

A photograph of a man in a light blue button-down shirt and khaki pants sitting on a desk in a classroom, holding an open book and gesturing with his right hand as he speaks to a group of students. The students are seen from behind, and the background shows a bright window.

Real Talk, Real Impact: Champion Guide to Speaking with Students

Introduction

Inspiring Future CPAs: A Guide to Speaking with Students

Every time you step into a classroom, you have the opportunity to plant a seed—one that could grow into a lifelong career in accounting. Whether you're talking to curious elementary schoolers, ambitious high school students or college students navigating their next steps, your role as a TXCPA Champion is more than just informational—it's inspirational.

This guide is designed to help you connect with students at every stage of their academic journey. Because what resonates with a fourth grader will be very different from what motivates a college senior. Younger students need to see that accounting is creative, problem-solving work that helps people and businesses thrive. High school students are often asking, "Is this something I could actually see myself doing?" And college students are deciding how to turn interest into action—and action into a career.

Inside, you'll find age-appropriate talking points, helpful tips for tailoring your message and real-world examples that make the CPA profession relatable and exciting. More than anything, you'll find tools to help you meet students where they are—and show them where a future in accounting can take them.

Let's get started—and help shape the future of the profession, one conversation at a time.



Speaking to College Students: Meeting Them Where They Are

When you speak to a group of college students, you're not just giving a presentation—you're helping shape their future. Whether you're talking to freshmen who are still figuring out what "CPA" even stands for, or seniors who are knee-deep in Exam prep, your message matters.

First-year and sophomore students are often still exploring career paths and deciding if accounting is the right fit. These students will benefit most from a big-picture view of the profession: What does a CPA do? Where can this career take you? How can TXCPA support your journey from student to professional?

Juniors and seniors, on the other hand, are focused on what comes next—internships, full-time jobs and CPA licensure. They're looking for guidance on how to stand out, pass the Exam and launch their careers with confidence.

This guide will help you tailor your message to the students in front of you—no matter where they are in their journey. Following, you'll find key talking points, conversation starters and TXCPA benefits to highlight. The goal? To help every student in the room see how TXCPA can support them at every stage of becoming a CPA.



Early-Stage (Typically 1st year, 2nd year or community college students)

These students are still exploring the field and building foundational skills. Consider talking points, such as:

- Why did you choose to major in accounting and become a CPA?
- How becoming a CPA opens doors to leadership roles and higher earning potential.
- Did you have any internships? (if so, share your experience)
- Talk about your industry: What is public/private/forensic/etc. accounting?
- Explain the broad scope of accounting: auditing, tax, advisory, forensic accounting, cost accounting, etc.
- Why accounting is a stable and in-demand profession with diverse career paths.
- Encourage joining accounting organizations (e.g., Beta Alpha Psi, NABA, ALPFA, IMA)
- Discuss soft skills and habits to start building now such as communication, professionalism, and time management.
- Share strategies for succeeding in intro accounting courses.

Later-Stage (Typically 3rd year, 4th year or graduate students)

- What was the biggest lesson you learned early in your career?
- How did you handle failure or mistakes early in your career?
- What was your first job out of college? What is your job now? Why did you choose this job?
- What are some of the perks of being a CPA? (i.e., work from home, travel, salary, job security)
- Tips on balancing exam prep with school, work, or internships.
- What to expect from a public accounting job such as busy seasons, client interaction, training.
- Discuss the role of data analytics, AI, and automation in modern accounting.
- Talk about career options beyond audit and tax such as consulting, financial planning, risk advisory, etc.
- Discuss the differences between Big 4, mid-tier, and local firms (culture, workload, learning opportunities)

High School Students

While high schoolers typically have a better understanding of accounting than middle schoolers, they often still have misconceptions about the profession, struggle with a clear vision of their career path and just the idea of college can be overwhelming. Even those who have taken an accounting class, which many may not have - probably aren't familiar with the wide variety of career paths accounting offers. Take this opportunity to disprove the stereotypes while talking about the many opportunities in accounting and how exciting and worthwhile the accounting profession is. Highlight the fact that accountants are needed in all businesses. The more positive stories and examples you share, the more engaged the students will be.

