

THE POWER OF PRESENTATIONS

One of the most effective ways to shape attitudes is through public speaking. That is one form of interpersonal communication and, in a sense, mass communication (depending on the size of the group), that can have significant impact. People have a chance to ask questions, raise points that have confused them, and share their opinions with the speaker. Two way communication takes place and that is essential to effective public relations.

In this section, we look at where school psychologists might be able to deliver their messages, some tips in being successful while speaking before a group, and outlines for three sample speeches—one for parents, one for teachers, and another for community leaders.

GAINING THE PODIUM

There are numerous places for school psychologists to seek speaking opportunities and many of them will allow you to share the important advice that will help students succeed. The key in your communications campaign is to identify your most important audiences and determine where they hear talks. Those locations should be your targets.

Consider these opportunities:

- School staff meetings
- PTA, PTO, booster club and other parent meetings
- Civic clubs, such as the Kiwanis, Rotary, Lions, etc.
- School board meetings
- Parent education classes
- The Chamber of Commerce

These are a few of the possibilities; you can determine more by looking at the audiences in your community that are most important to be influenced.

SCOUT YOUR AUDIENCE

Know your audience; all are different. You should find out as much as possible about the specific group you will be addressing. Learn whether there will be a large percentage of parents, senior citizens who have grandchildren in your school, business people, or others with specific interests. Your speech may be adapted slightly. More importantly, you may need to be ready for a different set of questions.

Consider these steps in scouting your audience:

- Ask the meeting coordinator to describe the audience. Find out how many people might attend and something about the group make-up. Ask as many questions as you feel appropriate.
- Find someone who is a member of that group and ask questions. If that individual is a friend, seek advice on the best approach and questions that might be raised.
- See if a friend has ever spoken to that group and review his or her experiences.
- Attend one of the group's meetings. This will give you first hand information.

CHECK OUT THE LOCALE

The location of your speech can have a major impact on your success, especially if you haven't checked out the location beforehand. No one likes surprises. Determine:

- The setting of the room. Is it a "cozy setting," or is it long and narrow, where you will have to work to keep the attention of those in the rear.
- Whether you will be presenting from a head table, podium, or be free to "walk the room." This can determine whether you can rely extensively on notes, what type of microphone to use, and how easy it will be to involve the group.
- Whether there will be a meal served.

You should also be clear on what you will need . Do you plan to use the transparencies that are included in this section? If so, make sure that an overhead projector is available.

Also, determine whether you'll need a microphone and ask for the type you prefer. If you are to use transparencies, you may wish to have a cordless lavalier microphone. You won't always get what you want, but you should always ask.

Get to the site early. Is there water at the podium? Is the projector working? Is there a spare bulb for it and do I know how to install the bulb? Do I have a back-up plan if my audio-visual equipment fails me?

It is always important to have a series of short talking points on whatever topic you may be presenting and be prepared to shorten, lengthen, or adapt the presentation because of time, audience, or technology glitches. Be flexible.

THE IMPORTANT HANDOUT

It's always wise to include handouts or at least an outline of your talk in case of the burned out bulb, the business meeting taking longer, etc. Before the presentation find out how many people will be in the audience, and bring more copies than you'll need. Determine how the handouts will be distributed and whether you want to distribute them before or after your talk.

GETTING BEHIND THE PODIUM

Reach out to the organizations that include your key audiences and seek speaking opportunities. It's always wise to start with "friendly" groups. As you become more experienced, reach out to other important audiences. There are times of the year when groups may be more interested in a youth or education speaker, such as at the start of school or American Education Week (the third week of November).

Determine whether you know people who are members of key groups. and ask them about speaking to the group. If you don't have such contacts, your Chamber of Commerce will probably have a listing of civic organizations and their presidents or program chairpersons.

To get more mileage from any speech consider, when appropriate, to invite reporters to cover your presentation. However, be sure to coordinate this with the group. If someone from a local paper is there, it may result in news coverage that delivers your message to a larger audience and could lead to additional invitations.

A SPEAKER WITH INITIATIVE

Consider bringing a speech or presentation with you whenever you attend a meeting-even when you aren't scheduled to be the speaker. One school public relations professional gave her speech six times in one year when the scheduled presenter didn't appear.

