

SYMPOSIUM PLANNING CHECKLIST FOR TEACHERS

Planning and attending a state government symposium will help students answer this Teach It's compelling questions by enabling them meet and talk with people who work in state government and to learn, firsthand, about the services they provide and how they go about providing them.

Most students are familiar with elected officials and their work. While you may have officials on your panel, this symposium focuses on people who carry out the work of state government, often behind the scenes. Many are in jobs that students may not realize are part of the government.

The information presented in the symposium will vary but will often be detailed and heartfelt. Many people who are not accustomed to public speaking can easily talk about their day at work and why their work is important.

The conversations and discussions before, during, and after the symposium will give students real-life insights about government. Hearing about state government directly from those who do it will help students understand that "government is people" and help them see that government workers, services—and careers—are accessible to them. All parties feel valued by one another, and the personal connections bring the lessons of government structure and service to life, which is particularly important as students approach voting age.

First Steps in Planning Your Symposium:

- Decide whether the symposium speakers will join you in the classroom or online.
- Select the date and times for your program. Consider allowing 3-4 weeks for planning.
- Discuss your symposium concept with school administration.
- Schedule class time for the Inquiry and Communicating Conclusions activities in the Teach It.

3 Weeks Before Your Symposium:

- Introduce the concept of a state government symposium and discuss inviting government employees to speak to the class about their jobs.
- After completing the Inquiry Activity in the Teach It, brainstorm a list of state government employees who your students want to invite to participate and talk about their jobs.
- Be sure to think ahead and develop your own list, too, in case student speaker invitations fall through. Consider people who work at the State Library, state museums, state Capitol, Legislative Office Building, Department of Transportation, state colleges and universities, or state agencies. Source #2 will help you and your students identify potential speakers if your group doesn't have enough personal connections to build a panel. You can invite elected officials, but try to focus on unelected employees. Your state senator or representative may be able to connect you to state workers.
- Establish a deadline for finalizing a list of invited speakers and a deadline for their RSVPs.
- Send invitations to the individuals on your list of potential symposium speakers. Be sure to include the date and time of the event, an overview of the symposium format, and your expectations of speakers. You can find a sample invitation [HERE](#). You can invite students to take

a sample invitation home to give to family or friends who might want to share their work experiences with the class.

2 Weeks Before Your Symposium:

- Inform parents and school staff of the symposium and invite them to attend.
- Ask specific people in your school (school resource officer, administrators, office staff) to be “on call” to fill in for speakers that cancel last-minute. They can prepare using the instructions on the invitation. Assure your colleagues that speakers are meant to explain their work and personal experiences, so they won’t need to do a lot of preparation.

1 Week Before Your Symposium:

- Finalize your list of speakers and the schedule for your symposium.
- Create a schedule for your symposium. You can review a sample schedule [HERE](#).
- Share your schedule with parents and school staff.
- Send your speakers a confirmation email with the draft schedule, tentative list of other speakers (if desired), and instructions for arriving at school or connecting to the virtual event.
- With your students, brainstorm questions they can ask your confirmed speakers that will answer the compelling and supporting questions of the activity.
- Role-play the symposium with your students in order to clarify the process and format of the event. Review polite habits, note taking, and asking questions.

Day of Your Symposium:

- Review the schedule, polite habits, note-taking, and asking questions with your students.
- Ensure all students are clear on the format or tools for taking notes.

After Your Symposium:

- Reflect on what went well and what could be improved for future local government symposia.
- Send thank you notes to symposium speakers.
- Assign students one of the Communicating Conclusions Activities from the Teach It.