

Law Symposia Project Template



Law symposia can be an exciting way to expose students to a wide range of legal issues and perspectives in a relatively short period of time. Symposia programs can be developed to respond to the particular needs and interests of students and/or curriculum areas. Examples of past law symposia include the 2006 Manitoulin Sentencing Symposium that included mock sentencings by students, the 2006 'Wrongful Conviction Law Symposium' which took place in Bolton, and the Law Day Student Symposium, which takes place annually.

The Law Day Student Symposium draws approximately 400 students and teacher from the Toronto public and catholic school boards, and has featured opening addresses from the Honourable R. Roy McMurtry, Chief Justice of Ontario, and Alan Borovoy, of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, as well as small-group workshops led by legal experts in the areas including immigration law, criminal law, family law, civil litigation, equality issues, media law, and mock trial preparation.



Law Symposium Project Template

Target Audience

Secondary school law and civics students

Planning Steps

1. **Set up a planning committee.** Members could include lawyers, judges, law professors, educators, school board officials, and students from participating schools. If there is an OJEN Committee in your area, committee members may be a helpful resource.
2. **Establish a budget.** What costs are involved? Will students be provided with refreshments or materials? Will attendees pay a nominal amount to participate? What sort of contributions might organizations such as judicial or legal associations, corporate sponsors or others be willing to make? Will a local establishment be willing to donate refreshments?
3. **Assign responsibility for logistics.** These may include promoting the symposium, registering attendees, liaising with speakers, obtaining biographical profiles, assisting with presentation requirements, communicating with sponsors, notifying local media and school yearbook coordinators, creating and distributing material/information packages, catering, photography, and transportation.
4. **Determine participants.** Who will be invited? How many students and teachers are expected to attend?
5. **Set a date.** Consult teachers, school board representatives, and justice sector representatives about school, holiday and court schedules.

6. **Arrange a venue.** It should have a large auditorium for all attendees to attend the keynote address, and “breakout rooms” for small group workshops.
7. **Draft an agenda.** You may want to consider selecting agenda items on one topic, such as employment issues or access to justice, or presenting many different topics that students can select from. Incorporate high profile and engaging speakers or community leaders that reflect a range of aspects, functions and issues within the legal sector (e.g. lawyers, judges, law professors, legal aid representatives, court personnel, etc).
8. **Book speakers.** Members of the planning committee can approach colleagues and book speakers. OJEN staff may also be able to facilitate connections to speakers on a particular topic.
9. **Promote the symposium.** Circulate notice of the symposium as soon as possible to allow school and court scheduling. Circulate to eligible schools through teachers, department heads and school board communication avenues. Program agenda and registration information might include a registration/payment cut-off date as well as a refund/cancellation policy.
10. **Finalize details.** Arrange for signage, nametags, audio visual requests, decorations, photography, and student helpers. Assign individuals to introduce and thank speakers, conduct registration, and distribute materials.
11. **Ask participants for their evaluation.** Have on site drop boxes for completed evaluation forms. Use the collated evaluations in planning future events.
12. **Submit a summary of the symposium to OJEN.** Include photos of the event for profiling on OJEN’s website and newsletter.

Volunteer Roles

- **Organizers**
Who: Judges, lawyers, court staff, educators, students, and school board officials.
Role: Organization and promotion of symposium
Time required: Depending on the number of people involved, organizers typically begin planning two - three months in advance, meeting once a month. On the day of the event, organizers are busier.
- **Speakers**
Who: Will depend on the theme of the symposium, but could include lawyers, judges, justices of the peace, law professors, legal aid representatives, police personnel, crime reporters, forensic experts, court personnel, community leaders.
Role: Delivering an address to students on a requested topic.
Time required: one hour

Materials or Supplies

- Venue
- Signage, programs, tent cards or name tags for speakers
- Refreshments (if desired)
- Consider justice education packages for participating teachers (speak to OJEN staff)
- Audio/visual equipment

Financial Costs

- Photocopying and signage
- Refreshments (if desired)

Timeline

- Begin planning, book venue, book speakers and contact schools at least three months in advance.
- Logistical planning will intensify in the month prior to the event

Volunteer Recognition Ideas

- Thank you letters from organizing committee and members of the judiciary who participated as volunteers.
- A photo of the symposium as gifts for volunteers.
- Provide volunteers' names and mailing address to OJEN in order for them to receive provincial recognition.



Students at the Humberview Secondary Law Symposium, 2005

Strategies for Evaluation

- Follow up individually with teachers regarding the educational and logistical aspects.
- Use the OJEN Teacher Feedback Form – www.ojen.ca
- Use the OJEN Student Feedback Form – www.ojen.ca
- Hold an organizing committee debriefing meeting.
- Contact volunteers, court staff, coaches and judges to solicit suggestions for next year.
- Submit a report on the symposium to OJEN; include a photo of the event.



LAW SYMPOSIUM PROGRAM SAMPLE **OJEN'S ANNUAL LAW DAY SYMPOSIUM** **APRIL 3, 2006, CENTRAL TECHNICAL SCHOOL, TORONTO**

9:15-9:30	Arrival
9:30-10:30	Law Day Opening Ceremony opened by Chief Justice McMurtry. Address also given by two students on the importance of young people getting involved.
10:30-11:15	Keynote Address with the topic of 'Balancing Rights and Freedoms' by Alan Borovoy, General Counsel, Canadian Civil Liberties Association
11:15-12:00	Lunch
12:15-1:15	Session A
1:15-2:15	Session B
	Session Topics: Alternative Dispute Mechanisms and Family Law; Youth Criminal Justice: Crown and Defence Counsel Perspectives; Police Investigations and the Rule of Law; Ipperwash: A Public Inquiry into the Shooting Death of Dudley George; Civil Liberties: What is a 'Reasonable Limit'; Investigative Crime Reporting: Covering All Angles; Labour Law and Employee Rights; Bioethics from Wrongful Birth to Euthanasia; Medical Treatment - Who Decides? ; and The Civil Liberties of the Individuals vs. the Interests of the State.
2:30	Departure of Students