

Art Docent Tips & Suggestions

The Art Lesson:

1) At the request of the teachers, docents from every grade MUST include art education in each of their projects. Each lesson must include learning objectives related to at least one of the following:

- **A specific element of art** (line, color, texture, form, shape, space, value)
- **A principle of design** (contrast, balance, pattern, emphasis)
- **An artist or style** (Monet, Picasso, Impressionism, Surrealism)
- **A children's illustrator or book concept** (Eric Carle collage, Harold and the Purple Crayon, Roberto the Insect Architect, Round Trip by Ann Jonas)
- **A specific culture or historical context** (Native American masks, Asian Sumi painting, African kente cloth, Colonial quilt-making, Prehistoric cave painting)
- **Techniques** using specialized art materials with examples of how real artists have used that material in a similar way (Ceramics, Watercolor, Pastels)

2) Every Art Session should include VISUALS that reinforce the lesson.

- Use prints or posters to illustrate the topic being studied (available in art room).
- Find examples in books or online and use the Elmo projectors in the classroom to share these visuals with the children.
- Make photocopies and tape them to the board for reference as the children work.

Planning Your Project:

- **Make a Sample.** Bring a sample of the project the kids will be creating, but remember that they might be more creative if it is put away after the project starts so they can't copy it directly. Making more than one sample is a good idea to show kids different ways to accomplish the same goal. Test the project out on your own child beforehand to identify what kids of that age will find challenging.
- **Curriculum Tie-Ins:** Ask teachers about curriculum tie-ins whenever possible. Art can be more meaningful if it reinforces something the students are already learning about.
- **Ask other parents to help during the lesson.** Many parents are happy to help!

Set Up:

- **Arrive early.** It is surprising how long set up can take, especially if you are working alone.
- **Paper the tables.** Use the large butcher paper to cover the tables if you're doing a project that is messy or will have little pieces to clean up. It can save you hours of scrubbing and sweeping.
- **Don't set out the supplies** until after you've finished your presentation. They are a big distraction for the kids.
- **Consider doing the lesson part of the project in the classroom** to minimize distractions.
- **Use protective clothing** for kids if appropriate.

- **Use disposable coated-paper plates for paint palettes.** It is far more environmentally friendly to put paint-filled plates in the garbage than to use the plastic palettes and need 4000 gallons of water to wash them and send the paint down the drain into our water supply. Plus, it will save you hours.
- **Have extra paper/material on hand** as some kids will get very upset if they can't start over (although it is best if they can work through and incorporate their perceived mistakes). Also this allows you to fill kids time if they get done early: just let them make a second project.

During the Lesson:

- **Be impartial** when discussing a work of art. Your opinions will influence the children's. Remember that everyone experiences art on a different level, Be encouraging of all attempts at active participation.
- **Provide artist background details** whenever available and appropriate to the age of kids.
- **Incorporate art vocabulary words** appropriate to the age of the kids and to the topic being studied
- **Keep discussion to 15 minutes or less.** Kids will be eager to start art project.
- **Don't try to talk over noisy kids.** Get their attention (using whatever method the teacher uses) and then speak.
- **Background music** is a great way to set the mood, try to incorporate music from the time period or country of the artist/style you are featuring.
- **Repeat yourself.** Summarize and reinforce what you are teaching multiple times. (Ask the kids over and over "What was the name of the artist we're learning about? What is it called when we paint with dots?")

After the Lesson:

- **Hanging the Art:** As Docents, we are the ones responsible for hanging our art projects and taking them down later. Ask your teacher where to hang the art. Once the project is hung in the hallway, it needs to include a sign that includes your grade and teacher's name, says what the learning objectives were for the project, and mentions what art or artist the class looked at for reference. This sign is what proves that we really are teaching art! *Please don't forget the sign!*
- **Drying Racks** – please remove art from racks as soon as possible so others can use the space and to protect your art from possible damage. Be careful where you leave the racks while the art is drying, they can't block traffic in the room, but try not to leave them too close to a sink area where they might get splashed.
- **Privacy/Talking to Parents** – Mann's privacy policy asks that volunteers do not discuss children's work or talent with parents. If parents want to know more, ask them to volunteer some time. Encourage them to visit the school and view the art displays.
- **Project Sharing Form** – fill out a project form and attach a sample so we can share ideas. See box on top of supply cabinet for past art projects ideas.