

Telling Your Story Workshop

Follow-up Tips for Scientists

Your visit to the classroom will be all-too-brief! In fact, it will be over before you know it, but there are things you can do to extend the value of your visit. Here are some ideas.

Leave Something Behind

If possible, leave something behind as a memory of your visit—a poster, a map, some bookmarks, a shell or rock, some artifact of your research, etc. You also can leave a list of resources for further learning about some of the topics you discussed. A list of web sites is particularly appropriate.

Make Yourself Available for Further Contact

In most instances you will want to provide a way for the teacher to contact you. This may be email, phone, or surface mail or all of these.

You may also want to make yourself available to the students. If so, consider how you want to be contacted. Email may be a good choice. Students may want to contact you for additional information, to ask follow-up questions, or to send a thank-you note. Often, a teacher will want the students to write you a thank-you note in their own handwriting. For this, it will be nice if they have your surface mail address.

Consider How to Maintain the Relationship

During the course of visiting the classroom and meeting the teacher you may find that there are mutually-rewarding activities that you and the teacher can continue after the visit. Perhaps there are opportunities for the teacher to visit your laboratory or research site and participate in joint research activities or in professional meetings.

Solicit Constructive Feedback

You probably want to elicit feedback from the teacher and the students on your visit. If you want constructive feedback that will allow you to really evaluate the effectiveness of the component parts of your visit the most effective way to get it is to directly ask for it. Teachers and students will be very appreciative of the time you took to visit the classroom so will be reluctant to provide any negative feedback, but candid feedback is precisely what you need if you are to learn from this visit how to improve the next one. So, here are some questions you can ask that will provide an opening for the teacher to give you constructive feedback. You could bring these up with the teacher immediately after the visit, or you could talk by phone later on, or you could type up some of these

questions and leave the sheet with the teacher to mail to you later on. Of course, you may have other specific questions you want to ask as well.

- Which parts of the visit do you think were most effective?
- Which parts do you think were the least effective?
- Which parts of the presentation do you think students found most interesting?
- Least interesting?
- What do you think the students would like to learn more about?
- Did the students talk about the visit the next day? If so, what did they say?
- Were there any parts of my presentation that you think I should modify?
- Things I should add?
- Things I should omit?
- Were there any parts of the presentation that you think were “over the heads” of the students?
- Did you notice students losing interest at any particular points?