

Guidelines for a Holocaust Survivor Visit

Hearing the testimony of a Holocaust Survivor is an invaluable learning experience for students. It is also an experience that requires careful preparation for the teacher and the students. The opportunity to hear from these valuable resources is quickly vanishing. Students should be well prepared for the significance of such an opportunity.

Welcoming a Survivor into your school should be much like inviting an honored guest into your home. You want the Survivor to feel comfortable and welcome and to have his/her needs considered.

- Allow 45-50 minutes for the Survivor to speak, with another 10- 15 minutes for questions from the audience.
- If you plan to record the Survivor's testimony, ask permission when you request the Survivor.

For the Survivor:

- Provide specific parking and entrance information (including any necessary stairs). Try to avoid high volume traffic times for the Survivor to arrive/depart.
- Have an adult greet and escort the Survivor to the speaking location.
- Offer a restroom stop.
- Provide a microphone, chair, podium, stool glass of water, and tissues.

Teacher Preparation:

- Have your students prepared with knowledge relevant to the Survivor's experience. Give them context to frame the testimony.

- If the Survivor experienced a specific event during the Holocaust, be sure the students know about the event itself.
- Know the correct pronunciation and spelling of the Survivor's name.
- Eliminate all distractions when possible: PA announcements, people traffic, etc.
- Inform students that they may NOT enter or exit the classroom or hall during the Survivor testimony.
- The teacher should be close at hand to repeat or rephrase any questions asked.
- The teacher's responsibility should be to give **undivided** attention to the Survivor.

Student Preparation:

- Students should have some background knowledge of the Survivor and their testimony.
- Students need to be aware that the Survivor may speak with an accent. This will require them to be especially good listeners.
- Make students aware that sharing these experiences can be difficult and sometimes can make the Survivor emotional.
- Discuss appropriate question asking. Share examples of appropriate types of questions. Have students prepare one or two questions they might want to ask the Survivor.
- Make clear expectations for student behavior: sit up, look at the Survivor, no talking, remain seated, stand up and introduce yourself when asking the Survivor a question.

In Conclusion:

- Personally thank the Survivor at the end of the talk.

- If time permits, allow the students to personally approach the Survivor. Our Survivors especially look forward to meeting students individually and welcome the opportunity to have their pictures taken with students. This experience can be very moving for students and the Survivor.
- Escort the Survivor to the exit or car.
- Provide a time to process the visit later in the day or at the next class meeting. Students often think of questions after the fact.
- Consider having students write thank you notes in small groups. Survivors receive many notes and the task of reading all of them can be overwhelming. For those who may not be sure what to write you might suggest:
 - Thank the Survivor for taking the time to come and share.
 - Mention a special part of the testimony that was meaningful to the student.
 - Tell what the student will take away from this experience.
 - Write it forward. Consider having your students write notes to a family member, clergy, neighbor, etc., to share the Holocaust Survivor's story. In this way they too become witness.