

## RM 10–SU: Learning Advocacy through Expert Testimony\*

### Purpose

This group research project is intended to help students develop knowledge and skills in advocacy by researching and presenting expert testimony on selected topics.

### Materials and Resources

For this research project, students may use video clips, newspaper and journal articles, statistics, and the Internet. Students may choose any individual or combination of presentation techniques (e.g., basic lecture, slide show using any presentation software). The teacher may choose to videotape the groups' presentations with the intention of simulating an actual expert testimony experience.

### Procedures

At the beginning of the module, place students into groups of five and offer them a choice of topics to research for their expert testimony. They may choose from a list of topics provided by the teacher or pick a controversial topic they are interested in as a group (see Expert Testimony: List of Topics and Project Guidelines at the end of RM 10-SU).

There are two parts to this project.

- **Part A:** Early in the project, each group must submit a two- to three-page paper describing their plans for conducting the expert testimony. The paper should include the following components:
  1. **Comprehensive plan:** Outline the group's "angle" or approach and key arguments on the selected research topic.
  2. **Proposed resources:** List resources (e.g., newspapers, journals, Internet, other media) and visual materials that the group will use.
  3. **Presentation format:** Identify the group's chosen presentation format (e.g., slide show, lecture).
  4. **Group responsibilities:** Provide a brief description of roles/duties of group members.

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- **Part B:** Each group must prepare an expert testimony presentation. The presentation should last approximately 20 minutes, not including audience questions, and incorporate the following components:
  1. **Introduction:** Briefly introduce group members. (1 minute)
  2. **Description of issue:** Describe in some detail the problem/concern/controversial issue the group is going to address.
    - a. **Define the problem:** Explore the origins and extent or proliferation of the issue and prevalent trends. Inform the audience about where the problem started, the extent of the problem, and how it is currently being dealt with in communities. (3 minutes)
    - b. **Provide demographics:** Cite statistics at the local, provincial, national, and/or international level, as applicable. Inform the audience about who is affected and how many people are affected by the issue. (3 minutes).
    - c. **Provide impact analysis:** Describe economic, political, and social dimensions of the issue, as well as the future of the problem if it continues without correction. (5 minutes)
  3. **Proposed solution:** Provide a detailed description of a program or a plan to address or resolve the issue. This may be either a hypothetical or an existing program or plan. If applicable, call for the adoption of a new policy or legislation. Finally, describe how the solution will be (or is being) implemented and evaluated. (5 minutes)
  4. **Summation argument:** Summarize the main points of the issue presented. Present a plea to action, a description of what the audience needs to do to make a difference. (3 minutes)
  5. **Discussion:** Answer audience questions. (5 minutes)

### Assessment

Both the instructor and audience assess the expert testimony of each group. On the day of the expert testimony, the presenters' peer audience will be given roles to play. As each group presents its expert testimony on a topic, students in the audience will be asked to assume the roles of legislators, school officials, parents, or members of a particular community. They will be asking questions from their assigned position (e.g., a student acting as a parent will ask the presenting group a question from the perspective of a parent). Each audience member will play a role and must ask a question relevant to his or her role. This poses unique challenges for the presenting group. If their research is thorough, they will be able to answer the questions well enough to satisfy and educate their audience.

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Both the teacher and the audience will assess the group presentations (see Expert Testimony: Teacher and Peer-Audience Assessment at the end of RM 10-SU):

- **Teacher assessment:** The instructor will assess the group based on the comprehensiveness of the expert testimony.

The following rating scale might be used:

4 – Exemplary, 3 – Accomplished, 2 – Developed, 1 – Beginning, Ab – Absent (of particular component)

The teacher assessment criteria could include the following:

1. Thoroughness of background research regarding the problem.
2. Creativity of the proposed solution (if the group has come up with a solution) or thoroughness of the knowledge of the proposed solution.
3. Degree of persuasiveness.
4. Time management.

