

# OPENING CEREMONY



## ***Who should attend?***

Students, parents, coordinator, ASPIRA staff, principals, teachers, tutors, and master of ceremonies.

## ***How long should it last?***

Usually no longer than one or two hours.

## ***What happens at an Opening Ceremony?***

The MAS Academy begins with the Opening Ceremony where parents, students and teachers can meet to talk about general issues, answer questions, dispel any anxieties about math and science, and discuss activities to come. This informal activity is an excellent initial opportunity for parents to become participants in their children's education and the best time to get everyone involved and kick-off the project. Students sometimes invite their parents, relatives, friends, brothers or sisters to the opening ceremony so don't be surprised if there's a large showing of people. To students this event is important – the Ceremony reinforces that they are part of a group with a common purpose, it reinforces that *together they can*. The Ceremony also implies the beginning of a summer that while fun, it will also involve hard work and collaboration.

## ***How do we go about organizing an Opening Ceremony?***

It is always a good idea to have an MC (master of ceremonies) who will introduce the parties who will speak at the Opening Ceremony. This takes the burden of people having to introduce themselves and ensures proper flow and timing of the ceremony making it just the right length. After the MC introduces him/herself, it is time to give some general information to the audience. The Executive Director, Principal, or someone who we all recognize explains what ASPIRA is and does and what the MAS Academy is about, why it is important, and what it means to the students and parents. This person also tells the whole audience when the Academy will be held, what dates, what times, if there are any holidays during the Academy whether they will be observed, and s/he will also relay the date, time, and location where the classes and the closing ceremony are going to be held.

The coordinator is then introduced and s/he says a few words of why s/he looks forward to work with these students. The teachers are introduced as a group or individually by the MC and they say something about themselves (where they teach, who they teach, why they became a teacher, why they like teaching). They also have one more important task, to give the students and parents a preview of what will happen this summer: what subjects they will work on together, what materials will be used, what activities will be held (such as visits to museums), etc. Each tutor is then introduced. If time allows, they speak briefly on who they are and why they decided to teach this summer. Anyone else who is involved with the project takes the podium at this time and speaks for a few minutes. Upon completion, the MC takes any questions from the audience and refers them to the appropriate person. Once this is done, a small reception with snacks is announced and everyone is asked to join us. Usually it is during the this time that the participants, parent, teachers, tutors, coordinator (and others) meet. A meeting away from the podium, the microphones, and the stage allows for a one to one meeting with peers, teachers and tutors and reassures parents and students that they are in good hands. Someone can, through the course of the Ceremony, talk about the importance of math and science in our lives.



*What needs to be done beforehand?* Opening Ceremony activity Checklist (✓):

- \_\_\_ Assign a non-conflicting date and time for the Opening Ceremony near the date when classes will begin.
- \_\_\_ Visit the location where the Ceremony will take place. Is it big enough? Is it easily accessible?
- \_\_\_ Secure the facilities for the opening ceremony making sure it is of appropriate size to seat all participants. Also, ensure that it has proper lighting, microphones, podium, chairs, etc.
- \_\_\_ Have a game plan. Who will attend? Who will speak when? Who needs to be recognized in the program or opening remarks? What will be the general schedule and progression for the Opening Ceremony? It would help to create a program agenda for the day. A photocopied 8 ½ x 11” folded sheet of colored paper makes a great program to be handed out to participants. This tends to include people on what’s happening and sometimes makes them less restless.
- \_\_\_ Send letter of invitation to parents with the date (for best participation a Saturday or Sunday are chosen), time, location and directions on how to get there. Advise them on the letter how many people they can bring per family so that you can have an estimate on seating and food (e.g. “you can bring one more person in addition to your parents or you can only bring one parent). †
- \_\_\_ Send a letter of invitation (date, time, location, and directions) to the principals of the schools where the students attend. Encourage them to send someone in their place if they can’t attend. This is important, if the principals like what they see they may be encouraged to participate again next year! †
- \_\_\_ Send a letter of invitation to a keynote speaker which can serve as a role model (a respected member of the community, Latino scientist, etc). †
- \_\_\_ Send a letter of invitation to potential Funders of the program. †
- \_\_\_ Inform the teacher, tutors and anyone else who needs to be there of the date, time, and location of the ceremony. You may want to tell them at this point what you’d like them to speak on so that they have time to prepare. (The letter sent to the parents can also be sent to this group)†
- \_\_\_ Purchase refreshments and snacks for the crowd (cookies, sodas, ice, chips, etc). If you need an exact count, include an RSVP date in the invitation letter.
- \_\_\_ Be familiar with the audio visual equipment needed. Most likely microphones and lighting will be needed. Sometimes overhead projectors or slide projectors are needed as well. Make sure the appropriate staff persons are there to work the lights and/or microphones. If you need volunteers to work these, it will be helpful to them if they arrive before the opening ceremony to determine their proper working and troubleshoot any problems.
- \_\_\_ Recruit friends and volunteers to help you with seating and distribute programs. Ensure that VIPs sit on the front and there is someone there to take care of them. Volunteers can also help with setup and cleanup for the reception, working AV equipment and lights, pouring ice & sodas, etc.

