

APA Ambassador **TOOLKIT**



American Planning Association

Making Great Communities Happen

It's thrilling and beyond rewarding to think that it's possible some of the kids in the sessions might go on to become the next generation of planners. To say this program left us all feeling inspired is an understatement.

—Mary Miltimore, AICP, Fitzgerald & Halliday
New York City Ambassadors Team Leader

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Ambassadors by the Numbers	4
Become an APA Ambassador.....	5-6
The Benefits to You as an Ambassador.....	7
As a New Ambassador, Where Do I Begin? How Do I Begin?.....	8
What Type of Activity Should I Plan?	9
Inspirations for Ambassadors.....	10
<i>No Small Plans</i>	10-15
Ambassador Spotlight.....	16-20

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APA AMBASSADOR TOOLKIT

On behalf of the American Planning Association, thank you for your interest in being an APA Ambassador. The goal of the Ambassador program is to advance the public understanding about planning and the planning profession and to reach future planners with diverse backgrounds. Since the (re)launch of this program in 2017, we have reached thousands of students and community members across the country. Join us in these efforts— we are here to support you!

—Monica Groh, APA Director of Emerging Professionals

WHAT

The APA Ambassador Program is a volunteer activity led by members of the American Planning Association with the goal of increasing awareness and understanding of the power and value that the planning profession brings to communities. Particular emphasis is placed on reaching audiences of diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, and economic backgrounds.

WHO

The Ambassador is an APA member in good standing who is passionate about the profession and who firmly believes in the principles of diversity in planning. Ambassadors can range from students, to mid-career professionals, to Fellows of the American Institute of Certified Planners. All are welcome.

WHEN

The Ambassador will be active for one calendar year (January through December), during which they will conduct at least two activities during dates and times they will coordinate with an organization or school of their choice.

WHERE

The Ambassador's activities can take place at any venue that is suitable for the Ambassador's comfort zone: an elementary, middle, or high school; a university; a community fair or community forum; or during a general plan update or zone change, etc.

HOW

The Ambassador will choose how to deliver the activity. It should include a conversation about basic concepts of planning and the planning profession, the benefits and value of APA, and an activity that bring those concepts to a community and personal level. Each activity should last at least an hour, if possible.

BONUS

You can earn up to 8 CM credits for your Ambassador activities under the 'pro-bono' option.



Ambassadors by the Numbers

More than 50 APA members volunteered for the APA Ambassador 2015–2016 pilot program, reaching participants across the country through activities at schools and community events.



75%

of the activities were
at elementary, middle,
and high schools





Become an APA Ambassador

The application period runs on an annual basis from October through December. To be an APA Ambassador you must be an APA member in good standing.

Commitment, Expectations, and Roles

What's expected of you as an Ambassador?

- Attend the Ambassador Orientation Webinar, whether live or on demand.
- Conduct at least two activities during the year of commitment (January through December). Each activity should be at least one hour, and should include a presentation, activity, and Q&A session.
- Administer Participant Surveys for each activity.
- Complete an Ambassador Activity Report Form for each activity.
- Complete one Ambassador Evaluation Report after completing all activities.
- Write a blog post for APA's website. (Optional)

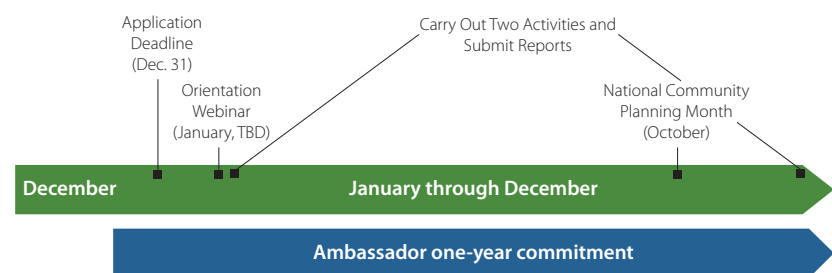


The time line below walks you through the year of commitment.

