

COACHING GUIDE: RESOURCE 5

Trajectory of Speaker Skill Development

Note for Coaches and Teachers:

Teaching communication skills requires a developmental approach. This chart offers a rough guide for where to start and how to progress over time. Youth and adults often follow different trajectories from one another, so this includes guidance on both. Of course, people are always different and this description may not always fit your situation -- remember, this is not a fixed process! Use this as a guide and stay flexible and informed by the people in front of you. For more ideas, see activities later in this guide and in other guides in this curriculum.

Youth Trajectory

Phase 1: Build Personal Connections.	Beginning young speakers benefit from building personal connections. When designing activities, use prompts to unearth shared beliefs and interests or discussions and share-outs to help students find what they have in common (in terms of working style, interests, goals, etc).	Ideas: Try to include structured social time, games, and time to share interests, expertise, or progress towards goals.
Phase 2: Initiate Team Culture.	After building personal connections, deepen the culture of the group. Have students come up with team names, mascots, and rituals that they will have as a group. Hold a discussion where students collectively define what they see as ideal communication traits and how they might recognize when they've been achieved.	Ideas: Early on, try student-led routines, including speaking warm-ups such as stretches, vocal exercises, and tongue twisters.
Phase 3: Make Personal Choices.	Students need to try out different ways of speaking and then make a choice about what suits them. Use demos or mini-speeches to explore basics of speaking genres (narrative, persuasive, informative, interpersonal). Then, help students make choices about what format and style of speaking best fits them and their message.	Ideas: Try short speaking drills to practice different genres using silly or "hot" topics that don't require prior knowledge. For example, tell a story about one of three random words. Or, give students a paragraph of a speech script to try delivering.
Phase 4: Increase Comfort.	After students make choices about what style of speaking they want to try, start with low stakes experiences to help them feel like speaking is possible. Over time, gradually: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Increase speech length; 2) Increase content difficulty; 3) Reduce amount of prep time; 4) Increase delivery demands; 5) Increase audience size; 6) Decrease audience familiarity 	Ideas: Have students collaborate with a peer coach before speaking for the class. For speech writing, use templates or post-its to scaffold their brainstorming.
Phase 5: Accomplish Personal Project.	As students advance, have them take a deep dive into a personal project (see examples in Resource 15 of the Storytelling Guide). Have them choose a style to personally master (storytelling, issue speeches, podcasts, monologues). Refine their delivery techniques and personal style along the way.	Ideas: Have students identify specific delivery goals and their preferred methods for feedback (written, oral, video). Have a class discussion on how to give quality feedback.

Youth Trajectory

Phase 6: Collaborate to Use Voice in the World.	Take students beyond their own individual goals and take a deep dive into a group project involving advocacy and persuasion. Focus on how to work together in a group to use their voice to improve the world, utilizing advanced spontaneous speaking and debate skills as well as field research (see examples in Resource 15 of the Advocacy Guide).	Ideas: Explicitly discuss student leadership structures, including how to assign roles, decide their process, and create project task lists. If using field research, include class activities where students practice interview techniques to gather field data.
Phase 7: Lead and Coach Others.	The most advanced phase for a public speaker is to be able to lead, coach, and mentor others. This can involve mentoring younger students, planning an event, creating a club or a team at their school, or even teaching mini-lessons to the class on speaking.	Ideas: Try creating simulations to practice facilitation skills (see facilitation skills in Resource 8 in this Coaching Guide). Discuss how to identify and anticipate needs of others and generate ideas for how to give “props” and celebrate their classmates through positive feedback.

Adult Trajectory

<p>Phase 1: Build Self-Awareness.</p>	<p>Often, adults are not always aware of their own personal strengths or have trouble telling their own stories. Coaches for adult public speakers should help people:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Articulate their personal core values and tell their personal stories; 2) Set personal speaking goals and analyze everyday situations of challenge and triumph; 3) Reflect on natural style and affirm personal strengths 	<p>Ideas: Use personal storytelling templates and have discussions assessing where people feel comfortable and where they don't.</p>
<p>Phase 2: Clarify Purpose.</p>	<p>After building self-awareness, it is important to have a clear purpose behind any talk. Coaches for adult public speakers should help people:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Explore basics of speaking genres (narrative, persuasive, informative, interpersonal); 2) Practice being flexible about using different speaking genres for different situations 	<p>Ideas: Use simulations of everyday situations (i.e. interviews, presentations, panels) and practice storytelling, persuasive speaking, and informative speaking</p>
<p>Phase 3: Organize Ideas.</p>	<p>Organization is often a major challenge for emerging public speakers. Coaches should help adults:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Clarify main ideas; 2) Improve the sequencing and structure of ideas; 3) Use powerful language that is meaningful and memorable to audience; 4) Be concise; 5) Practice strong transitions; 6) End with recaps. 	<p>Ideas: Have the adult student talk through their ideas as you scribe and take notes. Try having the student write down each idea on a single post-it and then place them on the board and group common ideas together and order them in a way that flows best.</p>

Adult Trajectory

<p>Phase 4: Internalize Strong Delivery.</p>	<p>After working on content, focus on improving oral delivery. Coaches should help students:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Identify personal style or “color” (see Resource 11 in the Presentation Guide); 2) Create habits around warming up breath support, voice, stance, enunciation, gestures, facials and eye contact; 3) Build awareness of natural strengths and pinpoint distractions and troublespots. 	<p>Ideas: Try warm-ups in Resource 9 of the Presentation Guide as well as the checklist for using your body as a speaker in Resource 12 of the Presentation Guide.</p>
<p>Phase 5: Prepare Effectively.</p>	<p>After building a strong foundation, it helps to prepare for a specific situation. If an adult speaker is preparing to give a talk, coaches should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Ask about objectives, event details, audience; 2) Create outlines that state the “gist” of each point they want to make; 3) Practice the sequence of ideas and transitions (if relevant); 4) Practice how to “reset” themselves to maintain energy and endurance for long talks. 	<p>Ideas: Have the student practice making quick outlines with limited time or practice telling spontaneous stories with themes.</p>
<p>Phase 6: Advocate and Participate More.</p>	<p>Beyond preparing for a single situation, adult speakers can benefit from talking through everyday communication with a coach. Coaches should discuss:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) How to speak up for personal needs and interests; 2) How to ask questions and listen to the needs of others; 3) How to figure out areas of comfort and discomfort when participating in conversations. 	<p>Ideas: Help the student seek out speaking opportunities for practice and reflect on them together.</p>
<p>Phase 7: Facilitate and Mentor Others.</p>	<p>Like young speakers, the most advanced stage of public speaking is being able to mentor others. Adult speakers can do this by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Improving their questioning techniques; 2) Helping others feel heard and listened to; 3) Noticing when someone is not included; 4) Giving others opportunities to lead; 5) Providing actionable feedback; and 6) Modeling strong communication 	<p>Ideas: Coaches can try simulations for people to practice facilitation, hold discussions of how to identify and anticipate needs of others, and even film simulations of coaching sessions to analyze and look at together to find ways to improve.</p>

