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Scott Ebright, APR, deputy director of communication services, OSBA

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Ohio School Boards Association

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Speech handout

(distribute after the speech)

- smile
- KISS (keep it simple stupid)
- know your audience and their needs
- do not give the audience a copy of speech or PowerPoint
- how do you want to be remembered?
- know what your purpose is
- know your material inside and out
- know what you want the audience to do afterwards
- understand that it's "Showtime"
- be likeable
- keep the audience's attention (even with gimmicks and surprises)
- make eye contact with everyone in the room
- vary your tone and pace
- tell personal stories so people can relate
- use humor very carefully
- move and gesture
- select your words carefully
- look and dress the part
- never eat a Frosty while driving to a speaking engagement
- smile and unlock your knees
- do not read your speech or PowerPoint
- to PowerPoint or not to PowerPoint
- know what came before you
- apologize if need be
- do not ignore signs of confusion
- be passionate
- don't be too long or too short (know when to stop)

Speaking in tongues is not communicating

by Ginny LaGuardia

If Abraham Lincoln had been a professional educator, chances we we'd still be trying to figure out the Gettysburg Address. If Wendy's had hired a professional educator to write its commercials, chances are the world would never have gotten sick to death of "Where's the beef?"

It's not as odd a combination as it sounds. Both the Gettysburg Address and the commercial have survived because they both had something to say, and said it so their audiences could understand it. They communicated. School systems and school boards are, or should be, communicating too, especially at a time when outside support can make or break a system. But educators have fallen into a trap. They have something important to say, but many aren't saying it so their audience can understand. Sooner or later, that audience could disappear.

Every profession, from programmers to rocket scientists, has its own specialized vocabulary, acronyms and terminology. Those in the same field understand it; outsiders may not. But computer programmers and rocket scientists seldom have to explain their actions to the public or depend upon it for financial support. Educators, I think, have forgotten that. They launch verbal barrages of pedantic prose at a bewildered public and can't understand why that public doesn't leap to its collective feet and applaud. It could be because that public doesn't understand, and when it doesn't understand, it's more likely to balk than back.

"Teacher talk," or educationese, has invaded even the simplest forms of communication. Report cards, for instance, probably the single most message to parents and the one most widely read, are sometimes a maze of murkiness. I remember my son bringing home grades for something called word attack, for example. I had a mental image of a room full of little kids racing around in a frenzy, beating on their reading books with sticks. I still don't know what word attack really means. I've asked several times, and must admit I didn't understand the answer. Will it get this kid into college? Is his stick too big or too small? Did the words win the battle or did he?

From a description to parents of a school calendar comes, "In developing (it), we have to anticipate the possibility that school may be closed during the year for emergencies such as inclement weather." Translation — we're planning on some snow days. Snow is not an emergency. It's a natural occurrence. If the writer had a premonition of real emergencies like tornadoes, an outbreak of the Black Plague or nuclear war, he or she should have said so.

The invasion of the term "grade level," while understandable, is a ridiculous redundancy. If you are in second grade, that is the second level, is it not? So why use both words? I understand a child can be on a different level within the same grade, but that would be grade and level. I also realize I have about as much chance to abolish this term as I have to convince the general populace that "alot" is not a word, but sometimes one must stick by one's principles.

All too often, "teacher talk" seems to be bent on proving a three-syllable word, preferably enhanced by a string of modifiers. Is better than a single, simple word, which does the job accurately. Some of the more popular:

- utilization (often modified by “expanded”) means use;
- implementation means put to use;
- instructional staff personnel means a teacher, I think;
- teaching strategies means how to do the job;
- scope and sequence means how much will be done and when;
- needs assessment is a questionnaire or survey.

There are many more like these tripping off educational tongues in print and in the flesh. Board members, once they’ve mastered the new language with which they are confronted immediately, adopt it as their own, and thereafter do their share in leaving their head-scratching constituents in the dust.