Depending on the complexity and the audience of each activity, up to eight hours may be required to include the following:

- Establishing contact with the activity host
- Securing a venue
- Researching and identifying the proper materials for the audience
- Preparing for the activity/presentation
- Delivering the activity/presentation
- Preparing activity reports/evaluations and blog posts for APA
- Participating in periodic calls/webinars with other APA Ambassadors to share ideas

Ambassador Timeline



Now I know that a profession exists that encompasses so many things that I am passionate about—the environment and the growth of cities. I applied to graduate school for urban planning after this event.

—A Chicago APA Ambassadors event participant

The Benefits to You as an Ambassador

- Giving back to your community
- Inspiring the next generation of planners
- Becoming an agent of community empowerment of diverse audiences potentially left out of the planning discourse
- Experiencing first-hand how to apply aspirational principles from the AICP code of ethics
- Earning pro-bono CM credits
- Building your resume, backed by the premier association of the planning field—APA
- Sharpening your public speaking and teaching skills
- Enhancing your professional network
- Gaining recognition from APA and its state chapters

As a New Ambassador, Where Do I Begin? How Do I Begin?

As planners, we tend to possess (and value) effective communication skills; we distill complex information for stakeholders and other planners on a daily basis. However, with our professional colleagues we seldom have to start from square one. Perhaps it has dawned on you that the basic, fundamental aspects which ultimately make up the planning field— i.e., government structure, the spatiality of the built or natural environment, interest group dynamics, etc.—may be foreign concepts to those unfamiliar with the planning process. It could take all day to explain the compositional elements of planning before even mentioning the *word* planning.

Thankfully, you'll be surprised to find that many people are far more adept than one would assume in understanding notions of planning, even the complex details; this has been a shared discovery among many of our Ambassadors. Very often, community members will know about the impact of planning via their daily experience, particularly if it affects them in either a positive or adverse way; however, they may not know how to describe this in planning terms. Thus, the Ambassador activity is an opportunity for you to bridge the gap between what participants already grasp about planning and how they can properly verbalize and creatively manifest their knowledge in a team setting—while having fun in the process!

What Type of Activity Should I Plan?

Consider the following questions . . .

- What is my planning story?
- What is my area of planning expertise?
- What age group will I be working with?
- What is my style of teaching/communication?
- Do my participants feel they have agency as residents of their city?
- How do participants describe their ideal neighborhood?
- Do participants notice changes happening in their communities?
- What relevant planning initiatives are taking place in the community that I can bring into the discussion?
- Are participants aware of who makes planning decisions where they live? And how?
- What knowledge do I want participants to walk away with?

No Small Plans

The American Planning Association has supported the creation of *No Small Plans*, a new graphic novel from the Chicago Architecture Foundation. The publication is part of CAF's "Meet Your City" initiative, designed to help young adults understand the important role planning makes in the development of their neighborhoods and also encourage youths to participate more fully in the community planning process.

What youth engagement methods are used by the Chicago Architecture Foundation in its goal to inspire future leaders to design the cities they deserve?

- Be clear about expectations.
- Emphasize inclusiveness and comfort.
- Consider times and places that are convenient for young people.
- Plan for youth in time lines as well as budgets.
- Facilitate meaningful work during the activity.
- Emphasize the importance of real experiences and real decisions.
- Actively report progress.
- Enable ways for youth to follow the project and stay connected.

Inspiration for Ambassadors

Ambassadors bring to the table a wide range of skill sets, backgrounds, and capabilities in terms of what type of activity is possible to execute. Some require little prep work, while others demand a higher level of planning, partnership, and funding. There is an abundance of exemplary programming focused on engaging community and youth in planning, both in and outside of the context of APA. The examples below are meant to get you started down your path; they are arranged in order of their time-investment level from low to high.

Low Investment: Simple presentations or discussions at schools, career fairs, or community events.

"What is Planning?" Ambassador Presentation

A simple PowerPoint presentation can be the easiest way to familiarize participants with the planning process. It is also an opportunity to describe the role of APA as a support system for both professionals in the field, and for communities with planning goals.

