

## HOW TO ENSURE A TERRIFIC SCHOOL VISIT

by Toni Buzzeo and Jane Kurtz

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- Give yourself plenty of time. Rome wasn't built in a day and neither are the best author visits. You'll probably want to start at least six months ahead of time. In fact, it's often necessary to contact bookpeople a year or more in advance (depending on how much speaking they do).
- Read the books! Everyone we interviewed agreed that the most important thing for making a school visit into a real reading and writing experience was for children to know the bookperson's books before the visit.
- Plan creative projects to go along with the books. The more students interact with a book, the more they "own" it and are ready for the exciting experience of meeting its author or illustrator.
- Organize an autographing opportunity. A good visit leaves everyone hungry for reading more books and also leaves many students enthusiastic about the special experience of owning a book.
- Get everyone involved. The best visits come when classroom teachers, library media specialists, administrators, art and music teachers, and parents all have a chance to put on their creative thinking caps and contribute good ideas.
- Wherever possible, make community connections as well. Consider coordinating the visit with the public library. Involve parents, volunteers, and community members in the visit. Use local media and school newsletters to advertise the event in advance.
- Designate a single contact person who will supply teachers with materials, books, and connections needed and who will keep in touch with bookperson in advance of the visit.
- Remember that it's hard to go on the road. Pay careful attention to arrangements that will make the author's visit more comfortable. For example, plan ample breaks, supply hot or cold liquids during and between presentations, inquire about the bookperson's wishes for lunch in advance, begin and end on time.
- Pay promptly and in full. Enough said.
- We have to say it. Read the books again! Don't fudge on this tip and you'll be delighted and amazed at the interesting connections and sizzling reading and writing experiences that will become memorable moments of every bookperson visit.

Toni Buzzeo and Jane Kurtz are the co-authors of the book *TERRIFIC CONNECTIONS WITH AUTHORS, ILLUSTRATORS, AND STORYTELLERS: REAL SPACE AND VIRTUAL LINKS* (Libraries Unlimited, 1999, ISBN 1563087448). Toni Buzzeo is an author and school library media specialist at Longfellow School in Portland, Maine. Her books include *The Sea Chest*, illustrated by Mary GrandPre (Dial 2002) and *Dawdle Duckling*, illustrated by Margaret Spengler (Dial 2003). Jane Kurtz is an award-winning author of both picture books and novels for young readers. She speaks at schools and conferences all over the country (and internationally), and her two new picture books are *Water Hole Waiting* and *Rain Romp*, both published by Greenwillow Books/HarperCollins.