There’s nothing wrong with this specialized language as long as it’s used by and for the people conversant in it. By the same token, there’s nothing wrong with a simple declarative sentence either. Everybody understands that.

The Connecticut Association of Boards of Education’s *Journal* published an analysis of poll results (written in educationese), which concluded the more the public knows about its schools, the greater the support. It follows that the more the public understands, the more it will know and the greater the chances of support.

Plain English doesn’t cost a cent. Returns could be priceless.

Ginny LaGuardia was a member of the Bethel (Conn.) Board of Education. This article first appeared in a 1984 Connecticut Association of Boards of Education Journal.



Continuum Health Partners, Inc

The Voice and Swallowing Institute Presentation Skills – Hints for Success

There are many reasons for “giving a talk”: a computer technician gives a training session, a sales person presents a new product, an academic physician presents a patient for review, a professor teaches a class, an accomplished professional in any field is asked to give a guest lecture, a job applicant is asked to give a presentation as part of the interview process, an attorney takes a case to trial. We all know people who are “naturals” at giving talks -- they always sound prepared, they present a topic clearly, they know when to add humor, they hold our attention, their slides are interesting, and they don’t appear nervous. The secret, of course, is that these “natural” presenters have invested considerable effort in acquiring excellent presentation skills and preparing their talk. And often they are quite nervous – they just don’t let the audience know.

If you need to give a presentation, it is probably for an important reason, and you want to leave an excellent impression on your audience. Here are some helpful suggestions for you. These suggestions cover what to do with your voice, your body, the environment in which you will speak, as well as a few suggestions about the content of your talk and how to handle the inevitable fear of public speaking!

The two golden rules of presentations:

1. Keep an eye on the time and don't run over your limit. **Ever.**
2. Practice your presentation. **A lot.**

YOUR VOICE – THE PRIMARY MEANS OF CONVEYING YOUR MESSAGE

The sound of your voice can help you convey your message to your audience, or it can be a deadly distraction (to both you and your audience). It is a common mistake of speakers to spend a lot of time preparing the *content* of the talk, but little time thinking about the *form*; in this case how the talk is conveyed – by voice and by audiovisuals.

The most common problems that speakers have with their voice are:

1. Having an increasingly difficult time keeping the voice clear as the presentation progresses, necessitating repetitive (and increasingly forceful) throat-clearing. This is *almost* as distracting and obnoxious for the audience as it is for the speaker.
2. Speaking too softly for the entire audience to hear easily. This can take the form of consistently being too soft throughout the presentation, or it can be frequent “fade-out”; starting a sentence sufficiently loudly and fading out by the end of the sentence (and repeating this pattern over and over).
3. Speaking with too rapid a rate of speech, causing the speaker to sound breathless, nervous, and unsure of herself. It is annoying (and therefore distracting) to the audience.
4. Using insufficient inflection (pitch, loudness and pausing variations), making the speaker boring to hear, even if the content is interesting. Add a darkened, overly warm room and you are guaranteed to hear snoring or side conversations from the audience.
5. Using insufficient articulatory precision (e.g. “mumbling”). At the most fundamental level, there are two things that you can do that will, to a great extent, overcome these



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problems: hydrate and breath!

Hydration

Voice is produced at the level of the larynx (“voice box”) by vibrating vocal folds (sometimes referred to as vocal “cords”). The vocal folds are made up of muscle and a layered, pliable gelatinous tissue covering, the mucosa. The mucosa is the part of the vocal folds that vibrates rapidly open and closed to produce sound. Just as the gears of a car will seize up if they are not maintained with lubrication oil, so too the vocal fold mucosa will have considerable difficulty vibrating without lubrication. Although the exact mechanisms of tissue hydration of the voice production system are not completely understood, a number of related hypothesis have been put forward. It may be that during prolonged speech, such as would occur when giving a presentation, the increased airflow over the mucosa of the vocal folds, throat and mouth, increases the rate of evaporation. Contributing to the problem is likely a little nervousness about giving the presentation, which can increase activity of the sympathetic nervous system that in turn decreases oral mucus secretions and salivary gland secretions and increases overall metabolic rate, causing the body to use more water. All of this acts to further dry the mucosa of the larynx, throat and mouth. The end result -- your tongue is stuck to the roof of your mouth and your voice is creaking and cracking. A simple solution – drink a few glasses of water for the two hours prior to your presentation. And then you should have a cup of water with you while you are talking from which you sip frequently.

