

Dear Second-grade Teachers,

I am so delighted that the Friends of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts will make it possible for every second grader in the Minneapolis Public Schools to visit the Minneapolis Institute of Arts for a Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) tour this year and for the next two.

The Friends Children's Fund gift will provide buses for all of your second-graders. Just follow these easy guidelines for reserving your bus and making sure the MIA receives the invoice:

1. Reserve the bus for the day and time of your tour. Please coordinate your tour time with other second grade teachers in your school.
2. When you reserve your bus, inform the bus company to send the invoice to the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, **not** the school, for this bus. They should send the invoice to:

Minneapolis Institute of Arts
Attn. Kristine Harley, Museum Guide Programs
2400 Third Avenue S
Minneapolis, MN 55404

3. Tell the bus company that the MIA will send payment **after** the trip is complete.

Many of you already know that a Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) tour is entirely student-centered. The docent asks a few questions and students say what comes to their mind as they look at and think about the art works. The docent points out what the children are talking about and paraphrases their statements, helping language development and encouraging listening to one another.

This process creates a positive environment for your second graders to experience art while having their own ideas and observations validated. We believe that this visit is just the beginning of a positive relationship with each individual child and, in time, others in his/her life. These students begin to learn about what museums are, how to visit a museum, and the many things they can do if they visit often. A take-home postcard will invite children to visit the MIA with their families.

Mary Lewis, the MPS Arts for Academic Achievement District VTS Coordinator will be offering Visual Thinking Strategies training throughout the year. Museum staff and guides will assist with training and coaching as well. The Friends Children's Fund is also making the Visual Thinking Strategies curriculum and teaching posters available in every school, so you can prepare students for their museum visit or reinforce the visit with classroom lessons. These will be sent to your school's Media Specialist, who will barcode them for circulation.

There are a few things we need your help with to ensure that this experience is the best possible for everyone involved. Please review the guidelines for a great museum visit that will accompany your tour confirmation. These policies are intended to protect you, your students, and the art, so it is important that students and chaperones understand group expectations ahead of time. We appreciate your help.

Again, we are so delighted to welcome you and your students to the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. We look forward to seeing you here soon.

Sincerely,

Sheila McGuire
Director, Museum Guide Programs
Education Division