Things to keep in mind for a compelling presentation:

- P** Photos and visuals
- L** Location-tailored interaction (try using Google maps to show participants where they live, work, and play relative to other amenities)
- A** Audience and demographics
- N** Number of slides/keeping participants engaged

Children's Books Relevant to Planning

There are a number of children's books that introduce planning themes in remarkably subtle and creative ways. Many of the titles, though decades old, are still relevant; some even anticipated issues in planning today. These can be fun for both child and adult participants and serve as icebreakers, using the simple themes as a guide toward more complex discussion.

The ABC of City Planning

(City of New York, 1937)



A progressive, alphabet-guided children's book produced by Fiorello La Guardia's mayoral administration in 1937.

Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel

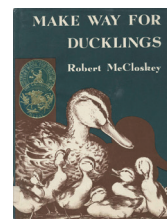
(Virginia Lee Burton, 1939)



The story of Mike Mulligan and his steam shovel and business partner Mary Anne. Features themes related to modernization and the urban built environment, as well as contrasts in urban versus rural values.

Make Way for Ducklings

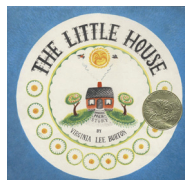
(Robert McCloskey, 1941)



A story chronicling a family of mallards in New York City as they seek to navigate natural spaces throughout the urban environment. Features themes of conservation.

The Little House

(Virginia Lee Burton, 1942)



This story tells the experience of a personified rural home that finds itself "swallowed up" by a city that she once observed from afar. Features opportunities to discuss urban sprawl.

The Lorax

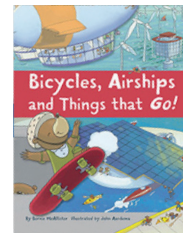
(Dr. Seuss, 1971)



This story chronicles the struggle of the Lorax, spokesperson and guardian for the trees, to prevent pollution and degradation of nature in his rivalry with the Onceler. Features themes of good versus evil, the environmental justice movement, and conservation.

Bicycles, Airships, and Things That Go

(Bernie McAllister, 2015)



The story of a family's trip to the science center as they utilize various modes of active transportation and discover clean and sustainable energy uses along the way.

Medium Investment: Interactive activities or games, mobile workshops, walking tours, and other instructional programs.

