

PUBLIC SPEAKING

OBJECTIVE/RATIONALE

Expertise in communication skills is necessary for the dissemination of scientific knowledge. The student will communicate conclusions clearly and concisely to an audience of professionals.

TEKS: 121.12 9A, 9B

TAKS ELA 1, 2, 3, 5, 6

KEY POINTS

GETTING READY FOR THE DELIVERY

1. **Don't memorize your presentation** unless you have a fail-safe memory. You will run the risk of forgetting a segment and staring dazed at a room full of bewildered faces. Practicing your presentation 4-5 times should make you comfortable with the material.
2. **Use 3x5 note cards** – they are easy to handle. Highlight sections to be emphasized.
3. **Practice delivering your presentation** in small segments each practice session. Smile, use hand gestures, and facial expressions.
4. **Use conversational tone.**
5. **Practice with a tape recorder**
6. **Practice in the room you will deliver your presentation in – with all of the equipment, lectern, and microphone.**
7. **Ask a friend to videotape your practices. Study the use of your hands, facial expression and eyes. Watch for any distracting mannerisms.**
8. **Practice. Practice. Practice.**

THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS OF SPEAKING

1. **Not meeting the needs of the audience.**
2. **An unclear purpose.** Set clear objectives. Make sure you recognize the difference between the subject, the title, and the purpose. They are not the same.
3. **Lack of clear organization.**
4. **Too much unnecessary information.**
5. **Monotonous voice.**
6. **Unnecessary, unclear, or inappropriate visual aids.**
7. **Reading the talk.**

DELIVERY

- Speak slowly and project to the back of the room.
- Tell audience to interrupt you if they are uncertain about what you've said.
- Ask the audience periodically if they have any questions.
- SMILE!!
- Maintain eye contact with your audience
- Be honest if you don't have an answer to a question.
- End on a positive note and thank your audience –and SMILE!!

NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

60% of our communication is non-verbal according to social anthropologist Edward Hall. When we stand before an audience our posture, facial expressions, voice, hand gestures, and our entire body communicates more than our words.

VOICE – when you practice with the tape recorder, listen to your voice. Inflection, pauses, tone, and pace are important nonverbal communicators and help avoid the mistake of being monotone. Here are some tips for your voice:

- Drink a small amount of water before your presentation. It will relax the vocal cords. Avoid carbonated drinks.
- Lower the tone of your voice and speak slowly
- Pause to give the audience time to formulate the information
- Use short sentences and don't forget to breathe from your stomach not your chest..
- Avoid letting the last part of the sentence drop. It suggests a lack of confidence. Practice emphasizing the last 2-3 words of the sentence.
- Avoid speeding up at the end of the presentation. The end should be the strongest part.
- Talk to your audience – NOT to your visuals!
- Pause after presenting a new visual to give the audience time to react.

EYES – Eye contact keeps the audience interested. Watching the audience also keeps the speaker tuned into their needs. Keep some lights on so you can see your audience.

BODY – If you are well-prepared and enthusiastic about your topic, body gestures will come automatically and naturally. Check a videotape of yourself for these distracting behaviors: walking aimlessly around, slouching or hanging onto the lectern, playing with glasses, a pencil, pen or something in your pocket, rocking back and forth, avoiding eye contact with the audience, twisting or clenching your hands, nervous laughing, or waving the laser ineffectively.

CLOTHES – Dress comfortably and appropriately – adapting your clothing to the audience.

Lectern, Microphones, Laser Pointer

Lectern – Smile at the person who introduces you.

- Don't rush. Take a moment to collect your thoughts, lay out your notes, and adjust the microphone.
- Avoid clutching the lectern. It is there to hold your notes and the microphone (not you!)
- Avoid using the lectern as a shield. It may act as a physical barrier between you and your audience. You may forfeit your valuable communication tools – your body and your hands.
- Place your notes high on the lectern. This way you will keep your head up and maintain better eye contact with your audience.
- If you wear glasses, make sure you have them handy.

Microphone – Try to test the microphone ahead of time.