OTHER IDEAS TO CONSIDER

Here are additional tips that have helped speakers succeed:

- Use local examples to support your key points. Those in your audience will relate to what they know.
- Eliminate any and all education jargon from the speech. This includes abbreviations. Your goal is for people to leave with the key points in their minds. They will have to understand and remember what you say. In public speaking, it's wise to keep it simple.
- Maintain a speech file in which you can include local examples or light moments for future speeches.
- Humor is good, but don't force it. Use humor carefully.

- Ask a friend to attend and react to your presentation. You should try improving your presentation each time you deliver it.
- Eliminate everything from the speech that does not add something to it. The shorter the better. The appropriate time will vary depending upon the group and the topic. A good guideline is around 20 minutes. AND ALWAYS LEAVE TIME FOR QUESTIONS.

PUTTING THE PRESENTATION TOGETHER

Presentations generally are divided into four categories:

- **The Introduction** in which you should draw the listener into the presentation. Some speakers use humor to do this, which is a technique that can work if you are good at employing humor. However, if your attempt is forced or not funny, you can lose the audience right at the start. Another approach is to describe the urgency of the message (“If we do not help students right from the start, they will never have a chance to succeed in school”) or focus on a timely issue that interests your audience (“Tomorrow school starts, and we all have an important role in helping students succeed”)
- **The Body of the Talk** in which you deliver your important messages
- **The Conclusion** in which you encourage listeners to take action (this may mean support school psychology), and
- **A Question and Answer Period** in which you will try to anticipate the questions that might be asked and determine what points you’ll make in your answers.

On the following pages, we provide three presentation outlines developed in this format. One is geared for parents which can be delivered at parent meetings; one for teachers for you to use at staff meetings or on a professional development day; and one for community members to use at civic organizations. Again, the NASP books on Handouts, Best Practices, and Children’s Needs should provide enough outline material for as many talks, handouts, or articles you would ever need. Please feel free to add to the talk outlines provided in this section and develop a handbook useful for your circumstances.

There are also designs for transparencies if you wish to use them. Additionally, the handout samples in Section 7 of this manual are meant to be used by themselves or in conjunction with these talks. Keep adding to these sections with materials you and others have developed.

These outlines should be considered just that. School psychologists should expand upon the points in the outline that relate to the specific messages their audiences need to hear. You may want to eliminate some elements from the outline for your speech, or change the language. All that is encouraged. Put yourself into your speech, using local examples, stories from your experiences, etc.

SAMPLE PRESENTATION FOR PARENTS

(“How To Motivate Children to Learn,” based on the handout on pg. 55 of *Helping Children at Home and School: Handouts from Your School Psychologist*. Using existing materials to develop a talk or article significantly shortens preparation time.)

INTRODUCTION

- If students don’t “care to learn,” they aren’t going to apply themselves.
- Parents are the child’s first teacher and continue to make a difference in their children’s attitudes.
- There are many easy to use ways for parents to motivate their children to learn. You can make a difference!

BODY

- A child who is academically motivated wants to learn and believes school is important.
- Infants are naturally motivated to learn. This natural motivation later translates to learning to read and write.
- However, negative beliefs can develop that interfere with their natural motivation. Sometimes children's negative beliefs develop as a result of the attitudes of their parents.
- Parental attitudes can influence student's attitudes about academic success. If parents don't place value on learning, their children are likely to model that behavior.
- Parents can motivate their children by letting them know classroom success is valued and by congratulating students on academic success.
- They can also teach good study habits.
- Here are some specific tips for parents (Several examples are presented here, but the speaker can adapt these, eliminate some, and include others from the handout.)
 1. Do family activities that encourage learning, such as visits to the library, museums or parks.
 2. Let your children know that learning is important and is the central purpose of school.
 3. Talk with your children about school and show an interest in their school activities. Go beyond simply asking, "How was school today?"
 4. Be sure to praise your children for trying hard and for being successful. All children need to know when they are doing well.
 5. Have a set routine for school work, and begin that routine in the early years. Your child should know when he or she is expected to work on school work each day.
 6. Set up a place to study where your children have the needed supplies and as much quiet as necessary.
 7. Make sure your children finish school work at home before doing things that could distract them from doing their school work.
 8. Be willing to spend time with your children practicing spelling words or multiplication facts.
 9. Review your child's work.
- It is also important to work with your child's teacher. Working together teachers and parents can form a powerful team to help children reach their fullest potential. Consider these four tips:
 1. Show your child that you respect his or her teacher. Don't handle disagreement with the teacher in front of your child.
 2. Talk regularly with the teacher so that each of you knows what is going on in school and at home. Waiting until report cards come out is often too late to make changes.
 3. Work with your child's teacher to make sure your child learns good study habits.
 4. Develop a system to give reinforcements at home for working hard in school.

