

USING HIV + SPEAKERS IN YOUR CLASSROOM: TEACHER ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES CONTRACT

The teacher requesting an HIV positive speaker plays a unique role. Because this speaker will be coming without an agency educator/advocate, you must play that role not only for your students, but also for this visiting speaker. You are the safety net for a speaker who is taking risks by revealing some very personal information. You are the safety net for students who probably never met anyone with HIV before and/or might have family wounds similar to the speaker's, which may be triggered by such an event. Here is a list of responsibilities we are asking you to agree to in order to participate in this program.

- Before the day of the speaker's visit, make sure that the class has some basic HIV knowledge: transmission basics, definitions of terms like HIV, AIDS, T-cells, etc. Students should understand how courageous it is for the speaker to share her/his story and the continued risk of "stigma" and discrimination that HIV positive individuals face. For more information, see *HIV+ Speakers Program Curriculum Guide for the Classroom*.
- When you meet the speaker before class, let them know if there are any students in the class who have situations warranting special consideration. *Don't use a student's name and don't point out who they are*, but say something like, "Some students in our community have lost a parent to AIDS," or "One or more students in this school is in recovery for injection drug use."
- Be present during the entire time your speaker is presenting.
- Treat the speaker as if she/he were a guest at your dinner table. Play the role of warm host/ess even if they tell a story of behavior you do not approve of or disagree with.
- When introducing the speaker, do not disclose her or his status as a person living with HIV. Allow the speaker to make that disclosure when s/he feels it is the right time.
- Intervene with your students if their questions are asked in a confrontational or degrading tone. Do not allow people to ask questions in hurtful ways. Ask: "How would you frame that question if this were a guest at your dinner table?"
- Let the students see you touch the speaker (e.g., shake hands, put your hand on his/her shoulder) before and after they disclose their status. Sitting close to them and/or touching them reassures students that contact with an HIV infected person is not risky.
- If the speaker gets confused or lost, help by reminding them of where they are in their story.
- If the speaker makes an erroneous comment, interrupt gently and explain to the class that you want to clarify the comment or information provided.

- Prepare a list of questions in case there is extra time and/or the students can't think of any. A question posted by the teacher will often help students feel free to ask further questions.
- Be sure to leave time to process with the students immediately after the speaker has left the room or, if not possible, then at the beginning of the next class. If you like, start by acknowledging your own feelings about what has been shared. Ask them about their feelings. Ask what they thought the speaker's feelings might be. You can also give age-appropriate ideas for students to get involved in prevention (e.g. volunteering, etc.).
- Complete and submit to CHL (using the enclosed SASE) the *Teacher Evaluation of HIV+ Speaking Engagement*.
- Assign, collect, screen for crisis intervention and submit to CHL the *Student Thank You Letter/Evaluation*.
- If a student reveals that s/he or someone else is in danger or at risk, follow the reporting guidelines in your school policy.

As a teacher using the HIV+ Speakers Program, I agree to the responsibilities outlined above.

Printed name

Signature

Date

Please sign, make a copy and return by email: info@healthandlearning.org, fax (802) 254-5816 or mail to: Center for Health and Learning 28 Vernon St. Suite 319 Brattleboro, VT 05301