Breath Support

We carefully regulate the amount of air in the lungs when speaking. (Think about what you would do if you were told to yell – you’d start by taking a deep breath.) A specific level of air pressure from the lungs is required to initiate and to maintain vocal fold vibration (depending upon the pitch and loudness level, among other factors) When we start out speaking on a lung volume that is above the resting lung volume level, then the natural tendency of the external intercostals muscles and diaphragm is to relax. This makes it rather easy to maintain adequate air pressure for speech. Once we begin to speak below resting lung volume, we must use active muscle contraction to force more air out and hence to maintain adequate air pressure. Therefore, speaking becomes more effortful. And speaking moderately loudly, such as during a presentation to a group, is even more effortful and difficult. There is a natural tendency, in these cases, to increase the rate of speech in an effort to “get the words out” before the speaker runs out of breath. This is a poor strategy that rarely, if ever, works.

The simple solution is to take slightly deeper breaths at the beginning of a phrase, and to take short “replenishing breaths” throughout the phrase. It will naturally allow you to keep your voice louder, prevent you from fading out as much, and indirectly, it will slow your rate of speech. Adequate breath support for speech will also provide the speaker with the flexibility to increase the range of inflections.

Achieving Increased Range of Inflections

Speakers who maintain the audience’s attention and interest are adept at using a variety of inflections in their voice. These inflections are made up of modulations of pitch, loudness, pauses, articulatory emphasis, and pace. Pitch – the musical tone of your voice – should never be constant and at the opposite end of the spectrum, it should not be overly variable (“singsong”). Loudness level cannot be decreased to the point where the audience is unable to

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hear the speaker, but the speaker can intermittently increase loudness, for a sentence or phrase or even a word, to add emphasis and redirect the audience's attention. Rate of speech should be varied with the judicious use of pauses. Slowing down a sentence by providing increased time between each word or drawing out syllables just a little is also an excellent means of adding emphasis to a key point. One of the easiest ways to practice increasing inflection range is to read children's stories aloud. When rehearsing the presentation, experiment with changing the inflection. Listen to how TV and radio personalities use a range of inflections to maintain interest and convey a message.

Vocal Warm Ups

Warming up the voice is important and helpful for professional voice users (singers, actors, and broadcast personalities), for occupational voice users (teachers, salespeople, for example), for those with injured voices, and for anyone who is preparing to give a presentation or wants to make a good impression with their voice. Allow approximately 20 minutes to perform a complete warm up. Ideally, warm-ups should be performed leisurely, but with good mental focus and attention to detail. Make sure you are well hydrated – drink lots of water before and during your warm-up exercises. Pay attention to your posture while you do warm ups. Good (but relaxed) posture is important for full and easy range of motion of the muscles of the articulators and full breath support. There are many vocal exercises that can be used for warming up the voice. A simple exercise for preparing for a presentation is to practice the talk – out loud and at the pace and loudness level you expect to actually use during the actual presentation.

YOUR BODY – LOOKING AT EASE AND NON-DISTRACTING

Posture

Stand up straight. Do not put both hands in your pockets. If you occasionally put one hand in a pocket, that's fine, but make sure there are no keys or change in the pocket. It's annoying to the audience to listen to jangling items in the speaker's pocket.