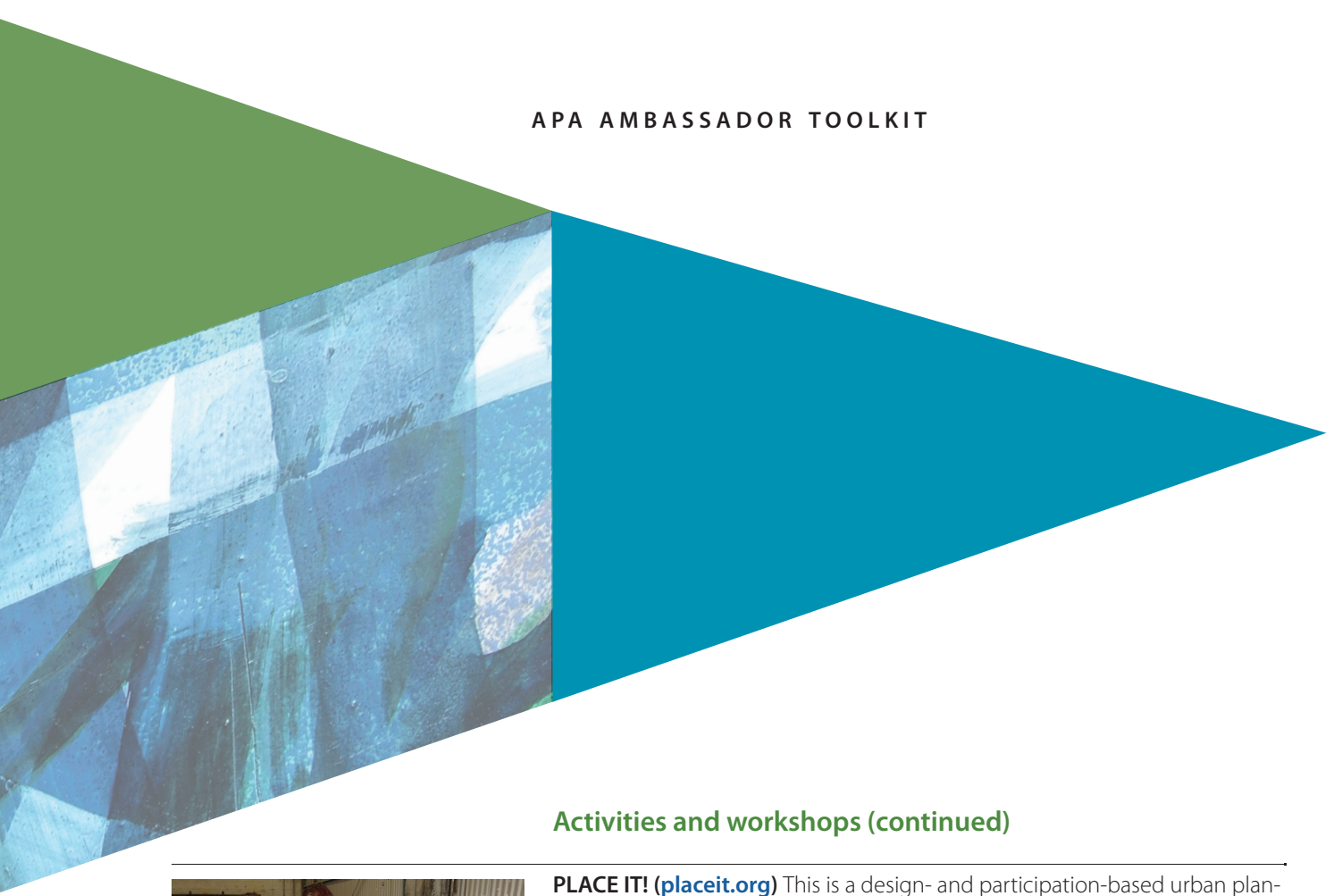
Activities and workshops



Box City (cubekc.org/architivities). This activity engages teachers and students in the act of design and the formation of our towns by decorating box shapes and placing them in strategic locations on a room-sized “map” of a neighborhood. Teamwork and negotiation are required as the various buildings put into place. Boxes are arranged according to zoning rules, which allows students to consider the details of their buildings, understand limitations, and account for smaller details such as scale, public space, and vegetation.



Blocks and Lots (blocksandlots.net). This is a strategic, all-ages board game that is a great small-group activity for workshops and classrooms. The primary goal of the game is for players to learn the principles and complexities of the often “invisible” process of zoning. Use it to introduce ideas about land use, urban planning, and what a fair city can be. Players learn about zoning through conversation and negotiation, responsible use of resources, trial and error, and conflict management.



Activities and workshops (continued)



PLACE IT! (placeit.org) This is a design- and participation-based urban planning practice founded by urban planner James Rojas. It uses model-building workshops and on-site interactive models to help engage the public in the planning and design process. Through the PLACE IT! process participants are able to learn about the role of planning and design in shaping how we live, and to translate their dreams and ideas into physical forms and models. From these physical results and their accompanying stories we can generate plans, drawings, and policy recommendations for municipalities, NGOs, and elected officials.



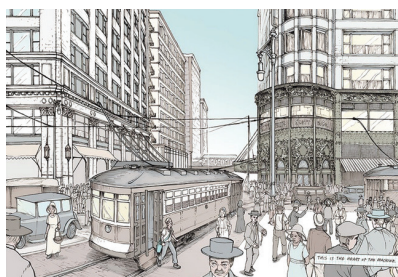
West Town Bikes/Free Spirit Youth Media (westtownbikes.org/node/151), "The Circuit." "The Circuit" is the proposed project from adolescent patrons of West Town Bikes in Chicago. The project led teens through field work and urban planning principles as they designed a plan to implement contraflow bike lanes connecting the Bloomingdale Trail, Logan Square Skate Park, and "The Garden" (Clark Park). These are high-volume destinations for youth who are weary of navigating the dangerous traffic of Western Avenue, Chicago's longest continuous street.