† Please ensure that the letters get there at least two weeks in advance. Leave a phone number where you can be reached in case there are questions (usually there are lots of questions!).

# CLOSING CEREMONY



## **Who should attend?**

Students, parents, coordinator, ASPIRA staff, principals, teachers, tutors, and master of ceremonies.

## **How long should it last?**

Usually no longer than two or three hours (somewhat longer since certificates need to be handed out).

## **What happens at a Closing Ceremony?**

The Summer MAS Academy ends with the Closing Ceremony where all the participants share on what was accomplished. Whereas the Opening Ceremony focuses on what will happen the closing ceremony's main point is to expose what *happened* and give the program a sense of closure. It is at this time that all meet to talk about accomplishments – it is at this time that it is reaffirmed that the time spent with the program was worthwhile. Once again, it is here where parents get involved with their children. Many parents are proud to be part of this activity and take time off, if they're working, to share on their children's success and witness their child receiving a certificate. The students are particularly proud of getting their certificates. To some this is the only certificate they have received the whole year, the only time where they are really appreciated. I have seen some students frame them and keep them for a long time. Parents are anxious and want to see their children receive their certificates. Many parents also want to take pictures of their child receiving their certificates to show to relatives and friends. Overall, the Closing Ceremony is a time to reflect and note achievements. The Ceremony implies the closing of a summer of hard work and fun.

## **How do we go about organizing an Closing Ceremony?**

The Closing Ceremony is similar to the Opening Ceremony with one exception: this is the time where the students speak to the audience. All the parties that addressed the audience at the Opening Ceremony can address the audience again but there needs to be time for a group of students to individually address the audience. Unfortunately, because of time considerations not all students can speak. Also not all students will want to speak. It is usually best set a fixed number of students to speak at the Ceremony (say, ten or so), ask for volunteers before classes end, and let the students themselves choose who will speak. If many students want to speak they can do so by acting as partial MCs, introducing participants, welcoming the audience, etc. The students that do address the audience for a short while practice beforehand (perhaps ready some index cards) and talk about their experience. What did they learn? What did they like best? What did they like least? Was it worthwhile? Is there a particular experience that sticks out that should be shared? Do they have anything to say to their teachers, parents, friends? Would they do this again? Would they suggest someone who has not participated to try it?

Teachers and tutors address the audience on similar topics or topics of their choice. The teachers and tutors will hand out a certificate to every student that had reasonable attendance at the Summer Academy. No one who has been there is left out. Most of the time (about an hour) will be spent giving out certificates. It sometimes works out better to give certificates out in groups. A group of five to ten people is called to the stage (all individually by name) and then one teacher or tutor hands their certificates to all and congratulates them. The next group is then called to the stage and so forth. Again, it is always a good idea to have an MC (master of ceremonies) who will introduce the parties and timing to keep the ceremony moving.

After all the certificates are distributed the group, or parts of the group get up on stage so that parents can take pictures of the whole group. This is usually the best part of the ceremony! Once done, a

small reception with snacks is announced and everyone is asked to join us. Someone can, through the course of the Ceremony, talk about the importance of *learning* math and science.



*What needs to be done beforehand?* Closing Ceremony activity Checklist (✓):