Gestures

Gestures are important for descriptive support and emphasis. The very first step in practicing use of gestures is to become aware of how you use them habitually. Incorrect use of gestures (too much or too little) is annoying to the audience. Annoyances become distractions. Pay attention to your own gestures in different circumstances (on the telephone, in casual conversation with one individual, etc.) and pay attention to how others use gestures. Ask a friend or colleague for their (honest) observations of your use of gestures. Watch other people's use of gestures. What do you like about their movements? What is distracting and why?

Facial Animation

Pay attention to your natural resting facial expression. For some people, the natural resting expression can be interpreted as sad or bothered. Except for slide presentations in which the room is darkened, audiences spend a great deal of time staring at the speaker's face. Even during slide presentations, eventually the lights come up for Q&A, and then the audience is staring at you, the speaker. The most common error of facial expression is looking overly serious. Using more gestures will help lighten up an overly serious face. Increasing awareness of your facial expressions is important, but tricky to do, since you will tend to change your

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expression if you start watching yourself in the mirror. The best way to increase awareness of facial expression is to ask friends or colleagues for their feedback.

Eye Contact

Eye contact with the speaker brings an audience “into” your talk quickly. Maintain eye contact with one person at a time as you complete a sentence (or a thought) and then move on to another person. You don’t have to go in order from person to person, but don’t jump from one end of the room to the other, back and forth. Appropriate eye contact helps control pacing of a talk and contributes to a sense that the speaker is genuinely interested in conveying information to the audience. Mentally divide your audience into “eye focus” areas; quadrants or groups of people. The number of people in each eye focus area will depend upon the overall size of the audience. Maintain eye contact with one member of an eye focus area for a sentence, then move on to the next person. When you have “visited” each eye focus area, begin to move back again over the quadrants, selecting a different person in each eye focus area.

Movement

Do not stand in one place for the entire presentation, if at all possible. Move about the “stage” area (slowly - no zinging back and forth) so that you can address different parts of your audience. In an audience of 20 or more people, spend three to four sentences’ worth of time in each “eye focus” area of the audience. The movement helps the speaker maintain contact with the audience, and it prevents the speaker from becoming locked into a rigid body position.

PRACTICE

PRACTICE IS THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU CAN DO TO ENSURE A GOOD PRESENTATION.

There are right and wrong ways to practice. The wrong way to practice is:

- not taking your practice session seriously
- always starting from the beginning of your talk. (You end up with a great beginning and a weak middle and a confused ending, because inevitably you will stop your practice session when you get to the rough parts.)

So, some tips for practicing correctly:

1. Every other practice run: start in the middle of your talk.
2. Take the “dress rehearsal” seriously. Make yourself run through the talk from beginning to end, no matter what, regardless of errors. Once you are actually giving your presentation, you cannot stop or start over, so practice the presentation all the way through from beginning to end.
3. For short presentations (under 12 minutes) at large meetings where there are many talks, one right after the other, it is permissible to read from a script, but make sure that you have read and practiced the presentation so many times that it is practically memorized. It is absolutely essential that you rehearse so that you can look up very frequently. It is very boring to listen to someone read a talk. You must make extra effort to use your voice, body and slides to add interest.

4. If you keep having trouble at the exact same spot in your talk, over and over, then you will most assuredly have trouble at that spot during the actual presentation. Change the wording or the slide or reorganize that part of the presentation – whatever it takes to overcome the problem.
5. Be aware that the written word and the spoken word are different – what reads well may be impossible to speak.
6. During multiple practices, you will end up changing what you say slightly. That's fine. You are not memorizing lines of a play.

ANXIETY / FEAR ABOUT PRESENTING

Part of the anxiety and fear associated with public speaking may come from lack of self confidence, or negative prior experience. Most however, is due to a common though irrational fear that something absolutely terrible will happen during the presentation and the audience will forever think you are ignorant, foolish or worse. Fear is a physiologic reaction in which the sympathetic nervous system is activated and contributes to the discomforting physical symptoms commonly experienced – especially accelerated heart rate and difficulty breathing. Lots of experience will help abate those nerves somewhat, but even professional actors get “stage fright” – they just manage it and turn it into positive energy.

