



Working with Students:

A Speaker's Guide for Judges, Crowns, Lawyers, and Other Members of the Justice Sector

Here are some suggestions for working with students.

Preparing for a Classroom Visit:

Logistics: Contact the supervising teacher prior to the visit. Confirm the time and date of the visit, where to meet the supervising teacher, the location of and directions to the school, the availability of parking and, if applicable, the necessity of a visitor's pass, and request any items you need to make an effective presentation (e.g., podium, TV/VCR, a bottle of water).

Purpose of Visit: Clarify the objectives of the visit and how it connects with the curriculum, the ages of the students, and questions or issues the teacher would like you to address. To assist with preparation, the extensive resource "Curriculum Support Document: Connecting Law-Related Curricula to the Courtrooms & Classrooms Program – 'How To' Guides for Judges, Crowns, Lawyers, and Other Justice Sector Volunteers" has been developed. It includes relevant curriculum expectations applicable to Kindergarten to Grade 12 and possible discussion points for justice sector volunteers. A copy is included in Tab 2 of this manual.

Format of Visit: Determine the format of the visit (e.g., speaking to one class or an entire assembly).

Topics for Discussion: Once you have received background information from the school, you may wish to consider any topics you and/or the teacher would like to address with the students (e.g., decorum in a courtroom, current legal controversies). Determine if there any resources you would like to have available when meeting with students (e.g., your Court robes, a copy of the *Criminal Code*, photocopies of a particular case of interest). Advise the teacher of information you would like the teacher to use to prepare the students for your classroom visit (e.g., online resources, including the Gr. 10 Civics resource *Values of the Justice System*, at www.ojen.ca and www.courtprep.ca). Consider requesting a list of the questions or the assignment that

students will be expected to complete during or after your visit. The guest speaker and students may use this list to ensure all relevant issues are raised during the visit.

Introductions: Consider starting by writing your name and title on the blackboard. Tell the students how they should refer to you (e.g., Your Honour, on a first name basis). Use language appropriate for the age group you are working with. If possible, avoid legal jargon. Should you need to use jargon, explain what it means. Students are usually expected to take notes; therefore, be prepared to repeat important points and/or write selected information on the board. Consider using visual resources (e.g., photos, flip chart, blackboard, video clips) as much as possible to keep students' attention and to support visual learners.

How to Engage Students: Students respond well to personal insights and anecdotes. Identify any such recollections you would be willing to convey. Age-appropriate, comical, poignant, and, ultimately, personal insights play a large role in effective presentations. The more of yourself you are willing to share, the greater the connection between speaker and students. Any unusual or comical incidents you have personally experienced, challenges you faced in becoming a member of the justice sector or post-secondary student, and the issues you face on a day-to-day basis should be well received.

Using Role Playing: Consider using scenarios with the students so that they may grapple with the issues. For example, by including questions like "As the judge, what would you have done in this case and why?" generate active engagement with the material and reflection.

Speaking Style:

Although speaking style is unique to each person, the following suggestions are offered to encourage greater interaction and dialogue between the speaker and the students.

- Be yourself.
- Despite your experience in the justice sector, you may feel somewhat ill at ease in front of a group of children or teens! Look for support from the students by sharing personal anecdotes. The supervising teacher will also be present to ensure effective classroom management.
- Consider varying your tone of voice and making eye contact with your audience.
- Sitting in a circle or at a level closer to the students encourages greater dialogue and conversation rather than a one-way commentary. You may also want to move around the room.

- Short attention spans, no matter how engaging the material, can challenge even the best speaker. Consider grouping related information together in short 5 to 7 minute overviews. These could be interspersed with visual materials and role-play activities (e.g., how an arrest takes place, a bail hearing, sentencing).
- If you feel the students are getting restless, you may wish to give them a short stretch break.
- If possible, avoid lecturing to the students. Provide opportunities for questions, interactive activities, and displaying any visual aids you have brought. (In particular, students might respond well to seeing the Court robes. This could also provide an introduction to the history of the robes.)
- Use age-appropriate humour.
- Find ways of having the students connect with the human side of you! This may mean promising not to sentence the students to some sort of punishment! Occasionally, a student will not ask a question for fear that it is too simplistic. You may wish to remind them that their questions are valuable. Doing so creates a welcoming, safe space to encourage a wider range of issues to be raised by many students.
- Avoid “Yes” and “No” answers to students’ questions. Although many of the students’ initial questions will be phrased to elicit these answers, wherever possible elaborate your response and use real-world examples. Ask the students how they might have responded to that question if they were in your position and why. This encourages the students to engage in higher-level critical thinking.

Presentation Content:

The content of the presentation will be at the discretion of the participants; however, a combination of spoken and visual materials often work well with students of different ages. Suggested visual items include photographs or drawings of a courtroom, age-appropriate forensic reports, Court robes, a copy of the Criminal Code, videotapes about the justice system, and brochures or other handouts for students.

For more free public legal education resources visit the Ontario Justice Education Network online at www.ojen.ca.

After the Courtroom or Classroom Visit:

- Consider using your speaking experience as an opportunity to build a working relationship or ongoing partnership with the teacher, students, and school.
- Please take a moment to fax the evaluation form “Courtrooms & Classrooms Feedback Form: Tell Us About Your Experience” to OJEN at 416-947-5248. We appreciate your feedback. A copy of this form is located in this manual.