- \_\_\_\_\_ Assign a non-conflicting date and time for the Closing Ceremony near the date when classes will end.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Visit the location where the Ceremony will take place. Is it big enough? Is it easily accessible?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Secure the facilities for the opening ceremony making sure it is of appropriate size to seat all participants. Also, ensure that it has proper lighting, microphones, podium, chairs, etc.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Think back. What happened during the Opening Ceremony that could be improved? Was the room too cold/hot? Is additional seating needed? Could the speakers be heard by everyone? Where there enough refreshments? Overall, what could be done to make this a more pleasant experience?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Have a game plan. Who will attend? Who will speak when? Who needs to be recognized in the program or opening remarks? What will be the general schedule and progression for the Closing Ceremony? It would help to create a program agenda for the day. A photocopied 8 ½ x 11” folded sheet of colored paper makes a great program to be handed out to participants. This tends to include people on what’s happening and sometimes makes them less restless.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Prepare student certificates. Believe it or not, this is usually what takes the most time. Each certificate has the individual’s name and is signed by a teacher and Executive Director. It is a good idea to get volunteers to help out in printing the names on the certificate. Be sure to give the people who need to sign the diplomas a heads-up and enough lead time to sign them. Everyone who has had reasonable attendance should receive a certificate. Those students that had excused absences due to medical or family emergencies can also receive a different certificate if they so choose (they would receive a certificate of appreciation or effort rather than a regular certificate of achievement or merit).
- \_\_\_\_\_ Help the students prepare their speeches. Once the students are selected, they will need help to prepare their speeches so that they fill the allotted time frame (not more than 5 minutes). Perhaps it would be useful to prepare index cards. Make sure that the students understand where they need to be at what time, where they enter and exit the stage, etc. Volunteers are very helpful in both helping students prepare and in guiding them before and after their presentation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Send letter of invitation to parents with the date (for best participation a Saturday or Sunday are chosen), time, location and directions on how to get there. Advise them on the letter how many people they can bring per family so that you can have an estimate on seating and food (e.g. “you can bring one more person in addition to your parents or you can only bring one parent). †
- \_\_\_\_\_ Send a letter of invitation (date, time, location, and directions) to the principals of the schools where the students attend. Encourage them to send someone in their place if they can’t attend. This is important, if the principals like what they see they may be encouraged to participate again next year! †
- \_\_\_\_\_ Send a letter of invitation to a keynote speaker which can serve as a role model (a respected member of the community, Latino scientist, etc). †
- \_\_\_\_\_ Send a letter of invitation to potential Funders of the program. †



*What needs to be done beforehand?* Closing Ceremony activity Checklist (✓) **(Cont'd)**:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Inform the teacher, tutors and anyone else who needs to be there of the date, time, and location of the ceremony. You may want to tell them at this point what you'd like them to speak on so that they have time to prepare. (The letter sent to the parents can also be sent to this group) Also inform them early on that they you need them to sign every certificate. †
- \_\_\_\_\_ Purchase refreshments and snacks for the crowd (cookies, sodas, ice, chips, etc). If you need an exact count, include an RSVP date in the invitation letter.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Be familiar with the audio visual equipment needed. Most likely microphones and lighting will be needed. Sometimes overhead projectors or slide projectors are needed as well. Make sure the appropriate staff persons are there to work the lights and/or microphones. If you need volunteers to work these, it will be helpful to them if they arrive before the opening ceremony to determine their proper working and troubleshoot any problems.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Recruit friends and volunteers to help you with seating and distribute programs. Ensure that VIPs sit on the front and there is someone there to take care of them. Volunteers can also help with setup and cleanup for the reception, working AV equipment and lights, pouring ice & sodas, etc.

† Please ensure that the letters get there at least a week in advance. Leave a phone number where you can be reached in case there are questions (usually there are lots of questions!).

# Visits to Museums



## ***Who should attend?***

Students, coordinator, teachers, and tutors.

## ***How long should it last?***

All day (from around 9 am to 5 pm, approximately).

## ***What happens during a museum visit?***

Along with the Opening and Closing Ceremonies, visits to math and science Museums are the highlight of the program – and the most fun for the students. Math and science museums have changed somewhat since the olden days. Many of today’s math and science museums allow individuals to explore first-hand a particular topic or subject. In other words, they are inclusive and engaging of the individual. For example, instead of say, a student seeing a picture of a tornado and reading a description of what it is, the student can press a button a machine creates a three foot (harmless) tornado. Students can see how a tornado is formed and feel its power by inserting their hand in the machine. Other buttons in the machine allow for the production of “special tornadoes” by changing the wind speed, size, humidity, etc.. This exhibit actually exists in the National Geographic Museum in Washington, DC. What happens is that students actually experience science by getting engaged in science. This explains math and science in a simple, easy to grasp manner and leaves a lasting impression on the students. The visit to the museum is mostly playtime where the student discovers science and at the same time has fun. Furthermore, this is the time where the students really get to see the relevance of what they studied in class.

