

Tips for Making Your All-School Assemblies Work Well

From 60 in 60 presentation at CADA 10

- 1) First and foremost – Why have an all-school assembly:
 - a. Learning “large group behavior”
 - i. They will need these skills in large classes in College or other learning experiences.
 - ii. The only behavior they are taught right now is Pep Rally behavior
 - iii. They will need them for honors assemblies, plays, formal concerts, graduations, lectures, etc.
 - b. To offer students the opportunity to learn from people outside the class room on subjects that are important to their education – self-respect, safety, personal responsibility, personal motivation, etc..
- 2) Consider having follow-up activities developed for after the assembly to emphasize the important learning points from the experience:
 - a. Most speakers have follow-up questions or activities on their websites
 - b. For awards assemblies and concerts there is an opportunity to have the students write descriptive narratives or observations about the experience.
 - c. There is always an opportunity to conduct a written evaluation of the event to help improve the activity in the future. Everyone loves to believe their comments make a difference and they can when you solicit them.
- 3) Always have an authority figure address the gathering first and calm the crowd. Nothing says this is important and or serious like the administrator.

- 4) Make sure the administrator knows to ask for quiet and to praise the audience for something. Do not begin remarks until the room is focused and quiet.
- 5) The administrator should introduce the student assigned to do the introduction drawing attention to the credentials of that student. "Ladies and gentlemen please welcome to the microphone your Student Body President, Bla, blab la." Applause.
- 6) The introduction is one of the most important components to setting up the speech. If possible have it done by someone who has heard the speaker personally and enjoyed them. Failing that make sure the introducer does the research to discover the important points this speaker brings to this audience. Most of us have websites with some kind of intro or bio available there. I prefer the student create his or her own introduction for me but man want the professionally written intro. Find out what the speaker wants and deliver that.
- 7) If you are using a gym consider setting the gym up with all the people on one side and on the floor. Most youth speakers I know can hold the attention of even the ones on the floor and would prefer that the audience is looking at the speaker and not each other across the floor. It makes for more powerful contact. If the floor isn't an option consider doing two assemblies so the audience can face the speaker. If that is not possible, consider pushing the sides back from the end where the speaker will stand and putting chairs on the floor so that you create a horse shoe with a platform for the speaker.
- 8) Sound systems are a must. Gym sound systems are NOT good enough no matter how good they are. It is always best to bring in a big sound system and point the speakers at the audience. Most band directors have such a system they use on the practice field available to bring into the gym.
- 9) Most student bodies are only taught pep rally behavior. When you are hosting a speaker in a gym, it is vital that the expected behavior is

explained. That can be done in the class room with a letter from the administration to be taught by the faculty or over the pa system or in the gym before the presentation. Stated expectations should cover: side conversations cause too much background noise so they need to be avoided; if the presenter asks for involvement, please get involved, respect the guest at your school, etc...

- 10) If you have assemblies you know which groups will have difficulty focusing and staying focused. It is always good to meet with them before hand and work out a plan to help them. That plan could be to bust them up so they are not together, or to offer them the opportunity to go somewhere other than the assembly or to position an authority figure with them to help them stay focused.
- 11) The assembly should be turned from the speaker back to an authority figure by the speaker so the dismissal is conducted in an orderly fashion.
- 12) You should have a check list for assemblies that include all the necessary items.

Assembly/Large Group Gathering Checklist

FUNCTION PURPOSE

- Celebration/recognition
- Education/information
- Motivation/inspiration

RESERVE SITE

- Gymnasium

- Auditorium
- Cafeteria/Multi-purpose room
- Library
- Stadium
- Other

DETERMINE ALTERNATIVES

- Study hall
- Other

AUDIO ELEMENTS

- Sound system
- Music / Band
- Other

ASSEMBLY LENGTH

OPTIONAL ELEMENTS

- Presentation of Colors
- Invocation
- Other

AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE

- Attendees review before event (students and adults)

CROWD CONTROL

- Seating arrangement
- Teachers sitting with students
- Praise for good behavior

GETTING ATTENTION

- Spirit key
- Mascot
- Music stopping
- Other

KEEPING ATTENTION

- Extra credit on material
- Use the band
- Staff help students pay attention
- Other

AUTHORITY FIGURE

- Meet the group

Date:

To:

From:

Subject: School Assemblies - Expected Behavior

Ladies and gentlemen:

It seems appropriate to explain some of the expectations of our assembly program at (name of school). We human beings gather in large audiences to listen to new ideas and to gather useful information for our lives, celebrate both personal and group accomplishment, to get excited, and to be entertained. Different behaviors are acceptable for each of these gatherings. You will be “information-gathering” audiences all the rest of your life - in college, at political rallies, in churches, and in theaters. Knowing what is polite and acceptable behavior and practicing that behavior is in everyone’s best interest. We would not want you to embarrass yourself by not knowing what to do in such situations.

Because of the nature of large gatherings, it is not acceptable to sit and visit with those around you. The murmur is distracting to others and it appears rude to the speaker. Everyone needs to sit quietly and concentrate on what is being said. That is the polite and respectful thing to do. It allows others in the audience to get the maximum benefit from the presentation. If you believe you will be tempted to carry on side conversations with those around you while the presentation is in progress, please move to a location with less possible distractions.

If you believe you will have difficulty paying attention, please let us know so we can make other arrangements for a better use of your time and energy. We have established another room for you to use as a Study Hall. You may choose to go there if you wish. If you choose to attend the assembly and if for some reason we need to ask you to leave, please leave quietly so the others can continue to enjoy the presentation. Also, if you know ahead of time that you will need to leave early, please sit in the back or near a door so your leaving will be as inconspicuous as possible. Thank you!

Many presenters ask for audience participation. Appropriate responses are part of the group experience and help each audience member maximize the experience. To that end, it is best to participate if what you are asked to do does not offend you or compromise your beliefs.

Not every presentation you will attend in your life will be interesting and action-packed. We do the best we can to bring you a variety of presentations to accommodate the variety of tastes and concerns here. Of course, we are each expected to sit attentively and quietly even through those we find less than stimulating. It is the tradition here at (name of school) to provide our presenters with a polite and attentive audience. If you have some ideas on how we can improve the large group program, I am most anxious to hear from you.

Thank you for your attention and respect,