

The Authors' Wish List

Compiled by The POD, an Online Group of Children's Writers

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SCHEDULING

- Call the author to confirm the author visit!
- Never ask the author to do additional sessions after details of the visit have been agreed upon.
- If the author has 15 minutes between sessions, do not let students use that time to get their books signed. The author needs those 15 minutes to catch her/his breath, race to the restroom, get a drink, and sit down for a minute. Speaking to large groups of kids demands high-energy, and s/he can't do it nonstop without a break. If you expect an author to do extra things, like 'read something to the entire student body' or 'tell us how reading has changed your life,' tell her/him before the visit so that s/he can be prepared.

PREPARING THE STUDENTS

- Students must be familiar with the author's books. If possible, prepare students by reading all of the author's work with/to them. Otherwise, select several books to share beginning well in advance of the visit.
- In addition, the best school visits occur when preparations infuse the curriculum. Read the article on this topic by Toni Buzzeo entitled "The Finely Tuned Author Visit" in [Book Links](#), March 1998 for ideas.

PHYSICAL ARRANGEMENTS

- Prepare to introduce the author in a fun and lively way. The librarian or teacher who does this job is basically the warm-

up band to get the kids fired up.

- If the author is speaking in a large room--auditorium or gym--you must provide a microphone for the students' questions. It's impossible to hear students unless they are in the first few rows. (An alternative to this is to provide the author with a lapel mike and room to move to the person who is speaking.)
- If possible, have the students wear name tags. It is a tremendous help to the author both during the presentation and while signing.
- Do not leave students alone with the visiting author. Authors are not hired to be baby-sitters. Likewise, if a teacher/librarian sees students disrupting, s/he should not be afraid to interrupt the session to remedy the situation. It is not the author's job to teach manners.

CREATURE COMFORTS

- Provide someone, either an adult or an older student, to act as the author's host or hostess for the day. S/he should greet the author when s/he arrives, introduce her/him to teachers and staff, and lead her/him from place to place.
- Provide on-going hot tea with lemon or cold water (author preference) for voice.
- Make time for a midmorning snack.
- Allow enough time to get from one class to the next and for bathroom breaks.
- Plan for a real lunch, rather than cafeteria food.
- Don't plan evening activities that run late if the author is visiting your schools for a week. The author needs the evening to rest and regroup for the next day.

BOOK SALES AND SIGNINGS

- Do not assume that an author will bring her/his own books to sell at a school visit. Check with her/him in advance. Many authors do not sell their own books and feel very uncomfortable being put into the position of doing so.
- If the author does not sell her/his own books, order books the day the author confirms. You can never order books too early. The biggest mistake schools make is waiting too long to order.
- Double check with booksellers or jobbers providing books to be sure that all titles are available.
- Provide a reasonably comfortable adult-sized chair and table for the signing.
- Do not allow students to ask the author to sign slips of paper or body parts. Most authors will provide signed bookmarks--or provide a master sheet so the school can make them. That way, each child can take home something signed by the author whether or not they buy a book. Ask the author about this.
- Likewise, if it's a young authors' conference and the students have written their own books, let them know that the author cannot sign hundreds of their books as well as her/his own.
- Schedule an hour (or longer) session during which the author is in the library without a group. During this time, each class, in turn, can send students with books to sign. This gives the students the opportunity to visit with the author while their book is being signed and solves the problem of a too many restless kids waiting for their turn.
- Provide an adult to help at the signing table. It's hard for the author to keep an eye on all the visual aids that s/he's brought while the kids are picking them up and looking at them unattended.

- There will always be students who want to buy books after the author's visit. Most authors will leave a few signed bookplates for that purpose, so make sure books are still available for sale after the event.

PAYMENT

- Pay the author's stated fee and do not try to negotiate a lesser fee. Author visits are exhausting and the fee is well earned.
- If you need the author's Social Security number, or an invoice, before a school district issued check can be processed, tell the author in advance so that the check can be ready the day of the visit.
- Don't make the author ask to be paid. This is very uncomfortable. Know that the author expects to be paid at the end of the day. There is nothing worse for the author than having to say, "Um, well, do you have my check?"

ACCOMMODATIONS AND TRANSPORTATION

- It is generally not a good idea to ask an author to stay in a private home. Many authors find it impossible to relax in someone else's home and feel they must be entertaining when they'd really rather not talk to anyone after talking all day. However, it is appropriate to verify that this is the author's preference.
- If you have arranged for someone to pick up the author, be sure that h/she arrives on time. The author will need time to catch his/her breath and set up materials before beginning presentations for the day.
- When the author has to travel between morning and afternoon schools, provide someone to transport him/her there, or someone to lead him/her there so that s/he arrives on time.