**Helping Students Improve their Presentations**

Academy for Teaching and Learning Excellence

University of South Florida

In-class presentations are a great way for students to demonstrate their learning, share information with classmates, and express their creativity. However, many students also view them negatively and dislike public speaking. How can we make student presentations a better experience for all involved?

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*Preparation*

To have students produce quality presentations, sufficient guidance and preparation time is crucial.

* Model for students what you would like to see by giving a presentation of your own. Demonstrate the appropriate timing, structure, and format that correspond with the presentation students will be giving.
* Dedicate a portion of class time to presentation prep. Allow students to use this time to become familiar with their presentation’s content, timing, structure, and format.
* Consider having students submit a presentation proposal or draft in the days or weeks leading up to presentation day so that you can give feedback or corrections, if necessary.
* Have students practice giving their presentation to a small sample of the larger class to receive feedback from their peers before their speaking day.

*Organization*

Provide students with resources to help them properly structure their presentations.

* Content organization – encourage students to outline the content they will be presenting and divide it into logically-organized sections (beginning, middle, and end).
* Share the following presentation tips with students:
  + do a dry run of the presentation to verify timing and any parts that you might get stuck on. Have a partner come up with sample questions that the audience might ask
  + take it slow; avoid speaking too fast and rushing through your notes
  + don’t overload the class with too much information ( and avoid excess text on slides)

*Confidence*

Employ in-class activities and strategies to help build students’ public speaking confidence.

* Communicate the importance of body language when presenting – using expressive gestures, making eye contact, and avoiding fidgeting and folded arms all project confidence and make for a more engaging presentation.
* Gradually build up to the individual class presentation: start with students speaking to each other in their chairs, then speaking out in class from their chairs, presenting with a partner, and finally, presenting on their own.
* Consider leading students through (or encourage them to practice on their own) speaking exercises before presentation day: [www.ted.com/talks/julian\_treasure\_how\_to\_speak\_so\_that\_people\_want\_to\_listen](http://www.ted.com/talks/julian_treasure_how_to_speak_so_that_people_want_to_listen)

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*Community*

A strong sense of community within the classwill help students feel more comfortable, confident, and relaxed when getting up to speak in front of their peers. Make an effort to build this community throughout the semester.

* Ensure students know (and use) each other’s names; encourage familiarity.
* Model/instruct how to give constructive feedback.
  + Instead of, “what I didn’t like about this presentation,” use “how this presentation could be improved.”
* Make ‘questions from the audience’ a part of all presentations – this will help students practice communicating with each other and ensure that the presenters are able to discuss their topic in depth.

**Evaluating Student Presentations**

* Use a specific presentation rubric that focuses not only on content but presentation style, as well. Share this rubric with students beforehand so they know what is expected of them
* 2 sample oral presentation rubrics are included on the following pages

**References**

Center for Teaching and Faculty Development Advisory Board. (n.d.). Top ten tips for helping students overcome presentation fear. Retrieved from <http://ctfd.sfsu.edu/feature/top-ten-tips-for-helping-students-overcome-presentation-fear>

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