

5 tips for community educators

Preparing to enter the classroom and other learning spaces

Whether it's your first time entering a learning space or the 100th, these tips will prepare you to have a successful experience making lasting, meaningful connections.

1 **Preparing for your session**

Set up for a successful session, whether virtual or in person

- Ask about visitor expectations by talking with the community educator coordinator or front office staff.
- Discuss with the teacher what role you will take on in the learning space.
- Clarify the schedule and location of the visit. Be sure you have virtual links in advance, when applicable.
- Utilize the Community Educator Learning Hub's [School 101](#) bundle to prepare for entering the learning space.

2 **Translating your expertise**

Think about how your knowledge will be received by learners

- Define your skills: What are your unique perspectives? What expertise do you bring to the table?
- Frame your expertise with digestible language for your audience. What industry jargon might you need to be able to explain in a different way for learners?
- Respond to questions with age-level appropriateness, stimulating critical thinking rather than supplying answers.

3 **Managing the learning space**

Encourage the learners to follow expectations

- Check in with the teacher on bathroom use, nurse visits and any other classroom procedures.
- Become familiar with how the class brings students back after small or large group discussions.
- Model respectful behavior and expectations.
- Consider how you react to those around you; know when you need to pause and take a deep breath.
- Respond with kindness and encourage kids to do the same.

4 **Building sustained relationships**

Create successful relationships and collaborations by devoting time, interest and presence

- Smile, introduce yourself and let the students know you're excited to be there.
- Try to learn a few names; see if the teacher is open to having everyone wear name tags when you're visiting.
- Be present. Turn your phone on silent and dedicate yourself to the time you're engaging with students.
- Follow up with the teacher on ways to extend your collaboration. Sustained mentorships build impact.
- Investigate partnership formats that align with your schedule: synchronous, asynchronous, in-person or virtual.

5 **Working with students during the visit**

Step into your role as a meaningful part of the learning space

- Plan to arrive early to ease into the environment.
- Enter with an asset-based mindset, focusing on strengths rather than deficits. This approach to teaching and coaching is grounded in what students can do rather than areas of weakness.
- Approach students' differences and learning styles with a lens of value in equity, diversity and inclusion.
- Use guiding questions to facilitate learning. Engage with follow-up questions and reframing to get students to view the problem from a new angle. For more information, take our [Working with Children](#) bundle prior to your visit.