Teaching Classes at Spark Makerspace: Best Practices & FAQ

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Below is a guide to help you successfully submit and teach a class. These best practices and frequently asked questions are based on our **Class Submission Form**. Please review this information to ensure your class proposal meets our standards and expectations.

Class Submission Process

1. **Seek Approval from Station Leads:**
   The station leads oversee the safety, proper training, and use of their designated areas. They are the experts in their fields and are responsible for ensuring that all classes align with Spark Makerspace's standards. Before submitting a class proposal, consult with the relevant station lead to gain approval. This step ensures that your class content, safety protocols, and scheduling are properly coordinated and meet the expectations for that area.
2. **Fill Out the Submission Form:**
   Complete all required fields in the Spark Class Submission Form, including email, studio hosting the class, title, date, and time.
3. **Describe Your Class Clearly:**
   Write an engaging description suitable for marketing. Clarify the appropriate skill level for the class (Spark strongly encourages beginner classes). Be specific about what

attendees will learn, any tools/materials they need to bring, and prerequisites (if any). Example descriptions are provided in the form.

4. **Provide Details on Tools and Materials:**
   Specify any tools or materials Spark will provide (with costs) and what students must bring. If none are required, write "No."
5. **Identify Certification Opportunities:**
   Indicate if your class certifies members on Spark tools or processes, and list prerequisites if applicable.
6. **Set a Minimum Age Requirement:**
   Define the appropriate age minimum for your class.
   a. Please take into account-
      i. Am I comfortable teaching a mixed-age group?
      ii. Are there safety concerns if younger participants attend (especially in tool- or chemical-based environments)?
      iii. Is the material developmentally appropriate for younger students?

   If your class is specifically for kids or teens, mark it clearly and do not mix it with adult classes. Being clear about the minimum age helps us promote your class effectively, ensure a positive learning experience, and maintain a safe environment for all participants.

   If you need help determining, do not hesitate to reach out.

7. **Submit Photos for Marketing:**
   Email photos representing your class to **casey@sparkmakerspace.org**. Use copyright-free images or those you've taken.

Teacher Compensation

1. **Eligibility for Pay:**
   Teachers earn **$15/hour** for classes with 2-3 students and **$20/hour** for classes with 4+ students.
   - Classes must:
     - Be approved by the lead of the hosting station.
     - Include tool or skill training specific to the area.
     - Meet the minimum student requirement.
2. **Options for Compensation:**
   Teachers can choose:
   - To be paid (requires submitting a W9 form).
   - To donate their compensation to the station's discretionary fund.
   - To waive compensation if the class doesn't meet attendance minimums.
3. **Single-Student Classes:**
   Teachers will not be compensated for single-student classes but can choose to teach voluntarily.
4. **Cancellation Policy:**
   If fewer than two students register, the class may be canceled. Ticket sales should end at least 5 days before the class start date to allow time for cancellations.

Student Communication

- **Automated Email to Students:**
  After registration closes, students will receive:
  - Important taking a class at Spark details.
    - LINK
  - Parking information.
- **Class-Specific Information:**
  Instructors should add any additional messages they want students to receive (or enter "NONE").

Best Practices

1. **Practice Makes Perfect:** If you're teaching a class for the first time, it's highly recommended to do a "dry run" or trial version of your lesson. (Reach out to staff for support) This helps you:
   a. Identify timing issues, material needs, or confusing steps before you're live with students.

    b. Spot potential problems that students may encounter, so you're better prepared to troubleshoot in real time.
    c. More accurately estimate the true duration of your class, ensuring a smoother experience for everyone.
    d. Make a checklist of all tools and materials, and walk through each step as if you're a first-time student. This not only builds confidence but also ensures the class runs efficiently and safely.
2. **Plan Ahead:**
    a. Preparedness is KEY! Make sure you have all needed materials ordered in a timely fashion, and that they are onsite the day of the class.
    b. If doing a class/workshop for the first time, it is advisable to do a "dry run" to identify any problem areas or needs that may arise during the live class.
    c. Arrive well ahead of time to set up the class area before attendees arrive.
3. **Representing Spark:**
    a. Present in a positive, professional, and well-organized manner. You are the "face of Spark," and our reputation is greatly impacted by your conduct.
    b. Ensure ticket sales close with enough time for class preparation and potential cancellations.
4. **Be Thorough in Your Submission:**
   Address every question in the form and provide detailed, creative descriptions to attract attendees.
5. **Communicate Early and Often:**
   Respond to any questions from Spark staff promptly and provide materials or photos for marketing as soon as possible.
6. **Understand Certification:**
   Clearly indicate if your class certifies members on tools and ensure all prerequisites are mentioned.

