

Community Resource People: Tip Sheet

Youth assess their own chances of success in society partially by the number of adults they know who have achieved legitimate success. The presence of additional lawyers or legal professionals in the classroom serve as a powerful message to youth that there are adults in positions of power and authority that do care about them, their thoughts, opinions, and futures. Using resource people in the classroom provides opportunities to bring in a variety of legal professionals, and interaction with legal professionals is a key component to helping students explore legal careers.

A Street Law program taught by law students has community resource people—the law students—integrated into every class. Even so, other legal professionals should be integrated into selected lessons that could be strengthened by their presence: for example, through the use of a local attorney, a police officer, or a social worker.

Simply bringing a community resource person into an educational setting is not sufficient to create a positive learning experience. The instructor should work to ensure that the experience is a positive one for both participants and the resource person. Without proper training and preparation, resource people may be unable to empower the audience they intend to help.

Community resource people can be used to:

- Make the lessons come alive by sharing firsthand experiences.
- Answer participant questions about the lesson.
- Provide technical assistance in implementing activities such as mock trials and moot courts.
- Serve as positive adult role models.

Tips and Techniques for Program Coordinators

Provide Law Students with Training in Using Community Resource People

Give law student teachers this **tip sheet** and other advice on recruiting and using resource people. Encourage law students to invite resource people to their class and to integrate them into lessons rather than letting them lecture.

Provide Law Students with a List of Willing Resource People

Some typical community resource people include lawyers, other law students, judges, and police officers. Gather a list of legal professionals or former students that are willing to be called upon to visit a classroom. We recommend checking with the following groups for these volunteers:

- Minority and female bar associations, young lawyer divisions of bar
- Legal aid or other public interest groups
- Local chapter of the Association of Corporate Counsel
- Your university or law school

- Government employees
- State Attorney General's office
- Law School alumni & Street Law program alumni
- National Association of Women Judges
- Trial lawyers association
- Police department or school's resource officer

Tips and Techniques for Law Students

Integrate Resource People into Class Activities

The resource person's participation in the class will be more effective if they are part of a lesson plan, rather than a substitute for a plan. In this capacity, a resource person might serve as the judge for a mock trial activity, help students as they work on a legal scenario, provide insider feedback during a lesson debrief, and answer student questions. Additionally, this method requires less preparation from the resource person, as they are not expected to prepare a presentation.

Encourage Effective Presentations

Typically, ineffective presentations include those that are overly technical, focus on purely legal topics, and are delivered in a lecture format. An effective presentation will be relevant to students, use language at their level, and be interactive. The easiest way to accomplish this is to integrate resource people into class lessons as described above. Any presentation from the person should include participation from students. Regardless of the method employed, visitors should present a balanced picture of the topic, including a variety of perspectives.

Prepare Resource People

When asking a resource person to participate, give them a brief summary of the class, what you are studying, why you want them to participate, and what follow-up activities are planned. Send the resource person the [visit information sheet](#). It tells the resource person the date and time of participation; length of class period; age and grade level of participants; and location of the school, parking, and classroom.

Tell the person about the lesson outcomes, topics to cover, or questions to be answered. Send the resource person a copy of the lesson in advance and let them know the specific ways you expect them to participate (e.g., review the answers to section A, assist groups with the scenarios on page 3, provide professional insight and answer student questions during debrief). Inform the person if you would like them to bring any props or supplemental materials.

The [visit information sheet](#) also contains specific tips/suggestions for the resource person. Remind the community resource person that his or her role is not to give specific, individual legal advice. Instead, resource people should focus on the selected lesson and its main objectives. If a student has a particular problem, the resource person should direct the student to community resources.

Debrief After Visit

Review the resource person's visit with the high school students to help them process. Ask questions like

- What were the major points made by the resource person?
- Do students believe the use of the resource person helped them learn about the topic?
- Did the resource person have any particular biases? If a resource person is an advocate of a particular viewpoint, introduce other viewpoints/perspectives.
- What training or education did the resource person need for their job?

Follow up with a thank you letter to the resource person. The thank you letter could be written by the law student and include high school student comments, or the high school students could write short notes on their own or collectively to thank the resource person.