



SAFETY POLICIES & PROTOCOLS FOR ARTISTS & VOLUNTEERS WORKING WITH CHILDREN

1. Have a valid police check

All artists and volunteers working in schools must have and carry with them a valid vulnerable sector check issued by your local police services. If you live in the City of Toronto we can help you with this. Please email us directly.

2. Partner with another adult

Never be alone with one or more children. Always make sure there is at least one other adult in the room. When it is necessary to consult with a child in private, ensure this is done in a room where there are other children and at least one other adult. Work in open areas wherever possible.

3. No need to touch

Students often want to show their appreciation of the visiting artist or volunteer through hugs and other physical touching. It may seem natural to be receptive to this and to want to respond in-kind. However, this is not appropriate in today's classroom. We have to use other ways (such as thumbs up/high five) to show appreciation and recognition.

4. Accompany a child to the washroom but don't go inside

In the case of working in schools outside the instructional day, always ensure there are two adults accompanying children in peer pairs to the washroom first, and call out to let anyone inside know you are entering. Then allow the child in with his or her peer partner and wait for them both outside. Accompany them back to the classroom. At an absolute minimum another adult should be in view. Never go inside the children's washroom.

5. Bend to the child's level when one on one

Students can be intimidated when engaging in a dialogue with an adult in authority who is much larger than they are. Where reasonably possible, show respect by bending at the knees and bringing yourself to the same level (height) as the child, especially when engaged in a serious one on one. However, make sure that you always place yourself at a reasonable distance (at least 18") from the child.

6. Do not engage in a relationship

We make ourselves vulnerable when we engage in a relationship with a student outside of the classroom. Sometimes children are in awe with the visiting artist/volunteer and may ask him/her for his/her phone number. It is inappropriate and not permissible to give out one's phone number or invite children we meet in the classroom to visit us at our home or elsewhere.

7. You must report

We are responsible for reporting any allegations or suspicions of abuse or neglect to not only the teacher but also the school administrator and the appropriate child welfare agency—Children's Aid Society, Catholic Children's Aid Society, Jewish Child & Family Services, Native Child & Family Services, as the case may be. That is three reports.

A simple approach is to call over the director/teacher (or other adult) immediately if and when a child is disclosing or acting out in unusual ways (such as touching inappropriately or expressing inappropriate art work) and say, for example, "Do you have a moment?" This does not draw attention to the child and allows him to disclose to two people in authority. It also provides for an additional witness to the child's disclosure.

8. Know the rules & follow them

You are required at all times to familiarize yourself with and adhere to all school and school board rules and policies. If in doubt about any rule or policy, you are responsible for seeking clarification from the school administrator. Ultimately you are responsible for your own conduct.

9. Document, document, document

Document your program including unusual circumstances with dates, classrooms, time, school and what was said. Keep a detailed journal with the understanding that it may end up in the hands of the CAS, legal authorities or other third parties years or months later. The journal must be bound so that the pages cannot be removed. Pages should be numbered and mistakes crossed out rather than erased. Use permanent ink.