Consider talking points, such as:

- Why did you choose to major in accounting and become an accountant/CPA?
- Where did you go to college? Was accounting always your intended major?
- What was your first job out of college? What is your job now? Why did you choose this job?
- What other opportunities are there for accountants/CPAs?
- What is a CPA and what is the difference between an accountant and a CPA?
- What are some of the exciting things that are a part of your work? (help students understand by sharing real-life stories)
- What are some of the perks of being an accountant? (i.e., work from home, travel, salary, job security)
- What skills do you rely on to be successful in your role?
- What advice do you have for high school students as they begin thinking about college?



Middle School Students

Most middle schoolers have little understanding of accounting and see the profession as narrow, uncreative, monotonous and boring—which obviously isn't the case. This presents a great opportunity to influence these students' perceptions and understanding of accounting. Keep your talk simple, relatable, and fun while offering valuable insights.

Consider talking points, such as:

- Explain what accounting is and that it is about much more than math - detail other skills used.
- Emphasize accounting's importance and role(s) within business.
- Highlight that no matter what their interests are, everyone needs an accountant.
- Help them understand the impact that accounting can have on businesses by sharing real-life stories.
- Share the easiest and hardest parts of your job.
- Share how you started your career and if you always knew you wanted to be an accountant.
- Tell them what excites you about the future of accounting.
- Share something they might be surprised to learn - people/businesses you get to work with, etc.
- Frame accounting as a prestigious yet attainable career path.



Elementary School Students

Presenting your career to elementary school students requires a slightly different approach compared to other students. With this younger audience (ages 5-10), you'll want to keep things even simpler, interactive, and visually exciting. By keeping it simple, with everyday examples, elementary schoolers will understand the basics of accounting in a fun way!

Some things to keep in mind:

- **Bite-Sized Information.** Break down your session into small chunks (2-3 minutes per topic) to match their shorter attention spans.
- **Engage Them Early.** Ask questions right from the start to involve them. For example, "Who here earns an allowance?" or "Are any of you saving your money for something?", "Who wants to be in charge of the money?"
- **Let Them Ask Fun Questions.** Elementary students are naturally curious. Be prepared for fun and unexpected questions!

Consider talking points, such as:

- **Start with a story or exciting fact.** Something like what you wanted to do when you were their age and how you got interested in your career. Make a connection between what you wanted then and now.
- **Explain what accounting is.** Something like: Accounting is like keeping score for money. Just like you keep track of points in a game, accountants keep track of how much money comes in and goes out.
- **Explain earning and spending.** You can do this by asking them to imagine they get an allowance for doing chores. Explain that's money coming in, like earning. When you buy candy or toys, that's spending. Accountants write down how much money you earn and spend so you know how much money you have left.
- **Talk about saving for the future.** For example, if you save some of your allowance instead of spending it, you can buy something bigger later, like a new bike or video game. This is called saving, and accountants help people and businesses decide how much to save.
- **Bring fun props or visuals.** Things like colorful play money or a piggy bank can help show how accountants track where the money goes.

Closing Thoughts: Your Impact Matters

No matter the age group you're speaking to, you have a unique opportunity to shape how students see the accounting profession—and perhaps even inspire someone to pursue a future they hadn't yet imagined.

Whether you're simplifying big ideas for elementary students or giving college seniors the real talk about Exam prep and career paths, your voice matters. You bring life to a profession that is dynamic, essential and full of possibilities. You help students see that accounting isn't just about numbers—it's about leadership, trust, strategy and impact.

Thank you for serving as a TXCPA Champion and for sharing your time, experience and passion. With every story you tell, question you answer and hand you shake, you're helping build the next generation of CPAs—and strengthening the future of the profession.

Let's keep the conversation going. Let's keep showing up. And let's keep inspiring students, one visit at a time.

