

Planning the Capitol Forum

This is the point at which all of the pieces of your programming year are coming together. You are about to have 80 students, 20 teachers, elected and public officials, area media, and invited guests arrive at the state capitol and you are responsible for making it all run smoothly. It will — if your planning is thorough. This chapter of the guide will help you. It covers agenda planning, leader preparation, materials preparation, and people flow and other logistics.

Goals of the Day at the Capitol

- Bring students from different schools together to deliberate about the role of the United States in today's world.
- Provide an opportunity for these students to express their convictions and their concerns to elected and public officials.
- Prepare these students to return to their classrooms and lead their classmates in a similar deliberative process culminating in a ballot to be shared with elected officials.
- Engage these students in an authentic experience with government officials so that they will want to remain active in civic affairs in the future.

Planning the Agenda

The Capitol Forum day comprises six main activities: Welcome and Presentation of Students' Concerns, Breakout Session I on Global Issues, Breakout Session II on the Four Futures, the Hearing on the Four Futures, Breakout Session III on deliberation on the Futures, and the Conversation with Elected Officials and Policymakers.

Included at the end of this section is an annotated forum agenda and a forum overview from the organizer's perspective. The annotated agenda will be included in the *Curriculum Resource Book Part II* (CRB-II). However, it is also available online as a Word document and should be adapted as needed for local differences and provided to all participating teachers at the pre-forum planning meeting.

The CRB-II also has a guide for lead teachers and guides for all Breakout Sessions. The annotated agenda and the guides are provided to all participating teachers so that they have both the specifics of their breakout session and the context for this so that they can prepare appropriately. It also helps them when they prepare their students—those who will attend as representatives and those remaining behind—for the day.

Breakout leaders should prepare for their role well in advance of the forum day. Organizers will need to familiarize themselves with these resources as well.

Class Statements and Posters

As part of their classroom preparation, each class prepares a “class statement” and a poster reflecting the international concerns and priorities of their classmates.

Teachers will post their class statement to the Capitol Forum website prior to the forum. The state organizer should print out the class statements from their state and include them in guest packets at the forum. (You may also wish to provide a copy in the student packets.)

Posters are presented at the opening of the forum.

If schools are coming in the night before

In some states geography may dictate that students arrive for the forum the night before. In Illinois, Indiana, and West Virginia, most schools arrive the afternoon before the forum and stay together at a hotel. They have used this time as an opportunity for students to meet with their state legislators in the afternoon and to spend time together in the evening. They organize a pizza party in the evening and include various activities to bring students together and prime the pump for the next day.

International Jeopardy has been a central attraction—featuring questions related to the readings covered in the background materials and news from the front page. They also have moved poster presentations to the evening. This provides an opportunity for greater discussion about the posters and the pre-forum classroom discussion, and freed up time the next day for longer sessions.

Welcome and Presentation of Class Posters

The opening session of the forum introduces student participants to the program sponsors, and introduces the purpose and topic of the Capitol Forum. This is an opportunity for the Secretary of State and representatives of other sponsoring organizations to welcome students to their state capitol and to address the students on the importance of their participation in the policymaking process. Following these introductory remarks, this session will be moderated by the lead teacher, who will need to introduce him or herself to the students and set the tone for the activities to follow.

Posters are presented at the start of the forum as a way to introduce the school teams and begin the conversation on global issues. These presentations should be limited to one



Lincoln, Nebraska



Hartford Connecticut

minute each. Half of your schools (10) will present their posters at the opening session and half after Breakout Session I.

Breakout Session I: Global Issues

Each student will come to the Capitol Forum prepared to discuss one of the four global issues addressed this year. Each student will be assigned a different global issue. In preparation for the day, their teacher will have given each student the appropriate background readings and policy options for the topic they are assigned. Teachers will forward the global issue student assignments to the state organizer as part of the student media release forms.

Breakout facilitators will oversee a discussion of the global issue and the policies options on that issue. This discussion is intended to combine dialogue and deliberation.

[See “Guidelines for Deliberation” in the resources section of the Capitol Forum website for discussion of this process.]

At the end of the session, facilitators from each breakout will select one student to serve on the afternoon’s Senate Foreign Relations panel. Thus, the Senate Foreign Relations panel will be made up of one student from each content area.