CONCLUSION

- It's tough being a parent today. We all have too much to do and too little time in which to do it. However, there's nothing more important in a child's life than his or her parents.
- It is essential that parents become part of the team to educate children. Working together, we can provide the best possible learning opportunities for children.
- Contact your child's teacher. Or phone me at (insert school psychologist's phone number) to develop an academic motivation program for your child.
- I will now be pleased to answer any questions you have.

Parents Are A Child's First Teacher

Infants
Are Motivated
To Learn;
Motivation
Can Continue

Children's
Negative Beliefs
Destroy
Natural Motivation
To Learn

Parents Do Make A BIG Difference

Tips for Parents:

- Family Activities
- Learning Is Important
- Talk about School
- Praise Children
- Create a Routine
- Set Up a Study Area
- Finish School Work First
- Spend Time with Child
- Review Child's Work

Work with Teacher:

- Show Respect
- Talk Regularly
- Develop Study Habits
- Create Reinforcements

Join
The Team
To Help
Your Student
Learn

SAMPLE PRESENTATION FOR TEACHERS

(“Promoting Competent Behavior of Tough Kids,” based on the handout on pg. 307. This handout can be used as a resource in developing the speech and as a handout to the audience after the speech.)

INTRODUCTION

- All teachers can remember the one or two “tough kids” they had in their classroom and the impact those children had on the remainder of the class.
- Behaviors they exhibit include talking out, not being prepared, noncompliance, and disrupting the classroom, among others.
- One outcome of such behavior is that teachers are leaving the profession. In fact, such behaviors are the leading reason teachers leave teaching.
- However, there is a strategy that will help get these tough kids on task. This strategy focuses on setting classroom rules, preplanning mild consequences for infractions, creating a simple reward system, and corrective steps for those students who insist on breaking rules.
- Let’s look at how this can work for you.

BODY

- Design rules that are specific and represent your expectations.
 1. Rules should be specific and observable.
 2. You should have no more than six rules.
 3. Rules should be primarily positive.
 4. Rules should be specific, not ambiguous.
 5. Rules should relate to what you expect from students.
- Pre-plan consequences and place them on a Rules Chart. With this approach, consequences will be clear and consistent.
 1. Consequences should be mild, not severe, and arranged in an increasing hierarchy.
 2. Severe rules for crisis situations, such as when a student is caught with a gun, should not be on the chart.
 3. Create an “What If” chart of positive consequences the entire class earns for not breaking rules.
- There will still be some students who break rules regardless of negative and positive consequences. Create a self-monitoring program for them.
 1. Inform students if they break three or more rules in a day, they will be placed on the self-monitoring program.
 2. Tape the self-monitoring chart to their desks.
 3. List on one side the rules the child is having the most problems with.
 4. Have the student twice a day (morning and afternoon) circle how well they are doing (from 1 to 4)
 5. Provide feedback to the student as to whether you agree or disagree with his or her self-evaluation.
 6. When the student reaches a stated improvement level, he or she is taken off self-monitoring.
 7. Consider communication with the parents as the student moves through his process.

CONCLUSION

- There are additional resources to explain this strategy. Share handout (page 307 in *Helping Children at Home and School*, for example) and/or cite the references listed in the handout.
- Indicate your willingness to meet with teachers to review this procedure and/or establish it with a student.
- Suggest that teachers who want to try this approach meet as a group in one month to discuss whether it is working.
- I will now be happy to answer any questions you have.