Many of the suggestions provided in these pages will help you gain confidence and partially allay your fears. There are a few things you can do to help manage the anxiety of public speaking. The first and largest thing is to be well prepared.

Memorize the first few opening sentences of your presentation. This will allow you to get into the presentation and allow the physiological reaction of fear to begin to settle down, without your having to think about what you need to say.

As you are being introduced, focus upon your breathing; slow deep inhalation through your nose, slow exhalation through narrowed lips (to keep the rate of airflow slow). Know that the audience wants to like you. People go to a presentation hoping or expecting it to be good. Most of the time, the audience is with you, not against you.

Don't Apologize For Being Nervous - Most of the time your nervousness does not show at all. If you don't say anything about it, nobody will notice. And if your voice is shaking or it is clear in some other way that you are nervous – calling attention to it or apologizing for it does not help move the focus off of the nervousness, but rather focuses the audience upon it even more.

Top ten tips for incredibly successful public speaking

by David Meerman Scott

I've been to something like one hundred conferences and corporate events in the past several years as I travel the world delivering keynotes and running seminars. I've seen a few great speeches. Sadly, most speeches I see are not very good. Some are downright terrible.

I've been collecting some observations on what makes a good presentation and also drawing from my own experience.

Most of us have an opportunity to speak, perhaps at your industry event, or your company's sales conference, or to a local club.

Make the most of your opportunity.

1. Take it seriously. If 200 people are in a room and you speak for a half hour, you are taking up 100 hours of people's time. I see many speakers "wing it" and it makes me feel sorry for the audience. Don't look bad.

2. Know the conference organizer's goals. When I speak, I work with organizers to deliver three goals in equal proportion: Education, entertainment, and motivation. Since I am a paid speaker, I must deliver on all three so the conference organizer is happy they invited me. You need to know the goals for being on the podium too. Why were you invited? How would the organizer define success?

3. Tell stories. When someone says: "Let me tell you a story...", you're interested, right? When someone says: "Let me tell you about my company...", is your reaction the same? It doesn't sound like a way you want to spend your valuable time, does it? Stories are exciting. Most presentations are dry. Open with a story. Tell stories to illustrate your point. It's fascinating to see an audience sit up and pay attention when you start to tell a story on the stage.

4. Nobody cares about your products (except you). Yes, it's just like what I say about Web marketing. What people do care about are themselves and ways to solve their problems. A speech is not about you; it is about your audience. You must resist the urge to hype your products and services. Even if you're asked to speak about your company or your products, make it about your customers or the problem you solve instead.

5. Prepare and practice. Run through your presentation as many times as required so that you are completely comfortable with the material. You should know the presentation so well that you could do it without PowerPoint and without notes.

6. Don't use PowerPoint as a TelePrompTer. Slides are great for showing images, charts, and the like. Consider showing a short video. But definitely don't use slides to show bulleted lists of text. Yawn! Way too many people just read off their slides. Don't! PowerPoint is not a speaker's crutch; it is a way to illustrate your spoken point. By the way, some of the best speakers don't use slides at all.

7. **Arrive early.** There is nothing worse than a presenter fumbling with technology on a stage. Everyone becomes uncomfortable and it is nearly impossible to make up that bad first impression. You should plan to arrive at the venue with plenty of time to spare and go to the room at least one hour prior to when you go on. You may need to arrive much earlier if there are sessions before yours because you will want to set up and test your equipment and stand on the stage to get a feel of the room. Use the microphone to hear your voice. Get as comfortable as possible with the venue before people arrive (or when they are on a break). The conference organizer and the A/V people will love you for arriving early! And when you are comfortable with logistics, you will deliver a better speech.

8. **Bring an electronic copy of your presentation.** I always carry my presentation on a memory stick and wear it around my neck from the moment I step out of my house until after I have presented. I wear it on the plane and in the hotel. I wear it out to dinner. You never know what may happen to your computer (I spilled water on my computer in Brussels once and fried it), so having that backup is comforting.

