

COACHING GUIDE: RESOURCE 16

Before the Final: Inspiring Speaker Confidence

An effective coach is able to know when to stop giving feedback and when to focus on inspiring self-confidence.

Public speaking is a social and emotional act, and even when speakers are fully prepared, they still need the mental strength to deal with nervousness, unexpected obstacles, stress, and self-doubt. As a coach, you need to leave sufficient time in the coaching process to focus on goals to inspire speaker confidence, even if this means sacrificing some areas of work you may want to practice. Every student is different in terms of how they react to high-stakes situations; some may actually perform better in the final performance, while others may stumble. Part of a coach's role is to help students understand their experience and create a concrete plan for what to do next time.

Reminders to Coaches

In the run up to a final performance or high-stakes situation, it is important to prioritize:

- Repetition and reinforcement of previous accomplishments;
- Rewording and clarifying previous advice (as opposed to saying anything new);
- Reflecting with students on worries and creating a plan to address areas of concern;
- Encouraging students to trust in themselves (never underestimate the power of a well-done pep talk!).

Goals to Inspire Speaker Confidence

For students to feel confident, coaches can help them:

- Know what it feels like to perform well. Every student needs at least one small part where they feel accomplished and successful.
- Internalize the flow of remarks. Every student needs to be able to talk through their rough outline for what will happen in the speech.
- Narrow down areas of concern. Rather than worrying about the entire speech, it helps to be specific about the top 2 areas of concern.
- Anticipate possible errors and have a plan for dealing with them. After several run-throughs, there are usually a few "trouble spots" that happen repeatedly, so it helps to have a plan for what they will do if they go wrong.
- Have an idea of what to expect from the context and audience, while also being prepared for surprises.
- Affirm abilities through self-talk. Every student should have a phrase or message that they write down and say to themselves to remind themselves to believe in their abilities.