- **Stationary.** Usually fixed to the lectern and adjustable in height. The best position is chin level. The drawback that is your movement is restricted.
- **Lavaliere.** Hangs around your neck, leaving your hands free. You can move around but be careful not to get tangled in the cord.
- **Clip-on.** Clips on to the jacket lapel. If you are a woman, find out what type of microphone you will be using ahead of time so you can plan to wear something appropriate.
- **Hand-held.** Allows you to move around. Watch for the cord while walking. If you have a remote and a laser, you won't have an extra hand for the microphone.
- **Wireless remote.** Clips to the tie, blouse, or lapel with a wire leading to a portable power pack that clips to the waist. This frees your hands and doesn't require a cord.

All microphones pick up sounds including papers rustling, clinking jewelry, and anything hitting the microphone. They also pick up comments you make under your breath to yourself and others. Be conscious of the p, b and s sounds.

Laser Pointers – Great for pointing out small details on slides.

- Use sparingly – avoid the sing-a-long bouncing ball effect
- Rest the pointer on your opposite arm to avoid the dancing ball caused by nervousness and shaky hands.
- Turn the laser off when you are not using it.

PERFORMANCE ANXIETY

Rapid pulse, sweaty palms, pounding heart, shaking knees – sound familiar?

The best ways to avoid performance anxiety are:

- Prepare
- Be enthusiastic
- Practice
- Have realistic expectations

Preparation – Know the subject, audience, and purpose. You have thoroughly researched your subject, so you will have the answers to most questions you will be asked. If you don't have the answer, you won't be panicked at the thought of saying "I don't know the answer to that question, may I get back to you?" Write down three tough questions you might ask if you were in the audience.

- Practice pronouncing the name of the person who will introduce you, so you can say "Thank you, Ms so and so, without stumbling.
- Hand-carry your slides, disk, or transparencies with you to be sure they don't get misplaced.
- Carry a spare bulb for the projector
- Carry a handkerchief just in case you need one.

Enthusiasm – Enthusiasm, energy, and a belief in what you are saying will capture your audience's attention.

Practice – Confidence comes from practice. Phrase and pause. Phrase and pause. Give yourself time to think and speak slowly. Practice making eye contact, modulating your voice, reading aloud, standing up straight, and SMILING!

Realistic Expectations – Perfection should not be your goal. Improvement and development should be. Don't take yourself too seriously. Prepare, believe in your topic, and practice. Then, if you make an error, learn from it and move forward.

- Nervousness before a presentation is natural – even the most experienced speakers get nervous.
- Most anxiety doesn't show as much as you believe it does.
- Eye contact with the audience can reduce speaker anxiety. Direct eye contact with one person helps the speaker concentrate on the message and stay focused. Scanning the audience may overload the brain and as a result, you may talk too fast, lose the audience's attention, and perhaps lose your focus.
- Interaction with the audience helps reduce anxiety. Ask questions of the audience and invite them to ask you questions as you go along. If your audience has the opportunity to participate, they will be more attentive.
- Exercise a couple of hours before your presentation.
- Yawning relieves nervousness.

- Arrive early to the place you will give your presentation. Greet people as they come in.
- Beware of the lone skeptic. In every group there will be one person whose body language indicates that he or she is skeptical, suspicious, or unimpressed. Don't bother to try to win them over. Most likely, the signs you are receiving have nothing to do with you or your presentation. Concentrate on those who are sending you positive messages.
- Humor can break the ice, establish a good rapport, and relax both the speaker and the audience. Make sure the humor is related to your topic and avoid jokes that may be offensive to any audience member.
- Visualize yourself giving a successful presentation!

Check out your local TOASTMASTERS! They are a non-profit organization dedicated to helping people improve their speaking skills. You can find them in the yellow pages or write to: Toastmasters, PO Box 9052, Mission Viejo, CA. 92690-7052 or check :

<http://www.toastmasters.org/>

Virtual Presentation Assistant:

<http://www.ukans.edu/cwis/units/coms2/vpa/vpa.htm>

This site contains a self-study course with advice on presentations.