

# Department of Teaching and Learning

## Suggestions for Success: School Visitation Guidelines for Students

Visiting schools is an exciting part of your teacher preparation program as you begin to develop a practitioner's perspective. It is also an opportunity for you to become visible to area school divisions for your future employment. As a VCU student in a K-12 setting, there are several professional guidelines that VCU expects you to follow to positively represent yourself and the university.

- Be on time for your scheduled visit. Arriving too early or too late could affect the teacher's plans and disrupt the class' focus.
- Sign in and out in the main office as a visitor in the school. Pick up a visitor's pass when you sign in and make sure that you wear it prominently. School personnel need to know that you're supposed to be there to ensure the safety of their building.
- Dress professionally; i.e., business casual. (Men: a collared shirt and slacks; no jeans or T-shirts. Women: nice pants or skirt/dress, modest top; no jeans, T-shirts, short skirts or dresses, low cut tops or midriff showing). Administrators, teachers, and parents may have specific ideas about appropriate attire for teacher candidates.
- Respect the school building's dress code for adults. Some schools serve a more conservative community than others, and it is important for you as an emerging professional to respect the surrounding adult culture. This may include removing extra body piercings (eyebrow, nose, oral piercings, etc.), wearing a natural hair color, and covering tattoos.
- Wear comfortable and appropriate footwear. You need to be able to move safely about the classroom and still maintain a professional appearance.
- Do not remain in a classroom with students without the teacher present. You must not be held responsible for any student mishaps when the adult in charge is out of the room.
- Maintain appropriate language and topics of discussion. Remember that as an adult in the classroom, you automatically become a role model for the students. Therefore, refrain from using profanity or coarse talk during the school visit.
- Maintain a professional distance from the students. It's important to remember that even though some of the students may be near your age or the ages of your siblings, you are there as a professional. Do not give out your personal contact information, and refrain from entering into conversations of a personal and sensitive nature with students. In addition, if you have your own personal website, please be sure that its contents are appropriate and represent you as a professional. Be aware that not only are students and their parents able to visit your site, but increasingly school divisions are performing web searches of teacher applicants as well.
- Maintain confidentiality about students, their families, and the teachers with whom you work. It is important, as a professional, to respect a person's reputation by not relating to others embarrassing or otherwise personal information. In addition, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act requires confidentiality regarding students and their families.
- Exhibit patience when working with students. Some students may "show off" for you as a guest. Help keep them focused on the lesson by not calling attention to their behavior or conversing with them during instruction. Never scold or reprimand a student. If a situation regarding safety arises, quickly and quietly let the teacher know.