High Investment: High school programs, conferences, and full-length published youth reading materials.

Youth programs



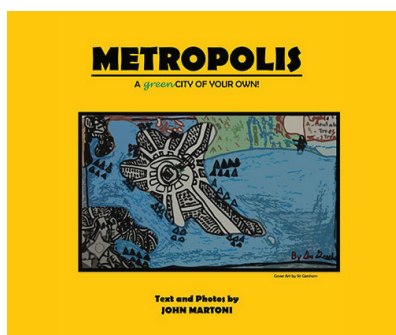
CMAP FLIP Camp (cmap.illinois.gov/about/involvement/flip). The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning's FLIP Camp (Future Leaders in Planning) is a week-long summer program that takes high school students from peripheral counties of the Chicago metropolitan area through an intensive survey of community and regional planning processes, field trips, and collaborative activities. The program culminates in a final presentation of team-focused projects in various areas of interest (e.g., land use, human services, and economic development). The program's goals are aligned with CMAP's regional master plan, *ON TO 2050*, and guides students' understanding of planning through the *ON TO 2050* framework.



The Chicago Architecture Foundation: No Small Plans (architecture.org/teach-learn/no-small-plans) (2017). With support from APA, a new citywide, civic education initiative by the Chicago Architecture Foundation intends to help teens and young adults understand what makes a good neighborhood. This graphic novel will be distributed to 30,000 Chicago teens over the next three years through CAF's partnership with Chicago Public Schools and the Chicago Public Library.

The novel and the initiative not only help young adults understand the important role planning makes in the development of their neighborhoods, but they also encourage youth to participate more fully in the community planning process.

Youth programs



Metropolis (planning.org/kidsandcommunity/metropolis) (John Martoni, 2010). *Metropolis* is a curriculum developed by John Martoni, a third-grade teacher and planner. It was designed as a standards-based, interdisciplinary unit of study for grades 3–6 (though it could be adapted for any grade level). Packed with illustrations and exercises, it is intended for use by elementary classroom teachers and other adults who seek to expose children to a variety of urban forms from around the world. The city elements presented in the lessons are edges, districts, public spaces, landmarks, and transportation. These elements provide an organizing mechanism for children to design their own ideal cities.



Urban Planning Youth Empowerment Conference. The Urban Planning Youth Empowerment Conference is an annual event held for high school students of East Los Angeles Renaissance Academy, hosted by UCLA's graduate student-led Planners of Color for Social Equity. In previous years the conference has included an introduction to urban planning, a campus tour, and college application help. Specific planning workshops have focused on transportation advocacy, environmental design, food access, women's use of public space, and local sustainability initiatives.



Girls Rock Science. This annual event, hosted by 93.7 KDKA-FM, is designed to invigorate girls of all ages with interest in STEM-related fields. Using a series of hands-on activities and inspiring guest speakers, the program is meant to acquaint girls with a wide range of STEM careers. It is held at the Carnegie Science Center in Pittsburgh.



Ambassador Spotlight

Name: Mary Miltimore, AICP

Project: "What is Urban Planning?"