9. **Don't go long.** When you build a speech and deliver it for the first time, it almost always runs long. Don't go over time! It's okay to end short because you can take a few questions, but running long makes the entire event schedule get out of whack. Worse, they may pull you off the stage, which looks awful.

10. **Be aware of body language.** My friend [Nick Morgan](#), author of *Trust Me: Four Steps to Authenticity and Charisma* says: "When words and body language are in conflict, body language wins every time." If you are nervous, it shows. If you don't believe what you're saying, it shows. If you aren't having fun, it shows. And your audience will always react to your body language instead of your words.

Presentation 201: Why public speaking is like billiards

My post yesterday [Top ten tips for incredibly successful public speaking](#) received the most hits of any post I have written this year, so I thought I'd add a thought about public speaking and why it is like billiards. I first shared this idea on the [Marketing Over Coffee](#) podcast with John Wall and Christopher Penn last year.

But it was my absolutely dismal performance at the [Social Media Club pool 2.0 party](#) at South-by-Southwest that made me re-think this. My teammate [Jonathan Fields](#), author of *Career Renegade*, and I, playing for the "Authors 2.0" team lost in the first round. Photo from the event courtesy of [net2no](#).

I used to play a lot of pool while in university and later while living in Tokyo. I got pretty good. Sadly, I've lost my skills in the past decade or so, but I fondly recall when I was at the top of my game how it felt.

These days, I do a lot of public speaking. I first started about 20 years ago while I was living in Tokyo and some friends started the [Tokyo Breakfast Toastmasters Club](#). I spoke at least once a month for six years as part of Toastmasters. Then I began to speak a lot at conferences and

events for my work as VP marketing for several companies. Now I am on the speaking circuit full time.

So here's the idea:

Novice: When you first start playing pool, you're worried about just hitting the cue ball properly and not looking stupid. You want to at least get the white one to hit a colored one and if it gets in the hole, that's a bonus. Your total attention is on that cue ball.

As a speaker, the first few times on the podium, you just want to deliver your content without passing out due to stage fright. Your total attention is on your presentation.

Intermediate: After you've played some pool, you start to be aware of your opponent. What is he doing? Shall I buy him a beer so he gets a bit more drunk and starts to miss?

After you've delivered a dozen or so presentations, you start to get a true sense of the audience as more than just a fuzzy haze of faces. How are they reacting? Did the joke work?

Advanced: You've got the important shots down cold and nearly always hit them. Your mind moves away from the actual shots and you're starting to think strategy. Instead of taking a difficult shot, should you go defensive and block your opponent in?

After about 50 or so presentations, you really know your material. In fact, you know your material so well that you don't think about it and instead your mind can focus on secondary things like where you stand, how you hold your hands and if the joke worked better with a one second pause before the punch line or two.

Professional: I was never even close to a professional-level pool player, but I saw some hustlers in action. What struck me was that it was always a given that they would sink the next shot, so their mind was focused on placement of the cue ball for the next shot. A good player could run the table because they were constantly setting up one shot ahead.

I've gotten to the point after doing hundreds of presentations that I can be thinking several slides ahead. While I am delivering, say, slide 42 I am focused on how I am setting up a punch line that comes at slide 44.

There is an amazing Zen-like focus when you have this much experience. You start to be aware of things in the room that even the audience is not aware of. I will often look into an audience of 300 people and be able to count exactly how many people are not looking at me and instead focused on their iPhone or BlackBerry. And I get pissed if the number is more than zero. At this point, all the time you are presenting, you are making mental notes for how to improve little things the next time.

At this level, both pool and public speaking is like a drug. You need a fix. Where is the next stage (or table)? How far do I have to travel till I'm in the comfort zone of being in front of 250 people? When will I next experience a line of 50 people wanting to say hello after a gig?