Plan an Engaging Class

At Spark, we believe the best learning happens through **hands-on making**. Whether you're teaching a one-hour workshop or a multi-session course, your class should prioritize **active participation**, not passive observation.

Key Expectations for Curriculum Design:

- **Hands-On Activities Are a Must**
  Spark classes are not lecture-based. Students should be **actively making**, experimenting, or interacting with tools and materials throughout the session. Even short demos should be followed by student practice.

- **Create a Simple Agenda or Outline**
  A class doesn't need a formal syllabus, but it does need a **basic plan**. Please prepare

an outline that includes:

    - What skills or knowledge students will gain
    - A timeline for the session (even a rough one)
    - Clear moments for student engagement (activities, building, drawing, testing, etc.)

- **Balance Talking with Doing**
  As a general rule, aim for **no more than 15-20 minutes of continuous talking** without switching to a hands-on activity. Think: “Show, then do.” You can explain a technique, but make sure students try it out right away.

- **Consider Different Learning Styles**
  Some students learn best by watching, others by doing, and others by reading or asking questions. Try to mix in brief demos, written instructions, one-on-one check-ins, or visual aids where possible.

- **Keep Class Size in Mind**
  Your plan should reflect the number of students. A small class can allow for more detailed instruction and personalized help, while larger groups may need more structure and simplified objectives.

Support Available

If you're unsure how to structure your class or want help building an agenda, just reach out! We’re happy to help you craft a plan that keeps students engaged and successful.

FAQs

Q: How do I determine the appropriate skill level for my class?
A: We encourage beginner-friendly classes at Spark, as they are the most accessible and in high demand by the general public. However, intermediate-level classes are also welcome. Select "Beginner" for entry-level classes, "Intermediate" for those requiring some prior experience, or use "Other" to provide a more specific description. Please specify any prerequisites/how much prior experience is needed for an intermediate class.

Q: What if I’m unsure about pricing for materials?
A: Provide your best estimate, send links, and provide as much information, Spark staff will assist.

Q: Can I teach without compensation?
A: Yes, you may donate your time or allocate compensation to the station's fund.

Q: What if I have additional questions or concerns?
A: Contact **casey@sparkmakerspace.org** for assistance.

Q: What is the minimum number of students for my class to run?
A: Classes must have at least two students to be eligible for compensation. Classes with fewer than two students may still run without teacher pay.

Q: How does purchasing class materials work?
A: Typically, instructors send links to the necessary materials, or we source them online and purchase them in advance.

Q: Is the material cost included in the class price? Who sets the class cost?
A: Yes, the material cost is factored into the ticket price. Class pricing is determined by an algorithm based on class hours and material cost per student. The only exception is certification classes, which follow a different pricing model.

Q: How do we order materials before knowing how many students will sign up?
A: In most cases, we take a calculated risk depending on factors like material cost, usability for other classes, and shipping times. If materials are particularly expensive, we may close ticket sales early to order an exact amount.

Certifications

What is Certification?

Certification at Spark Makerspace ensures that members are trained and qualified to safely and independently use specific tools, equipment, and processes in our workshops. By successfully completing a certification class, members gain the knowledge and skills necessary to operate tools while adhering to Spark's safety and operational standards.

Why are Certification Classes So Affordable for Members?

Certification classes are significantly less expensive than non-certification classes because they are **financially subsidized** by the generous support of the **Frank Loomis Palmer Fund, Bank of America, N.A., Trustee**.