## ***How do we go about organizing a Museum Visit?***

First, visit the museum without the students and in advance. This is very important as it leads to a clear understanding of the museum’s policies and procedures. If at all possible, this should be done before the program begins. A call to the museum to set up a meeting with a friendly museum staff who can answer questions is helpful. This will answer questions such as: Is there a particular day of the week when the museum is closed or open to the public for free – which holidays are observed –what are the hours of operation? Are there any guided tours for groups or group discounts? What are the payment procedures, do we have to pay in advance with a check, do we need to make a reservation for the group? Are chaperones needed? Are there any current or new exhibits aside from the traditional displays? Is there an easier way to get there? Where do we park? What do we do when we arrive? How can we prepare in advance for our group visit?

It is best for the teachers and tutors to go as well. They may have additional questions of their own and would probably like to know what themes or specific topics are exposed in the museum so that they can give an added emphasis to those in class before the visit. If the museum is too big, they may also want the class to focus on a particular section or to convene the class at one point during the day to have an informal learning session in front of one of the exhibit halls that focuses on topics they have covered in class. Furthermore, if everyone visits the museum beforehand, they can tell the students and parents what to expect. In a nutshell, visiting the museum beforehand reduces anxiety, helps answer questions by the students (and parents who want to know where their children will be all day!), and ensures that the transition to and from the museum is swift. Moreover, you can all encourage and build enthusiasm in the students by telling them what they are about to see!

Transportation for the museum needs to be arranged. If a bus needs to be chartered it needs to be done in advance. They need to ensure for availability of buses for those dates and reserve their services for the Academy. Also, contracts need to be signed and checks need to be cut. Sometimes, there is public transportation to a location near the museums with free shuttle buses available to make the final leg of the trip. If the group is not large, and it can be broken into even smaller groups, this may be a feasible alternative. In this case, planning in terms of time since to be most effective since public transportation is more sporadic and slower than a bus directly to the location. Once the teachers and tutors have visited the museum and spoken to the museum staff a game plan needs to be created. Everyone involved needs to decide what the best method will be for the organization of the students. Whether they will be paired off or visit in groups is moot as long as the policies and procedures of the museum are respected and everyone has fun.

The letter of recruitment sent to parents should have the dates and short descriptions of the museums to be visited. Parents should know that this is an all day affair. If possible, you may want to ask them to bag lunches for the day. Something small, a sandwich and fruit may do. The letter should also have a consent form signed and dated by parents allowing their children to visit the museums. It should note on the consent form that children will not be allowed to visit the museums without a consent form. If you don't have consent forms for all students, follow up calls should be made to get them in on time – or so at least the students can show up on the day of the visit with a signed consent form in their hand.

Tell the students about the impending visit (however, don't tell them so much that the element of surprise and wonder is removed). In general, tell them what the museum is about, what topics are covered, how long the visit will last, the logistics and organization of the visit, ask them to bring bagged lunches, etc. If everyone knows what needs to be done ahead of time there is less chance for last minute problems or concerns. Most likely, students and parents will have questions on the visit – this is where a visit in advance will greatly pay off.



*What needs to be done beforehand?* Museum Visit activity Checklist (✓):

\_\_\_ Visit the museums in advance.

\_\_\_ Arrange for Transportation.

\_\_\_ Assign a non-conflicting date for the Museum Visits. Weekdays are best for a visit since museums are less crowded. It is also best to check with the teachers to ensure that the visit doesn't conflict with, or adds to, something they are trying to do in the classroom.

\_\_\_ Have a game plan. Will students pair off? Will they see exhibits in groups? How will the pairing or grouping be done? What policies of the museum are they to follow? What is off limits? Also, tell them how much fun it will be.

\_\_\_ Ensure collection of all signed consent forms. †

\_\_\_ Inform the teacher, tutors of the date, time, and location and how you will all get to the museum. This needs to be done both for the pre-visit as well as for the actual visit with the students.

† Ask parents to return the consent form along with the enrollment form before classes begin. This will greatly reduce the number of missing consent forms.

# RECRUITMENT



## ***Who should attend?***

Students, coordinator, teachers, and tutors.

## ***How long should it last?***

All day (from around 9 am to 5 pm, approximately).

## ***What happens during a museum visit?***

Along with the Opening and Closing Ceremonies, visits to math and science Museums are the highlight of the program – and the most fun for the students. Math and science museums have changed somewhat since the olden days. Many of today’s math and science museums allow individuals to explore first-hand a particular topic or subject. In other words, they are inclusive and engaging of the individual. For example, instead of say, a student seeing a picture of a tornado and reading a description of what it is, the student can press a button a machine creates a three foot (harmless) tornado. Students can see how a tornado is formed and feel its power by inserting their hand in the machine. Other buttons in the machine allow for the production of “special tornadoes” by changing the wind speed, size, humidity, etc.. This exhibit actually exists in the National Geographic Museum in Washington, DC. What happens is that students actually experience science by getting engaged in science. This explains math and science in a simple, easy to grasp manner and leaves a lasting impression on the students. The visit to the museum is mostly playtime where the student discovers science and at the same time has fun. Furthermore, this is the time where the students really get to see the relevance of what they studied in class.