Location: New York

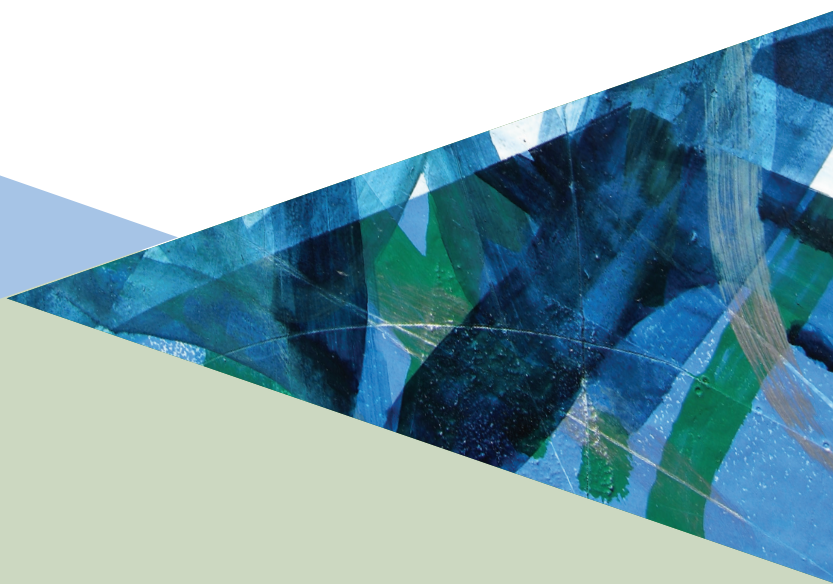
I worked with two of my colleagues at Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc., Melissa Pineda and Zainab Kazmi, to lead a session at the Covenant House New York, a shelter for homeless and underserved youth in New York City and across the country. We held this session during the Covenant House's "Life Skills Program," which the shelter hosts on a regular basis. The kids are invited (but not required) to learn about a variety of topics.

Approximately 25 kids, ranging in age from 16 to 21 years, participated. The group was fairly evenly split between females and males and the majority of the kids were African American or Hispanic.

What was the goal of your activity?

What did you want participants to come away with?

Our goal was to help raise the kids' awareness about what urban planning is and the impact it has on their daily lives. Most importantly, we wanted the participants to come away with the understanding that as members of the community, this is a profession and practice that is for them. This is even more true considering that they will feel the great impacts from planning decisions that are being made today in the years to come. We wanted the kids to feel encouraged to get involved in the planning decisions being made on their behalf and to understand that people want to hear what they think.



How did you design your activity? What was the framework through which you reached your participants? What was the flow of the activity like? How did your participants interact with the project and what were the results?

We encouraged friendly discussion as the kids got settled in order to set an informal tone. We then kicked things off by showing APA's short video: *The Future Belongs to Those Who Prepare for It*. This helped to engage the kids from the start, as they showed lots of curiosity and excitement to learn more about the different concepts and ideas shown in the video.

We then led a discussion with the aid of a PowerPoint and provided an overview of what urban planning is, the many interconnected elements it involves, and the impact planning has on communities' quality of life. We emphasized the ways in which the planning process has evolved from one that involved only a few people with similar backgrounds to one that prioritizes community engagement and a diversity of perspectives. We prepared prompt questions to ask at various points to ensure that it felt more like a discus-

sion as opposed to a presentation. Once the kids understood that they could ask questions and engage throughout, we had no problem getting them to participate.

We used the events and aftermath of Hurricane Sandy to explain the concept of resiliency as well as how the planning process is being used to create a more resilient New York City. We explained that this is just one example of how to implement the planning process and that it can be applied to a variety of other issues.

Then we told them it was their turn to be planners during an interactive activity. We provided markers, stickers, magazines, and other material as well as worksheets that provided spaces for each step in the planning process. We asked them to pick something about NYC that they thought needed to be improved and that was personally important to them. Some kids chose the congested subway system while others

noted a vacant lot they walked by every day that they felt was wasted space. Using the materials we provided, we asked them to create a collage, drawing, or whatever they preferred to explain how they would approach this issue as a planner. We walked around the space to answer questions and offer ideas during this portion of the session. Many of the kids were bursting with different ideas and excitement.

Lastly, we brought the kids back together and invited them to share what they had come up with. We ended by providing materials to the kids about how they could learn more and get involved, such as a list of planning blogs they could subscribe to, APA's page of resources, and the website for their area's community board.



What challenges did you face during your activity? What were your learning moments?

Challenge #1: We wanted to be sure that we addressed any topics that were especially sensitive for this particular group, such as housing instability and gentrification, with the utmost care.

