

HOW TO AVOID THE FEELING OF ISOLATION BY CONDUCTING AUTHOR VISITS

By Donna M. McDine

Your writing career is moving at a steady pace, but from time-to-time, the feeling of isolation overwhelms you. What is a writer to do to get one's self out into the world of the living, but not neglect your writing goals? One of the best ways to get yourself known locally as a serious writer would be to participate in author visits to elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools in your area - depending on what genre you write for. Also check out your local library and bookstores – they too may be interested in having you conduct an event. Presenting your short story or non-fiction article for children's magazines can be fun way to present the creative writing process to children of all ages without overwhelming them. And since you are writing for children, why not spend time with them?

It can be daunting to research school visits, considering the Internet comes up with over 2 million hits when typing in "School Author Visits." Why not check out the following resources:

1. Local Schools –Contact an elementary school in your area and find out whom you need to present your school visit request to. The school secretaries are happy to point you in the right direction, whether it is the principal, PTA or program coordinator of the school. **IMPORTANT:** Keep in mind you don't necessarily need to have a published book to conduct a school visit. You may be able to present a published short story or non-fiction article to the class. In addition, let the school know that you can meet with

respective teachers and conform the event to coincide with their ELA State Assessment Guidelines.

2. Your network of fellow writers – We are all cheering for one another and I'm sure your network would be happy to discuss their ideas of school visits. If you are just starting out, the Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators – <http://www.scbwi.org>, has a wealth of information on all topics for writing for children.
3. Local Librarian – I have had wonderful success in becoming “buddies” with my local librarian. They are a chock full of information when it comes to conducting events for children. You never know, they may be so impressed with your initiative that they may request that you conduct a visit at their library. What better way to keep children inspired to read by meeting a local writer living in their midst?
4. Local Bookstores – Approach the manager or owner to see if they would be interested in having you conduct an author visit. If they are, obtain their guidelines for conducting such a visit and tell them that you will get back to them with your proposal / school visit kit. Be sure to leave your business card with them.

Put yourself out there...it will not only be fun for the children but for yourself!