## ***How do we go about organizing a Museum Visit?***

First, visit the museum without the students and in advance. This is very important as it leads to a clear understanding of the museum’s policies and procedures. If at all possible, this should be done before the program begins. A call to the museum to set up a meeting with a friendly museum staff who can answer questions is helpful. This will answer questions such as: Is there a particular day of the week when the museum is closed or open to the public for free – which holidays are observed –what are the hours of operation? Are there any guided tours for groups or group discounts? What are the payment procedures, do we have to pay in advance with a check, do we need to make a reservation for the group? Are chaperones needed? Are there any current or new exhibits aside from the traditional displays? Is there an easier way to get there? Where do we park? What do we do when we arrive? How can we prepare in advance for our group visit?

It is best for the teachers and tutors to go as well. They may have additional questions of their own and would probably like to know what themes or specific topics are exposed in the museum so that they can give an added emphasis to those in class before the visit. If the museum is too big, they may also want the class to focus on a particular section or to convene the class at one point during the day to have an informal learning session in front of one of the exhibit halls that focuses on topics they have covered in class. Furthermore, if everyone visits the museum beforehand, they can tell the students and parents what to expect. In a nutshell, visiting the museum beforehand reduces anxiety, helps answer questions by the students (and parents who want to know where their children will be all day!), and ensures that the transition to and from the museum is swift. Moreover, you can all encourage and build enthusiasm in the students by telling them what they are about to see!

Transportation for the museum needs to be arranged. If a bus needs to be chartered it needs to be done in advance. They need to ensure for availability of buses for those dates and reserve their services for the Academy. Also, contracts need to be signed and checks need to be cut. Sometimes, there is public transportation to a location near the museums with free shuttle buses available to make the final leg of the

trip. If the group is not large, and it can be broken into even smaller groups, this may be a feasible alternative. In this case, planning in terms of time since to be most effective since public transportation is more sporadic and slower than a bus directly to the location. Once the teachers and tutors have visited the museum and spoken to the museum staff a game plan needs to be created. Everyone involved needs to decide what the best method will be for the organization of the students. Whether they will be paired off or visit in groups is moot as long as the policies and procedures of the museum are respected and everyone has fun.

The letter of recruitment sent to parents should have the dates and short descriptions of the museums to be visited. Parents should know that this is an all day affair. If possible, you may want to ask them to bag lunches for the day. Something small, a sandwich and fruit may do. The letter should also have a consent form signed and dated by parents allowing their children to visit the museums. It should note on the consent form that children will not be allowed to visit the museums without a consent form. If you don't have consent forms for all students, follow up calls should be made to get them in on time – or so at least the students can show up on the day of the visit with a signed consent form in their hand.

Tell the students about the impending visit (however, don't tell them so much that the element of surprise and wonder is removed). In general, tell them what the museum is about, what topics are covered, how long the visit will last, the logistics and organization of the visit, ask them to bring bagged lunches, etc. If everyone knows what needs to be done ahead of time there is less chance for last minute problems or concerns. Most likely, students and parents will have questions on the visit – this is where a visit in advance will greatly pay off.



*What needs to be done beforehand?* Museum Visit activity Checklist (✓):

\_\_\_ Visit the museums in advance.

\_\_\_ Arrange for Transportation.

\_\_\_ Assign a non-conflicting date for the Museum Visits. Weekdays are best for a visit since museums are less crowded. It is also best to check with the teachers to ensure that the visit doesn't conflict with, or adds to, something they are trying to do in the classroom.

\_\_\_ Have a game plan. Will students pair off? Will they see exhibits in groups? How will the pairing or grouping be done? What policies of the museum are they to follow? What is off limits? Also, tell them how much fun it will be.

\_\_\_ Ensure collection of all signed consent forms. †

\_\_\_ Inform the teacher, tutors of the date, time, and location and how you will all get to the museum. This needs to be done both for the pre-visit as well as for the actual visit with the students.

† Ask parents to return the consent form along with the enrollment form before classes begin. This will greatly reduce the number of missing consent forms.