Plan with the Classroom Teacher

Your classroom visit will be a success if you plan with the teacher every step of the way.

Plan the topic of your lesson with the teacher.
Ask the teacher what science topic the students will be studying around the time you plan to visit. The teacher may be looking for help teaching a certain concept. Suggest activities and discuss how these could support the curriculum. Tying your lesson to the regular science instruction program assures that your visit will be an important part of the students’ science education.

Schedule your classroom visit.
Your visit will likely last less than an hour. Find out the length of a regular class period and plan your lesson for that amount of time.

Make an appointment before or after school to meet with the teacher in the classroom where you will be teaching.
This will help familiarize you with the classroom so that you know what to expect. For example, many elementary classrooms have no running water and few electrical outlets. The teacher can help you resolve these issues before your visit.

Assure the teacher that you are considering safety.
  o Find out whether there is a class set of goggles. If not, bring child-sized goggles that you can clean and reuse for other classroom visits.
  o Elementary schools have very strict fire regulations. Make sure that your plans meet these regulations. Even things that don’t seem dangerous may be against fire codes.
  o Review the MSDS for chemicals you will be using and have them on hand during your visit.
Discuss logistics, the students, and their experiences in science.

- Familiarize yourself with the classroom to be sure you will have what you need.
- Discuss what the children already know about science. When you present your science lesson, use vocabulary words and build on concepts the students have studied.
- Tell the teacher about the lesson you are planning. The teacher can make sure students have the background and skills so that they are ready to learn with you. If necessary, find out if the students already know how to use a thermometer, graduated cylinder, or dropper.
- Find out how student groups are typically structured.
  - How many students are in each group?
  - How many groups are there?
  - How do groups decide who will complete each task?
- Ask the teacher to have students seated in groups ahead of time.
- Teachers are the masters of classroom management. Find out what strategies they use to get the children quiet and focused when they are working and talking within their groups. The teacher may use claps, rhymes, or other signals.
- Let the teacher know that the students will need to wash their hands after doing the experiments with you.

Offer to be a resource for the teacher.
Teachers very often wish they had a scientist who they could contact from time to time to help them provide accurate explanations for the students. They may also have questions about experiments they are conducting. Share resources developed for elementary and middle school teachers by the professional organization where you are a member—the American Chemical Society.
- inquiryinaction.org
- www.acs.org—Activities for children