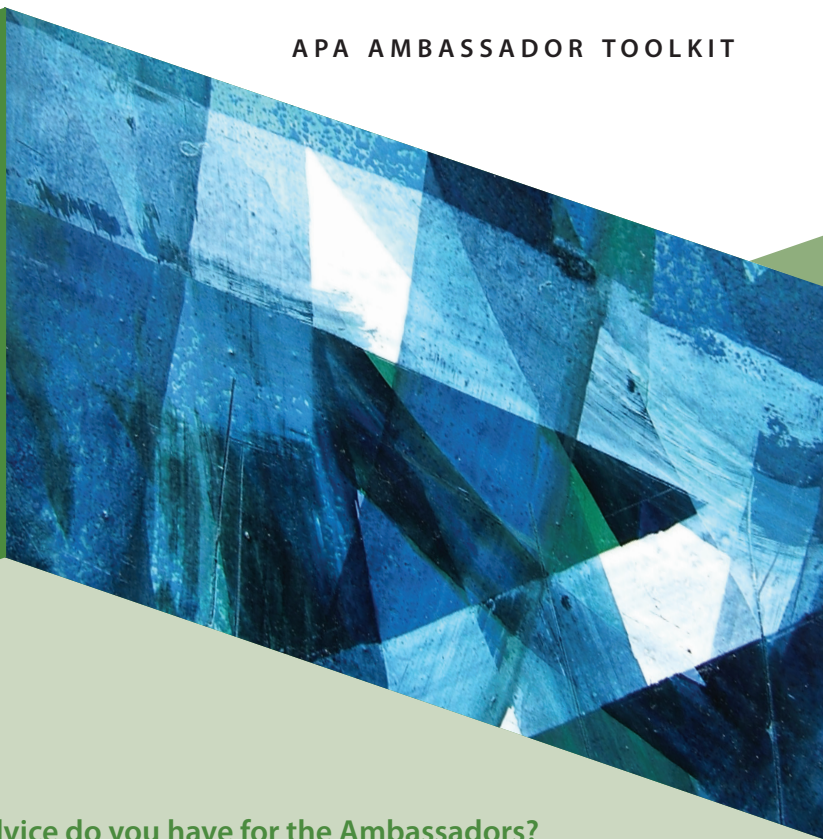
Initially, we thought the best thing to do would be to avoid directly bringing these issues up and we planned our content accordingly. However, we quickly realized that these were some of the subjects the kids were most eager to talk about because they were the ones that had personally impacted their lives. We adjusted accordingly and made time for discussion of these topics. We worked hard to answer their questions with both honesty and positivity, all the while emphasizing how they could get more involved in such issues.

Challenge #2: The group included kids that had varying levels of education and we wanted to be sure the content was accessible for all.

We have consistently found that a successful way to address this issue is to make sure that all presentation materials are highly visual since this is a medium that most people are able to understand. We also made sure to walk through our presentation material with someone outside the industry in advance of our session to ensure we weren't unintentionally relying on planning jargon or other planning-related imagery that were familiar to us but not easily understandable to others. There was no need to "dumb down" any information and we have found that kids of all ages and education levels can quickly grasp what we would consider to be complicated topics.

Challenge #3: We wanted to make sure that we kept students attentive throughout the activity in the hopes that we could avoid any behavioral disruptions.

While the kids did occasionally get distracted, we found that the best solution was to not push them, adapt accordingly, and transition our discussion to one in which they could be more engaged. It also helped to ask employees of Covenant House for tips, pointers, and a heads-up in regard to potential roadblocks.



What advice do you have for the Ambassadors?

- Interaction is key! Get the kids involved in an activity or take them on a walking tour so they can see a project site in person instead of just in a PowerPoint.
- While we did use a PowerPoint, I'd highly recommend using it as an aid to showcase visuals and guide a discussion. Young people are usually in situations where they are being presented to, talked to, etc. These sessions seem to be the most successful when the kids are encouraged to speak up throughout their entirety.
- Make the content personal and relevant to your audience—there is no better way for the kids to gain an understanding.
- Utilize your resources and go over your session with whomever you are coordinating with—they will be able to tell you what may not work and what will.
- Bring food if you are facilitating a session outside of the classroom that is not mandatory for people to attend. We brought pizza and it definitely helped us draw a crowd.
- Be ready to adapt! No matter how much you prepare beforehand, things won't go as planned at some point during your session. So be prepared to adapt things along the way, whether it be the format, content, or something else.