Photo: Michael Shea

Springfield, Illinois

Breakout Session II: The Four Futures

For this second breakout session, students will be assigned to look at one of four possible “Futures” or policy directions concerning the role of the United States in the world. You will make these breakout session assignments ahead of time so that you can “jigsaw” the students and create four groups with a (nearly) equal distribution of global issues experts. Students will use this session to look in depth at their assigned Future and to prepare to present and advocate its merits in the afternoon plenary session. Students will be encouraged to apply their knowledge of their assigned global issue to the discussion of their Future. Each breakout leader will select two students to launch the presentation of their assigned Future during the afternoon hearing. The rest of the students will prepare to address clarifying questions pertaining to how their assigned Future addresses the global issue they have been working on.

The final segment of this breakout session involves a “dry-run” of the Future presentation.

A fifth group of students, the “Senate Foreign Relations” panel, will also be meeting at this time. This panel will be prepared by the lead teacher, or a designated teacher, to ask questions of each Futures group during the hearing on the Four Futures. Their goal will be to draw clarifications of each Future from the assembled students charged with advocating for it.

Lunch and Free Time

A simple meal—pizza or sandwiches—is recommended.

Hearing on the Four Futures

All students will enter the hearing on the Futures and sit together within their Futures groups. The Senate Foreign Relations panel will be seated at the front of the room facing the assembled students. This session is generally held in a legislative chamber to help set the scene for a policy hearing.

Each Future is presented and discussed in turn. The Future is introduced by two students who have been selected during Breakout Session II. The Senate Foreign Relations panel will then direct questions to the policy experts within each Future group (i.e. the rest of the group). The goal of this session is to give each of the four Futures a full and fair hearing. Future groups are expected to make a strong, yet realistic, case for their assigned Futures. Senate Foreign Relations panelists are expected to ask questions that will further illuminate the Future and highlight its distinctive characteristics and its differences from other positions.

Coming to Terms with the Futures—A Straw Poll

Following the hearing on the Futures, students are asked to drop their role as advocate of an assigned future and to begin to articulate their own positions on U.S. foreign policy. To aid in this transition, and to break the spell of the role-playing that took place during the Futures hearing, students will have a chance to “vote” for their top two preferred Futures. You will place a simple poster, one for each of the

Futures, within the meeting room. Students will be provided with colored dot stickers, one blue and one red (for example), and will be instructed to place the blue dot on their number one Future and the red dot on their number two. This exercise provides an instant snapshot of student thinking and an interesting visual reference for the conversation with elected officials that follows.

Conversation with Elected Officials and Policymakers

In the final session of the Capitol Forum involves an open forum with elected officials and policymakers. This should be a highly interactive session. The goals of this session are to give students an opportunity to deliberate with one another and to share their thoughts, concerns, and ideas with elected officials and policymakers, giving the officials an opportunity to hear from young people. The lead teacher will serve as moderator of this session.

Note: The lead teacher will want to keep the goals of this session in mind as it is easy for both students and officials to fall back into more familiar patterns in which students ask questions and elected officials respond. The lead teacher may need to redirect the conversation from time to time to maintain the balance between the panel and the students.

Wrap Up

The Capitol Forum closes with a summation from the lead teacher and perhaps a few words from the Secretary of State or state organizer. The lead teacher should also review the work that is to take place when students and teachers return to their classrooms.



Springfield, Illinois

Leader Guides

There are leader guides for each of the breakout sessions and a lead teacher's guide for the full day. It is important that all leaders understand the purpose and approach of the sessions they will lead and how they fit into the overall context of the day. The guides are available online from the Organizing and Leadership Resources and in the CRB-II.

Establishing Your Panel of Elected Officials & Policymakers

Selecting your panel participants is a key task and one that may occupy a significant part of your time as an organizer.

~ The importance of a good microphone system ~

When students are presenting their posters, presenting their assigned Futures, and discussing their own views in the House Chamber with elected officials a good sound system is critical. Most Capitol Forum programs have been given access to the microphone system in the chamber. This is ideal. However, everyone's situation varies slightly. If you need ideas about how to handle this, give the Capitol Forum Coordinator a call. We have seen many variations.

Approaching Elected Officials

Senators, representatives, state legislators—these are busy people. And their schedules are frequently not set until the last minute. Nonetheless, the programs that have been the most successful have asked early and often. This is a relationship that needs to be nurtured from the beginning. Let them know early (in the fall) what the program is about, when the forum will take place, and why they will want to be there. This is not one more talk. It is an opportunity to encourage youth civic engagement, an issue that has been gaining currency with elected officials in recent years.

