



Guidelines for a Holocaust Survivor Visit

Hearing first-hand 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 a guest into your home – perhaps envision a visit with a grandparent. You want the survivor to feel comfortable and welcome and to have their needs considered.

For the survivor:

- Provide specific parking and entrance information (including any necessary stairs). Try to avoid high volume traffic times for the speaker to arrive/depart. Inform the survivor of bus/pick up zones so they can be avoided.
- Have students greet and escort the survivor to the speaking location.
- Offer a restroom stop.
- Provide a microphone, chair, glass of water, and tissues.

Teacher Preparation:

- Have your students prepared with knowledge relevant to the speaker'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 speaker emotional.
- Discuss appropriate question asking. Share examples of appropriate types of questions.
- Encourage students to check with you in advance if they are uncertain about a possible question.
- Make clear expectations for student behavior: sit up, look at the speaker, no talking, remain seated, speak up when asking 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. Check with the survivor beforehand about taking pictures with the students. This after-the-talk-experience can be very moving for students and the survivor.
- Escort the survivor to the exit or to their 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.
- Students should write thank you notes to the survivor. Consider having students write notes in small groups. Survivors receive many notes and the task of reading all of them can be overwhelming. The teacher should read all notes before they are mailed to the survivor. A straight-from-the-heart note should never be discouraged, but you may suggest a three-part message for those who may not be sure what to write:
 - 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.