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### **Teaching Artists: Navigating the Policies and Bureaucracy of Public Schools**

1. *Go Through the Chain of Command.* Most schools are top-down. If a teacher or parent asks you to be involved in a school project, be sure you go to the Fine Arts Coordinator, Principal, or Central Office administrator who is in charge to clear *everything* about the project before starting. Calling the school office or district office and inquiring as to the appropriate channels is a good idea.
2. *Include the Arts Teacher(s) in the School.* Many times residencies and in-school programs, field trips and the like are planned by a principal or administrator and the arts staff are never informed until it happens. This can create ill-will, plus it deprives the arts staff of spending time to prepare their students for the upcoming experience, as well as follow-up activities after you have finished your work in the school. Having a meeting with arts staff several weeks prior to a program or residency is encouraged. This way your project can be interwoven into that teacher's current curriculum and lesson planning. It also will help you learn about the level of skill and knowledge of the students in that building as well as how you can help bolster the school's curriculum through your work in the school.
3. *Share Teaching Materials.* Providing school classroom and arts teachers with hand-outs and curricular materials for them to reinforce your work is a great idea. Ask how you can be helpful to the teachers.
4. *Be Aware of MA Curriculum Frameworks and District Curricula.* To sell your services to a district, they will want to know how your work will intersect with MA Curriculum Frameworks in specific subject areas as well as their own district curricula (which should be based on the state frameworks).
5. *Get Everything in Writing!* Make sure you have a valid contractual arrangement and it is clear who is paying for your services. Is it from a PTO fund? School's fund? District funds? Grant money?
  - a. Be sure appropriate paperwork is signed in advance, you should inquire whether or not the school has to issue a purchase order for your services, if so, that needs to be done before you start.
  - b. You may need to fill out and submit a W9 form with your social security number.
  - c. Inquire as to whether or not you need to submit an invoice after your services are completed. If you don't provide the invoice, they often will not pay you until that is received.
  - d. Patience: With public schools, it is likely to take at least 3 months before you will be paid for your services.
6. *CORI Check:* Every public and private school and organization working with students under 18 years of age is required by law in Massachusetts to have you fill out a **CORI release form** (Criminal Offenders Record Information) which will include your full name, any other names (maiden or previous married name), current and past address, and social security number. This usually must be done two weeks prior to you beginning to work with children. *CORI reports are NOT transferable from district to district*; you need to fill out this form for every district or private school or community organization with which you work. If you work in several schools within one district, only one CORI check should be necessary. Each CORI check is valid for 3 years.