What if they can't come to the state capitol on the day of the forum? At the Nebraska and the Utah Capitol Forums, their senators have participated via teleconference from the Capitol in Washington. In Connecticut, Senator Dodd was unable to attend but videotaped a message to the students greeting them and letting them know how important their work at the forum and in the classroom is and that he was looking forward to receiving the ballot report later in the spring. That's also a wonderful entree to next year.

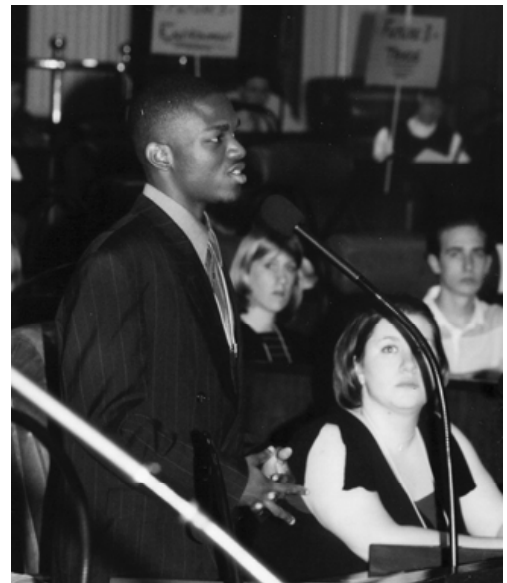
What if a senator or representative would like to participate but is unable to attend at the time of your forum session? The Rhode Island Capitol Forum has adjusted their morning schedule to make room for an additional session with their senators.



Providence, Rhode Island



Hartford, Connecticut



Springfield, Illinois



Salt Lake City, Utah



Springfield, Illinois

Photos: Michael Shea

Your first effort should be to engage elected officials. The focus of the program is two-fold: to engage young people in consideration of our country's relationship to the larger world and to help them to find their voice in the public arena. It is important that they have an opportunity during the forum to express their views on international issues to those who have been elected to represent them.

Ideally, your panel will include some federal officials who have direct responsibilities in international relations — a Senator or Congressional Representative, for instance. Bear in mind, though, that one of the goals of the Capitol Forum is to help students appreciate the connections between foreign policy choices and local concerns. You may well find state officials who are articulate and passionate about global issues. As always, you will need to strive to balance this panel to represent different viewpoints and roles within the policymaking sphere.

Your job will be made doubly hard by the busy schedules of the people you wish most to attract. For this reason, we suggest you begin to contact potential panelists very early in the year. It's never too soon to get on an official's calendar. While you will no doubt have to wait until the last moment for a final answer, you will at least have brought the Capitol Forum to their attention and established a relationship with staff people who might be quite valuable in the future. As your partner in this program, your Secretary of State can be particularly helpful in gaining the attention and ultimately the participation of elected officials. Do not hesitate to ask for this help.

The ideal panel size is in the three to five person range, but plan for last minute cancellations and substitutions. If you can do so diplomatically, line up a few "B team" panelists who can come at the last minute.



Raleigh, North Carolina

Note: Make sure your panelists have a clear understanding of the role you want them to play during the forum. Elected officials are usually expected to make speeches. Students are used to asking questions.

These roles are reversed, or at least skewed, at the Capitol Forum. Students will be encouraged to make policy statements and officials to ask questions and pose counter arguments. Your lead teacher will be prepared to moderate this session. However s/he may find it a challenge to keep panelists and students from reverting to their usual roles. Careful preparation of panelists in advance of the forum will go a long way toward keeping things in balance.

Need help explaining the role?

Need some help in introducing your prospective panelists to the purpose of the conversation with elected officials? In response to a request, we have developed an overview located in the resource materials of this section and online.

Should Students Be Assigned Futures in Advance?

Some teachers make the argument that students will do a better job presenting their assigned Future during the hearing on the Futures if they are assigned prior to the forum, we recommend that you not do this. The Capitol Forum is not a competition; it is a conversation. Students should be familiar with all four Futures through the pre-forum lesson, but they should be ready to argue any one of them equally when they arrive. The idea is to open their minds to a range of views; not to close them from most in order to make a case for just one. In other words, the Futures are a tool to help broaden discussion.

Logistics of the Day

Registration

You will need to have a system in place to register schools and guests and distribute materials for the day. These materials will include information packets for students, teachers, and guests, as well as nametags and breakout leaders' supplies. Your registration desk workers should also be prepared to answer questions regarding parking, rest rooms and other facilities, forum locations, etc.

