

TIPS AND TRICKS FOR CANYON CREEK'S ART DOCENTS

YOUR FIRST LESSON:

- Introduce yourself (or ask your child to do it for you).
- Ask the kids about art. Raise your hand if you have ever drawn a picture? Taken a photo? Sculpted with Play Doh or clay? Danced? Made a craft? Played an instrument? Decorated your bedroom? If you've done any of these, you've done art! You are an artist!
- Tell them about the year. "About once a month, I will come in and introduce you to a new artist and piece of art. We will learn a little bit about these, and create our own artwork as well."
- Share our philosophy. "All people are unique. Your artwork is unique. It will not look like anyone else's art. It will be your very own! And that is awesome!"

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT:

- Prior to the lesson, find out how your teacher gets the class's attention. Use this for continuity.
- After using the teacher's attention grabber, wait for quiet. This can be painful to wait! However, you want all the kids to have a chance to hear and participate. You can say, "Thank you, Mia. Thank you, Hudson" as kids stop to listen.
- After asking a question, call on 3 or 4 kids. More will want to answer. In the interest of time, say "Now turn to someone next to you and share your idea." Give this about 2 or 3 minutes, then use the attention grabber again.
- Don't be afraid to ask your teacher for help!
- Ask your teacher what they would like kids to do when they are finished. If it's OK with him/her, bring in extra paper and crayons or oil pastels or whatever and let them draw if they wish. They can take these pieces home.

INTRODUCING A PRINT:

- Show the print. Have students look at it silently for 20-30 seconds. Then ask: "What do you notice?"
- Share name of print and artist. (Sample questions could be: "What do you think this print should be called?" or "Why do you think this print is called this?")
- Give 3-5 pieces of information about the artist/print. Keep it simple and basic. For example, "This print is called *Child with a Red Hat* by Mary Cassatt. Mary Cassatt was born in Pennsylvania in 1845, over 160 years ago! She was very wealthy, so she never sold any of her paintings. She loved to paint subjects that showed the sweetness of life."



Child with a Red Hat by Mary Cassatt

- A follow up discussion might be, "What is the first thing you notice when you look at this print?" "Why do you think the artist made the hat so bright?" (This is called the focal point). "What else could she have done to make the hat the focal point?" (size, texture) "What kind of art supply do you think she used in this print?" "How do you think this picture shows 'the sweetness of life'?" "Do you like this print?" (and ask why or why not or simply ask for thumbs up or thumbs down...tell kids that we all see art in different ways and have our own likes and dislikes...and that's OK).
- There are no wrong or right answers. Art is personal. Encourage and accept all observations, interpretations and opinions.

- Watch the print presentation video at nsd.org; Click *parents*, then *Art Docent Program*, then **‘how to present a print’ video**. This may be very useful! Keep in mind your age group when presenting a print. A kindergarten print presentation might take 5-8 minutes with a few minutes to introduce the project parameters, while a 5th grade lesson may be longer and the project a bit more involved.

CHOOSING A PROJECT:

- Students are not creating exact replicas of the prints. Projects should be based on an element and inspired by the use of this element in the print. For example, with Mary Cassatt’s *Child with the Red Hat*, students learn about focal point. A project example might be for them to draw themselves with a funky or brightly colored hat or t-shirt, or they might cut a random shape out of scrap paper, glue it on a white piece of paper, and use black marker to incorporate the shape into a composition. Both projects help reinforce the concept of focal point.
- Whenever you can, it’s always helpful to try a project out on your own student(s). This can give you valuable insight! Is it too hard? Too easy? Can the directions be made clearer? Having these samples is always a great way to show kids what you have in mind. It often feels way more accessible for kids to see the art of other kids as opposed to an adult piece.
- Think about student choice. Find a balance between “have to” and “get to,” meaning have some guidelines that kids have to follow (for example, your random shape has to be no smaller than a golf ball and no larger than a softball; glue your shape in the middle of your paper), but allow for choice (you may choose your color and what you want your composition to become).
- Be flexible. Some kids are not going to follow your directions. Gently nudge them in the right direction if it seems appropriate, but remember that art is supposed to be fun. It’s OK to let go of your expectations and embrace the directions kids take the project. 😊

TALKING WITH KIDS ABOUT THEIR ART:

- Instead of asking “What is it?” ask “Tell me about your art.”
- Use statements that describe what you see: “Looks like you had fun with purple.” “It’s fun to see how you put those shapes together.” “I like your ideas.”
- These types of statements let the child know you’re really looking at their piece, but not judging it.

ORGANIZING SUPPLIES:

- Newsprint on the desks helps keep things clean.
- Sometimes each kid needs their own supplies, a black marker, for example, or a paint brush. Other times sharing works, such as with paint. Decide what might work best for your project.
- Many classrooms have designated kids for helpers. If they do, use them to help pass out supplies.
- If a project has very few supplies, you may choose to pass them out all at once. If there are several supplies, it may help to stagger passing them out. If possible, set up a station where kids can pick up and return supplies as they need them.
- Portables: Bring a pitcher or thermos of water if it is needed.
Paper towels and baby wipes are always a good idea.
- We do not supply art smocks. If you plan on using something particularly messy that may be difficult to wash out of clothing (i.e. acrylic paints, printing inks), you may ask your teacher to place a newsletter request for families to send in an old shirt on art day.

SENDING ART HOME:

- Clay: Either you or the students can wrap the piece well with newsprint and put in a brown paper lunch sack with the child's name on the front and the word 'fragile!'
- Other art: Some docents keep all pieces until they decide which two they will place in the Art Gala (one of the pieces chosen can be clay). Then, they put the artwork for each child together after the Gala and send it home either in a stack or in a big folder (two pieces of 12x18 manila paper stapled together). Other docents decide on the two pieces as they go along, and send home throughout the year any art that they do not plan on using in the Gala. Keep in mind: each child gets 2 pieces in the Gala. If you choose a class piece and a child was absent, choose another piece for that child. They don't have to match.
- When labeling artwork for display, use first names only (and last initial, if needed).

OPTIONAL EXTRAS:

- Photos of other pieces of art by the artist may help reinforce a concept. For example, showing other pieces by Andy Warhol in addition to the Marilyn print reinforce his use of repetition.
- Showing a photo of an actual place can help students "see" a print more clearly. For example, showing a photo of Broadway in New York City helps when viewing *Broadway 1936* by Mark Tobey.
- Showing a photo or self-portrait of an artist helps kids make more of a connection to the artist.
- If you have time left at the end of your lesson, conduct a museum walk. Put student art on their desks, push in chairs, and line up behind you. Tell kids that you are going on a *silent* museum walk. Your job is to follow the snaking line and enjoy the beautiful art of your classmates. Notice how they are all unique and awesome!
- Another optional extra for students is to take a photo of their clay project or other sculpture (a photo of the art itself or the artist holding their 3D art) that will not fit into a portfolio. This photo can be sent home separately or glued to the front of their portfolio if you decide to make them.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- nsd.org; Click *parents*, then *Art Docent Program*. Especially, '**how to present a print' video**. This may be very useful! Keep in mind your age group when presenting a print. A kindergarten print presentation might take 5-8 minutes with a few minutes to introduce the project parameters, while a 5th grade lesson may be longer and the project a bit more involved.