

Chapter 3

BETTER PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES

Administrators, supervisors and teachers must not only understand legal safety standards and better professional practices as discussed in the previous chapter, but they must know what protocols to utilize to limit their liability and the school's liability in addition to providing safer instruction. This chapter provides a number of recommended practices for administrators, supervisors and instructors to help protect themselves, their students, and their school. It should be noted that the term "better" not "best" was used when referencing professional practices. There may not be one "best" practice for every situation, there may be a number of practices that can promote safer makerspaces, Fab Labs and STEM labs. It is ultimately the discretion of the instructor to determine which practices are better for their students, school and facility. It is the instructor who is responsible for determining if the instructional site is safe or not! At a minimum, utilizing the following practices and strategies are recommended.

Developing a Legal Paper Trail

Roy's 2009 article provided detailed information about what documentation should be kept on file to demonstrate efforts taken to prevent harm to those in makerspaces, Fab Labs, and STEM labs. If named in a lawsuit, the following

items could be admissible in a court of law and help build the case that the administrator, supervisor, or instructor is not liable.

- **Evidence of lab safety training(s)**— This could consist of a school sponsored professional development session, conference presentation, undergraduate or graduate laboratory management course, certificate earned from an online training/course (ex. Flinn Scientific Inc.), and other related trainings.
- **Student and parent signed safety acknowledgement forms**— Notice these are not called contracts or consent forms, they are simply used to communicate the expectations to the parent/guardian and the child. The original copy should be kept on file for the entire time the participant is using the school or facility. Each year a new one should be signed and added to the participant's file. Parent/guardian signatures do not protect the instructor from being found liable in the event of a negligent act, the form simply indicates the parent/guardian acknowledged they are aware of the hazards despite efforts to maintain a safer learning environment. An example of a safety acknowledgement form can be found in the Appendices.