Breakout Sessions and Assignments

During the morning segment of the Capitol Forum, students will participate in two breakout sessions. The first arranges participants according to their assigned topic (global environment, trade, terrorism, nuclear proliferation, or immigration). In essence, the teachers make the first session assignments when they give each student a global issue prior to coming to the Forum. The second breakout session is to discuss the Futures. The assignments for the second breakout session are not known to the students prior to the forum, but students should be familiar with the Futures as part of the pre-forum lesson.

The second breakout session is a jigsaw of the first with the goal being to have the global issues equally represented within each of the four Futures groups. Your job is to reassign the students for Session II. You will make these assignments several days in advance of the Capitol Forum. (Breakout assignments are discussed later in this section)

For Breakout Sessions I and II, you will need to have reserved 4 small meeting rooms

(close to the chamber if possible) that will hold about 20 students that are set up in a way that will promote dialogue and interaction with the other student's in the group.

Posters

Registration is a good time to collect posters from students. You or a volunteer can then set up for the presentations or ask students to deliver posters to the meeting room where someone can be assigned to handle the set up.

Note: Establish, in advance of the forum, an order for poster presentations based upon travel times so you are not caught waiting for a group from the far end of your state. Teachers may also appreciate knowing in advance if their students will be called to present in the first or second group.

Have all of the posters on display in the main meeting room or rotunda area during the forum day. They provide an interesting backdrop for photos and students appreciate the opportunity to view other students' work. The posters give your guests and the media a glimpse into student thinking on the forum topics.

Have a comment paper or journal in front of each poster for everyone to have the opportunity to make a written comment for the students to take back to their fellow classmates. Another option is to give each person an index card for each poster to make comments and then drop them in a box that has been placed in front of each poster.

If your state capitol has an exhibit area, you may want to arrange for the posters to be hung following the forum. (The exhibit schedule is probably set far in advance, so make

your arrangements for display and/or storage early.) Following the event, the student posters may also be displayed at events where you are promoting the Capitol Forum.

It will be impossible for you to guarantee the safety of posters that are put on public display. For this reason, the poster guidelines provided to teachers caution against the use of photos or materials that cannot be replaced. Returning the posters to the schools following these post-forum displays would be a logistical nightmare. We recommend that teachers tell their students that posters will be left at the state capitol for various displays and will not be returned, but the organizer may want to keep several for promotional purposes or as samples.

Meals & Snacks

If possible and affordable, a continental breakfast upon arrival is a nice way to welcome everyone. Lunch for all Capitol Forum participants is a must. A simple meal—pizza or sandwiches—is recommended as the time set aside for lunch is short.

In large states, where distances may dictate that schools arrive the night before and/or



Lincoln, Nebraska

leave the next morning, you may want to provide a breakfast and/or dinner on the Capitol Forum day. If you have the money, or a special sponsor, a more formal dinner at the close of the Capitol Forum would be a nice touch.

The question of snacks for breaks is not easily answered, although it is a welcome respite and energy booster. In addition to the costs (cookies and soda for 100 adds up!), you will want to consider the extra time needed to do that, and whether food and beverages may be prohibited from some meeting areas.

Photos & Video

The Capitol Forum—in the setting of the state capitol, in the presence of elected officials, and with the participation of dozens of active and engaged students—is a very photogenic event. Make arrangements to record the day in photos and/or video.

Your state capitol may already be wired for video. There may even be capitol photographers who can be retained for free or a small fee. A participating teacher or the alternate student with a flare for photography can serve as the official photographer. Or you might want to invite a student video team from one of the participating high schools to create a class project.

If you do find that you need to hire a freelance photographer, we think you will find that it is money well spent. You will make good use of the photos in all of your promotional efforts. Photos of each school team with their poster, and perhaps the Secretary of State, would probably be welcome in the local newspaper or the lobby of the high school. Photos and/or video of students engaged in

Poster Presentations

Student posters are usually presented to the full assembly in two batches, the first at the opening of the day and the second following the break between the first and second breakout sessions. Alternatively you could set up the posters around the room, then ask half of the schools to stay with their posters in order to discuss them with the other teams as they circulate around the room. Then they switch and the other half presents while the first half circulates. This gives students an opportunity to speak in small groups about the work that expresses the views of their classmates.

the dialogue, can be used to help explain the program to potential funders or co-sponsors as well as potential teacher applicants.