- **Peer-audience assessment:** The same rating scale can be used for the peer assessment of the group presentations:

4 – Exemplary, 3 – Accomplished, 2 – Developed, 1 – Beginning, Ab – Absent (of particular component)

The groups' peer audience will assess the presentation based on the following criteria:

1. Satisfactory answers. The audience must assess the extent to which the group answered their individual questions to their satisfaction.
2. Level of creativity. The audience must assess the extent to which the group captured and maintained their attention throughout the presentation.
3. Level of persuasiveness. The audience must assess the extent to which the group was able to convince them that their proposed solution to the problem was appropriate.
4. Extent to which new information was learned.
5. Extent to which the group appeared knowledgeable on the subject.

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## RM 10–SU: Learning Advocacy through Expert Testimony (*Continued*)

### Expert Testimony: List of Topics and Project Guidelines

#### Topics for Expert Testimony

The following guidelines should be addressed in preparation for this project:

- Choose a topic for your group from the following list.  
You will be making a case for
  1. a Drug Education curriculum with a focus on substance abstinence
  2. a Drug Education curriculum with a focus on harm reduction
  3. mandatory universal drug testing
  4. drug abuse prevention programs
  5. mandatory teacher training in substance abuse detection and prevention
- Expert testimony should be effective/powerful and persuasive.
  - Your team should prepare a 20-minute presentation on your topic. You may use charts, graphs, and other visuals to support your verbal testimony. No reading will be allowed during the presentation.
  - Use whatever techniques you know to “persuade” and “hook” your audience. Use pertinent personal experience, case vignettes, and statistics. But above all, be informative: do your research well.

#### *Part A: Expert Testimony Draft*

The first part of the project involves writing a paper that describes the following:

- A comprehensive plan of your presentation (your angle, your key arguments).
- Proposed resources (e.g., newspapers, journals, Internet, other media) and a list of visual materials you will be using.
- Logistics (how the presentation will be done and any AV needs).

#### *Part B: Expert Testimony Presentation Outline*

The second part of the project involves giving a presentation of your research findings.

- **Introduction:** Briefly introduce yourselves.
- **Identification of Issue:** Describe the problem/concern/controversial issue you are going to talk about in some detail.
  - **Define the problem:** Explore the origins and extent of the issue and prevalent trends. (What is the problem? Where did the problem start? Who is doing what to curb/prevent the problem?)
  - **Provide demographics:** Give statistics at the local, provincial, national, and even international levels, as applicable. Who is affected by the issue?
  - **Describe the impact:** Analyze who or what is affected by the problem. Address economic, political, and social dimensions of the issue. Address the future impact of the problem if it continues without correction.
- **Proposed solution:** Propose a concrete plan or solution to address the issue (which is the title of your topic, and the main part of your presentation).
  - Describe the theory base of your plan or solution.
  - Describe the cost-effectiveness of the implementation of your proposed solution.
- **Summation argument:** In the closing statement, summarize the main points of the issue, why you are concerned, what could happen, what should be done (a plea to action).

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<b>Expert Testimony: Teacher and Peer-Audience Assessment</b>					
<b>Rating Scale</b>					
4 – Exemplary, 3 – Accomplished, 2 – Developed, 1 – Beginning, Ab - Absent (of particular component)					
<b>Teacher Assessment</b>					
Names of group members _____					
Topic _____					
Assessment Criteria	4	3	2	1	Ab
1. Thoroughness of background research regarding the problem. Extent of information on topic from current research/data (e.g., from Health Canada, Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institutes of Health, and/or other well-established, credible sources)					
2. Creativity of the proposed solution or thoroughness of the knowledge of the proposed solution					
a. Description of how each component of the solution addressed the issue at large					
b. Description of a tool to assess success of the solution					
c. Description of the theory base on the solution					
d. Description of the cost and cost-effectiveness of implementation					
3. Degree of persuasiveness					
4. Time management					
Total points _____					
<b>Peer-Audience Assessment</b>					
Topic _____					
Your question for the group _____					
Your agenda: Indicate whether you are a parent, school board member, local politician, or community member. _____					
Assessment Criteria	4	3	2	1	Ab
1. Did the group answer your question satisfactorily?					
2. Did the group hold your attention throughout their testimony?					
3. At the end of the group's testimony were you convinced that the group's point of view was valid and the "right" one even though it might be in conflict with your personal agenda/values?					
4. Did you learn something new from the group's testimony?					
5. Did the group appear knowledgeable on the subject?					
Total points _____					