Teachers: How to host an effective scientist/engineer visit

PRE-VISIT: Call, meet, or email to plan goals and logistics ahead of time.
See the Classroom Visit Planning Sheet (other side) for a comprehensive list of information you will need to share with your visitor. Make every effort to respond to your visitor within 2 days, even if it is just to make arrangements for a later conversation. Be sure to discuss these important big-picture considerations:

- **Share your goals for the presentation with your visitor** – what essential idea(s) do you hope the students will take away? (See “Teaching That Sticks” for help choosing a simple goal.)
- **Help your visitor find connections to your curriculum.** Discuss what the students are learning. Ask about your visitor’s work. Do not expect the visiting presenter to teach the students content, but instead, to inspire them to further explore the presentation topic or science in general.
- **Share any special student needs** to help you and your visitor include all students in presentation day. (visual/hearing impairments, special needs, English language ability, etc.)

DURING A VISIT: You are responsible for helping the visitor’s presentation run smoothly.
Your visitor should expect you to do the following things:

- **Help them access the building and the room** – give them a clear plan for arriving and entering.
- **Host a visit for your own students** so you’ll know them well enough to manage their behavior.
- **Stay in the classroom the entire time.** Never leave the presenter alone with students.
- **Manage any disruptive students** to keep the other students focused on the visitor.
- **Interrupt the visitor** with a request for clarification if the presentation begins to move beyond the student level of understanding, or is close to running over time - **arrange for a nonverbal signal** to give the visitor if either of these situations arises.

POST-VISIT: Follow up with your visitor and your students for lasting impact.

- **Send a Thank You Note**
  A thank you note to the presenter, written and signed by the children in the class will always be appreciated, and you’ll have your own words of thanks for the presenter’s effort as well. Older children can be encouraged to write individual letters.

- **Debrief the Visit with the Class**
  Shortly after the visit, lead a class discussion to capture students’ initial responses: What information or ideas did the students find most interesting? Were there any big surprises? How did the visit alter their perceptions of people who do what the presenter does? Do they have any unanswered questions? This is also a good time to review any concepts you feel are important to reinforce.

- **Help Students Ask Follow-up Questions**
  If the presenter has agreed, collect lingering questions – or new ones – that you or your students may have, and send them via e-mail or other means. Occasional exchanges with the presenter can add an exciting new element to the science program. Maybe the students can report some of their own new discoveries to the presenter, or respond to the questions that the presenter may have.

- **Opportunities for Longer-Term Impact**
  Has the presenter discussed aspects of the scientific or engineering process that you might adopt for long-term use in your science curriculum? Quoting a scientist whom your students know can have a special impact. For example:
  - “Do you remember that _________ spoke to us about how careful scientists are to base their claims on data? That’s also important in science class.”
  - “Do you remember we learned about a group of scientists who studied _________ for ten years before they agreed they understood how it worked? That kind of thoroughness is always important in science.”

Modified by P. Cohen, MIT NASA Astrobiology and J. Garrett, MIT Edgerton Center, from “Telling Your Story” Workshop Materials developed by TERC for the Center for Ocean Sciences Education Excellence - New England. The work was supported by NSF under Grant No. 0215456 and from the NASA Astrobiology Institute grant to MIT and a Paleontological Society Outreach Award to P. Cohen. Any opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the funding agencies.
# Classroom Visit Planning Sheet

## Contact Information

Teacher’s name: __________________________ 
(Please indicate your name)

(Student call you… __________________________)  
(Please indicate how your students should call you)

Presenter’s name: __________________________ 

School phone: __________________________ 
Work phone: __________________________

Home/cell phone: __________________________ 
Home/cell phone: __________________________

Email: __________________________ 
Email: __________________________

## Visit Information

School name: __________________________ 
Main Office phone: __________________________

Principal’s name: __________________________ 
Address: __________________________

Directions to school: __________________________

School parking: __________________________

School access procedures: 
- Check in at office 
- Badge required 
- Escort required 
- CORI/SORI

Other access info: __________________________

Where we will meet (include room number): __________________________

Time we will meet: __________________________

## Student Information

Grade level: ______ 
Number of students: ______ 
Length of class period: ______

Number of class periods (if doing multiple classes) ______

Special circumstances (students with special needs): __________________________

Curriculum the students are studying: __________________________

Teacher’s goals for the visit: __________________________

**Topic(s) presenter may talk about:** __________________________

What students already know about these topics: __________________________

Relevant student interests: __________________________

Questions students may have about these topics: __________________________

Important student skills in math, maps, graphs, etc.: __________________________

**Visuals and objects the presenter should bring in:** __________________________

## Equipment

Let your visitor know if you will be able to provide any of the following:

- Projection screen
- Overhead projector
- LCD projector
- Computer
- Internet access
- Whiteboard/chalkboard
- Flip chart
- TV/VCR
- Wall map
- Other equipment – specify:

## Room type

Let your visitor know about the space where you’ll host the visit:

- Classroom
- Cafeteria
- Laboratory
- Other __________________________

Furniture/seating arrangement:

- Tables
- Lab benches
- Desks
- Sink