Local college and university publication offices can be a good source of referrals for photographers and videographers. These offices are also used to tight budgets and they know which photographers work well with this age group.

The Guest List

The Capitol Forum day is a great opportunity to showcase your efforts to funders, state officials, and leaders within your state's education community. You will no doubt want to extend invitations to your current underwriters and co-sponsors. You may even want to find specific roles for some of these guests (poster evaluation, lunch speakers, etc.).

We also suggest special outreach to state officials. A letter from the Secretary of State, explaining the day and inviting members to come by, may be all that is needed. Many state legislators would appreciate the opportunity to greet students and teachers from their districts. You will also be laying the groundwork for greater participation by some of these state officials in future years.

Preparing Forum Materials

Materials Packets

You will need to prepare several different types of materials packets for the Capitol Forum for teachers, students, special guests, and members of the media. Many of the packet inserts are provided online or as reproducible materials in the Curriculum Resource Book that was distributed at the Introductory Workshop. You will be responsible for others, such as a list of participants and the day's agenda. The "Capitol Forum Packets Grid" in the resource materials provides details for the packet assembly.

Additional Materials

You will also need to prepare signs, nam-

etags, breakout lists, etc., to help make the event run smoothly. Much of this work hinges on information you will gather from student media release forms collected by participating teachers. Five media release forms should be distributed to each participating teacher at the pre-forum planning meeting.

Ask the teachers to carefully complete the forms, filling in each student's name (as it should appear on certificates of participation and name tags) and the student's assigned topic. The fifth form is for an alternate. Students will need to take the form home for a parent to sign, giving consent to use of the student's name, likeness, etc., in the media. Teachers should fax the forms to the state organizer as soon as possible (at least two weeks before the forum). You may want to ask that they mail or bring the hard copy forms to the forum so that you will have the original signatures for your files.

You will need the student information from these forms to put together many of the materials for the forum. These materials include: breakout assignments list, nametags, certificates of participation, folder labels, a list of schools and participants (to place in folders), and a poster presentation list.

1. Breakout Assignments List

This will be an internal document for use by the lead teacher, breakout leaders, and state organizer. The lists are useful in directing students to their assigned breakouts. In Breakout Session II, breakout leaders may also find that the list is useful in forming policy expert groups and in selecting students to serve as presenters.

To assemble a list, create a word processing file with eight sections:

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------|
| 1. Global Issue 1 | 5. Future 1 |
| 2. Global Issue 2 | 6. Future 2 |
| 3. Global Issue 3 | 7. Future 3 |
| 4. Global Issue 4 | 8. Future 4 |

As the student media release forms come in, add the student and school name under the appropriate Session I topic, then assign one

student from each school to a Future. Under the Futures list the student's name, school and their Session I topic.

You also want to make sure that you don't put two students from the same school in the same future, leaving one future uncovered. Remember, each teacher will need to have a student who is prepared to present each of the four Futures during the post-forum classroom lesson and balloting. (Students who are selected to serve on the Senate Foreign Relations panel will be familiar with all four Futures.)

As you make Futures assignments, balance each group so that each global issue is equally or nearly equally represented. Pay some attention to the balance of girls vs. boys. As a final step, write each student's Session II assignment on the student media release form.

Make several copies of the breakout lists: one for each of the eight breakout facilitators, the lead teacher, and a few extra for organizers. They are useful when someone is wandering the halls looking for his session.

2. Nametags

Prior to the forum, you will create a nametag with each student's name and color codes that correspond to the student's assigned topic and Future.

For uniformity and readability, we suggest printing name tags (sticky or cards in plastic holders) from a word processing or page layout computer program using your Capitol Forum or Watson logo with space for participants names and schools. All confirmed participants should have a nametag: students, teachers, staff, and guests. Print name tags to hold aside for unconfirmed guests. Blank nametags, printed with the logo but not name, should also be brought to the site for last minutes additions and corrections.

After the nametags are printed, add a colored sticker or write in a code that designates each student's Breakout Session II assignment (i.e., " F1" for Future One breakout).

Keep the nametags organized by schools. It saves time at registration if you can distribute materials bundled by school, rather than alphabetically by participant.

3. Certificates of Participation

Produce a template for a certificate with student names and schools added as they become available. The certificates can be printed on a nice paper stock with a pre-printed border.

