Preparing for a Guest Speaker

Before the speaker arrives:

- Give students some articles or stories to read about the topic your guest speaker will be covering. This will give them some background knowledge and context. Even if you've been studying the topic in class, it can give students an alternate perspective.

- As part of the reading assignment—or as a separate activity—have students write several questions they can ask your guest speaker. This will prevent awkward silences and encourage students to be actively involved in the presentation.

- Share with students your expectations for how the visit will go. Outline for them the order of events. On the day of the guest speaker, will there still be a warm-up to start class? Will you have time to review the previous night's homework? Will students be seated in their usual arrangement, or will you have them seated differently to ensure their attention and focus on your classroom guest?

- Review behavior expectations. Make sure students know that you will hold them to the same high standard of behavior as always. Take the time to discuss what courteousness looks like. Go so far as to talk about what good listening looks like and explain that you expect all students to be good listeners. Also let them know how you'd like them to react to the speaker—should they clap at the end of the presentation?

- Will there be a follow-up activity to the speaker? How will students use the new information they gain from this guest? Share your plans with them before the speaker arrives. This gives students incentive to pay attention and be involved in any question-answer session or discussion.

- Consider having students take notes or fill out a graphic organizer during the presentation (if you know what will be covered in advance).

- If there will be an opportunity for questions, consider having students create a name tent on their desks (if possible) so the speaker can call on them by name. This will help ease your guest's anxiety.

- Remember to send your guest speaker a handwritten thank you note. This can be something you write and send, or you can have students sign a card, or you can even have students design and send the thank you card themselves.

Potential Follow-up Activities:

- Give a quiz on the material covered during the presentation.
• Have students write a Letter to the Editor commenting on the speaker’s content.
• Pose a controversial statement or question raised by the speaker and give students the opportunity to discuss it in a Socratic seminar setting or in a four-corner debate.
• Ask students to journal about what they remember from the presentation.