Spark aims to always have grant support for certification programs because they are **cornerstones of accessibility, safety, learning, structure, and independence** at the

makerspace. By ensuring certifications remain affordable, Spark strengthens its commitment to making tool access and training available to as many members as possible.

How Does Certification Work?

1. **Training Focus:**
   Certification classes focus specifically on the tools or processes being certified. The goal is to ensure members understand:
   - **Studio/Shop rules and policies.**
   - **Safety protocols** to prevent accidents.
   - **Proper operation** of the tools.
   - **Maintenance and cleaning** procedures to keep the workspace functional and organized.
2. **Certification Included in Public Classes:**
   Certification opportunities are sometimes included in public classes. If a public class offers certification on a specific tool or process, it will be noted in the class description. When a **member** successfully completes the class, they are certified to use the tool independently during their visits to Spark.
   Note: Certification is only valid for Spark members in good standing.
3. **Member Independence:**
   Once certified, members can:
   - Use the certified tools independently during Spark's open hours.
   - Avoid requiring staff or instructor supervision on certified equipment.
   - Confidently and safely work on their projects.
4. **Skills First:**
   Certification classes focus on training, not creating a finished project. This ensures that participants' attention is fully on understanding the tools and processes.

Why Certification is Important

- **Safety:**
  Certification ensures members can use tools safely, reducing the risk of accidents and injuries.
- **Efficiency:**
  Certified members do not require staff supervision, allowing them greater flexibility in their work and freeing up staff resources.
- **Confidence:**
  Certification provides members with the knowledge to work independently, empowering them to take on more ambitious projects.

Certification Opportunities

1. **Regular Offerings:**
   Certification classes are held regularly in each of Spark's five main areas:
   - **Fiber Arts/Sewing**
   - **Electronics & Technology Lab**
   - **Woodshop**
   - **Stained Glass Studio**
   - **Print Shop**
2. **Integrated into Public Classes:**
   Instructors may include certification as part of public classes to reduce their workload and provide flexibility in scheduling. Members taking these classes will be certified upon successful completion, while nonmembers will not receive certification.
3. **Clearly Noted in Class Descriptions:**
   Classes that include certification will have this information prominently noted in the description. Upcoming certification opportunities are also announced in member emails.

How to Get Certified

1. **Enroll in a Certification Class:**
   Look for classes labeled as offering certification in the description. These classes are available to Spark members only.
2. **Complete the Training:**
   Attend the class, follow the instructor's guidance, and demonstrate understanding and competency during the session.
3. **Get Certified:**
   Upon successful completion, the instructor will mark you as certified for the specified tool or process. This certification is logged, granting you independent access to the specific tools in that area the class covered.

FAQ - Certification

Q: Do I need to be a member to get certified?
A: Yes, certification is available exclusively to Spark members. Public classes that include certification only grant it to members.

Q: How will I know if a class offers certification?
A: Classes that include certification will have it noted in the description and will be highlighted in regular member emails.

Q: Do I need to bring anything to a certification class?
A: Check the class description for required materials or tools. In most cases, Spark provides everything necessary for certification training.

Q: Is certification a one-time process?
A: Yes, once certified, you are authorized to use the specified tool or equipment independently. However, members are encouraged to revisit training or consult leads of the studio/workshop/lab if they feel they need a refresher.

Q: How often are certification classes offered?
A: Certification classes are held regularly, typically on a monthly basis, across all five Spark workshops.

Student Feedback Surveys

After each class, students receive an **anonymous feedback survey** via email. These surveys help Spark Makerspace continuously improve the learning experience and provide valuable insights into class structure, teaching effectiveness, and overall satisfaction.

How Surveys Work

- Sent automatically to students after the class.
- Responses remain **anonymous** to encourage honest feedback.
- A **Spark Board Member reviews survey results monthly** and compiles a report.
- **Significant comments, suggestions, or praise** will be shared with you to recognize strengths and address potential improvements.

Why This Matters

- Helps improve class structure and organization.
- Provides constructive feedback to support your teaching.
- Recognizes your strengths and student impact.

If you have any questions about survey results or feedback, feel free to reach out to classes@sparkmakerspace.org