tricks up at the ready can be helpful to keep things running smoothly. Get a sense of what tools and techniques are in place already, and be prepared to invent systems that work for you in the classroom. Here are some basics:

- **Have a signal to get the attention of the class**. It could be a call and response, a sound-maker, or a

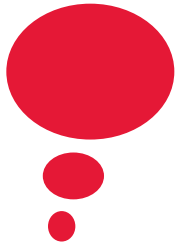
clapped rhythm. Take time to **practice the signal** to get the response you need. Do not proceed until you have everyone's full attention.

- **Employ wait time**. This means taking time—until half the class members have their hands raised, perhaps—before calling on a student to provide an answer. This helps to prevent a situation where the student whose hand shoots up the fastest is called on each time the teacher asks for input.
- **Establish firm and consistent expectations** for students, but focus on the positive. Thank students who follow directions quickly.
- **Circulate!** Scan the room for students needing more help or specific directions.
- See **more tips** from this BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF) resource for new teachers: <http://tinyurl.com/bctf-classroom>

Distributing Materials and Supplies

One way to manage the energy in the classroom is to carefully plan the introduction of new and exciting materials, tools or technology.

- **Consider how the distribution of materials will cause excitement**—for example, handing out musical instruments, iPads, paints, scientific tools, props or costumes will create a stir! Carefully lay out expectations, safety considerations and/or user instructions before providing students with



RESOURCES FOR ARTISTS WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE — *Tips for Teaching Artists*

access to these materials.

- When introducing new tools or materials, **provide students with ample time to explore** on their own before providing explicit instructions.
- **Ask for a special helper** to assist with setting up, distributing materials or cleaning up. Many classrooms have student monitors; enlist students as teaching assistants, technicians, stage managers and in other roles.
- If you are releasing students to work collaboratively and the space is likely to become noisy, ensure you **have a plan to get back the attention** of the class.

Lesson Planning

A lesson planning template allows educators to visualize the unfolding of the lesson from the initial “hook” or introduction, through the exploration, application and closure of the lesson.

- **Start each lesson or visit with a “hook”**—show students your work, share a short story or ask a question that will get them engaged and **set the tone for the visit**.
- **Create models** so students can see or handle an example of finished work.
- **Avoid lengthy teacher talk**. Plan your lesson with a sequence of instruction, practice, and sharing. Break up the lesson with physical and hands-on activities.
- When sharing skills, consider using the **gradual release model** (“I do, we do, you do”). This means the students **observe** the skill first, then **participate with assistance**, and finally **participate independently** as they develop

confidence.

- If you are planning a one-off or a series of lessons, **lesson plan templates** might help you. Here is one from the BC Art Teachers’ Association (BCATA) to get you started: <http://tinyurl.com/bctf-lessonplan> A quick online search will yield many more examples!