

Educators' Top Tips for Engaging Audiences

For All Audiences:

- Write thank-you notes when someone is doing their job well
- Talk up all agency programs when interacting with community members
- Build and maintain quality relationships
- Have clear and consistent marketing across your catchment area
- Be consistent- don't cancel!
- Use every "in" you can – networking, personal connections, referrals & references
- Attitude! Act like you love it. It's relevant to you, too!

Grades K-5 (Elementary School)

- Use your parent contacts
- Make contacts through other community agencies: Child Abuse and Neglect councils and other community resources, guidance departments, and Parent-Teacher Organizations (PTO/PTA)
- Internet safety is a great way to get in to elementary schools initially, then you can work with them to offer other programs, like personal body safety puppets.
- An in-person visit with puppet is a great ice breaker
- Speak slowly and clearly
- 4th-5th graders aren't as young as we think- don't talk down to them (or anyone!)

Grades 6-8 (Middle School)

- Give school what they want and expect in your first years of contact before suggesting other programming that may feel less "safe" for them
- Interactive activities get up & move around
- Ask guidance and principals if they have specific issues they're dealing with in their environments and what we could help them address
- They are older than they look! Don't talk down to them.
- Use humor- be funny, make jokes!
- Play the most current popular videos while students file into the classroom, so you have their attention immediately
- Emphasize how you can link programs to the Maine Learning Results
- Share statistics about percentages of kids harassed, bullied or victimized by abuse/violence (from the Maine Integrated Health Survey)

Grades 9-Cert (High school)

- Use peer educators
- Remember what it was like to be in high school: be cool, make jokes to be approachable
- Wear hip clothing
- Speak honestly & realistically
- Emphasize consent- use interactive activities to illustrate the concept

- Relate to your audience. Tailor the presentation to the specific age group you're working with- freshmen are different from seniors

College/University

- Build strong contacts at the school
- Access students through residence life directors
- Collaborate with campus-based anti-violence providers or organizations
- Use Facebook/Twitter updates
- Use interactive presentations with any and all campus organizations: blanket the student body

For Parents/Community

- Host free community events and tie them to food, art, music, etc.
- Go through the town council (for example, host a meeting after towns vote on sex offender ordinances- time presentations to coincide with hot issues)
- An easy sell is always technology safety
- Hold parent info nights and include agency and program info
- Recognize teachers and schools during awards and events

For Very Small Groups

- Presentations to very small groups can be challenging, and also offer some of the best opportunities to connect individually with students. Students are usually more willing to risk sharing and engaging within a small group versus a large one. There is a lot of unplanned, genuine discussion. Smaller groups also allow you more time and space to do things that you might not be able to with a large group.
- If you have an even ratio of male and female students, it is a good opportunity to try some activities with split gender groups and some with same gender groups.
- Some presenters prefer to sit with small groups, instead of stand, to encourage the intimacy of the discussion.
- For very small groups, board-type games that would never work with a big group can be perfect for a handful of people.
- Some activities that work in large groups will work fine in small groups, but won't take as long, so need to be prepared with supplemental activities. A read-aloud for young students can be a great "time-filler."
- Small groups can work on a group project; for example, everyone can design a page for a class book and then the book can be compiled right there on the spot.
- For older students, it's a good chance to focus on facilitating a conversation among the class.
- If you know in advance that a class will be very small, consider requesting that the teacher/guidance counselor/education techs or all of the above actually participate in the class to help flesh out the numbers.

Professionals

- Have a clear and current website design
- Follow-up with emails
- Use your contacts
- Invite yourself to committee meetings, staff meetings, rotary clubs
- Host a "lunch and learn"
- Make your schedule and topic work for them- defer to their busy schedule
- Speak to their specific concerns and what will help them best relate to your cause

- Have clear and concise brochures: no dramatic photos, don't be wordy, use your brochures when making contact

Resistant School Districts

- Speak their language and dress like them
- Invite administrators to observe presentations in another school
- Ask administrators from non-resistant schools to talk to resistant schools
- Use references from other neighboring districts and letters of recommendation
- Reiterate your program's "FAB" (feature/advantage/benefit) during initial meeting or introduction.
- Brief powerful statistics can illustrate your benefits- especially local ones, like the Maine Integrated Youth Healthy Survey.
- Use quotes from actual students that illustrate the impact SV education has had on them.
- Find an ally within the school district- a teacher, parent other community member
- Use examples from community projects/other school districts
- Make a deal – agree on presentable material- allow school district to have lots of say over what happens, and how, and then evaluate the effort
- Send out a different kind of letter (like a newsletter) and address it to specific people (as many as possible)