Getting the Right Students in the Right Breakouts—Color Coding

When creating your breakout list, name tag codes, and room assignments, you may find it useful to adopt a color coding scheme:

Global Issue 1.....Green	Future One.....Green
Global Issue 2.....Red	Future Two.....Red
Global Issue 3.....Yellow	Future Three.....Yellow
Global Issue 4.....Blue	Future Four.....Blue

Signs directing students to breakout rooms may make use of the color coding scheme. Rolls of crepe paper streamers in the four colors would also be useful to tie to door knobs and to mark sections of seats for the hearing on the four Futures in your main meeting space, when students will need to be seated with the rest of their Breakout Session II members.

This system may seem excessive, but it might help to get everyone to the correct breakout sessions on time, not a small matter given the tight schedule and the likelihood that your meeting spaces will be quite spread out.

4. Folders

You will assemble three different types of folders: student, teacher, and media/guest. It's a good idea to use three different labels or folder colors. A small mailing label with the student's or teacher's name and school can cut down on the problem of folders left behind in breakout rooms. While everyone will start out with a basic packet of materials appropriate to their type, students and teachers will add to and make notes on their materials as the day progresses. Breakout facilitators will distribute appropriate handouts during the breakout sessions and students should be encouraged to keep handouts and notes for use in their post-forum classroom presentations in their folders.

5. List of Participating Schools, Teachers, and Students

As the student media release forms come in, create a list of participating schools, teachers, and students to place in everyone's folder.

6. Poster Presentation List

Half of your posters will be presented prior to Breakout Session I and the other half prior to Breakout Session II. It is helpful to decide on the order of presentation ahead of time. Divide the schools into two groups, trying for some balance. (You wouldn't want the youngest groups to present one after the other, or all the rural schools to be grouped together, etc.) Schedule schools that you know will be on time in the first presentation group. If the order can be determined early on, it can be printed on the agenda. (Pro: The students will know when to be ready. Con: One last detail that might delay the agenda's preparation. Removes flexibility if lead teacher or organizers should decide to change the order for any reason.)

Each school will be asked to include their school name prominently on the front of their poster. However, printed table tents with the school names placed in front of each poster are easier to read and add a touch of uniformity.

Checking In With Teachers

Participating teachers will leave the pre-forum planning meeting with preparation work to do with their students prior to the forum. The lead teacher should contact each participating teacher in the weeks leading up to the forum to see that everything is going well, that teachers and students understand the preparation work and have it under control, and to ask if there are any questions or concerns prior to the forum. Your lead teacher should also touch base with participating teachers concerning the logistics of the day—arrival time, parking arrangements, where to check in and leave posters, anything that might be confusing.

Checking in with Breakout Facilitators

It is also the responsibility of your lead teacher to prepare your selected breakout facilitators. There will be a session at the pre-forum planning meeting on breakout sessions.

Breakout leaders will be working in pairs to prepare for and facilitate these sessions. In the week prior to the forum, your lead teacher should contact breakout facilitators to review plans.

Session I and II breakout facilitator guidelines are available online.

Working With the Media

Your Secretary of State's office will be an important partner in your media relations efforts at the Capitol Forum site. At this point in the year, you will already have worked closely with the Secretary's media staff. These media officers have established relationships with statehouse reporters. Ask for their assistance during the Capitol Forum day or have someone assigned to introduce reporters to key participants, answer basic questions, and keep

track of which reporters showed up.

You will want to prepare information packets for reporters. Key items to include are a list of participating schools and students, background on the organizers and state and national sponsors, an agenda, and copies of previous media releases.

The Importance of Evaluation

At the end of the forum day, each student will be asked to complete an evaluation of the forum program. A standard form, provided by Choices, will be included in each student

packet. These evaluations provide valuable feedback from students on how to make the program better. Many of the student comments are also good material for reports and funding proposals. Please take the time at the end of the forum day to have students complete and turn in the evaluation forms. It only takes a few minutes to do and can provide immediate feedback while it is fresh in their minds.

Teachers will also receive an evaluation form in their packets. These evaluations will be completed at school after the teacher has finished the post-forum lessons and activities. Forward copies of these evaluations to the Choices office.

Collecting Evaluations

Collecting evaluations from students can help shape your program for next year, and it can be a wonderful source of student quotes that help to explain the program to others. Make time at the end of the day for students to complete student evaluations and hand them in to someone as they leave the room.

You can require the teacher evaluation be returned prior to CEU being processed.