

Power Speaking Series

Essential Activities and Resources for Public Speaking in the Classroom

The activities and resources include a mixture of videos, individual, group, and class activities, to help keep all students interested and engaged as they learn effective public speaking skills. The following activities and resources have been created by the Centre of Excellence for Entrepreneurship and have previously used and well-received by students during *Speaking with Confidence* workshops that took place during the summer of 2022. The activities and resources are suitable for students of all age groups and abilities, including EAL students.

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We’re all Humans

Instructions:

One of the first steps of becoming comfortable and confident when presenting in front of others is remembering that everyone is human. Everyone messes up sometimes and as you practice your public speaking abilities, nobody will make fun of you if you mess up. This is a safe space for everyone to improve their public speaking skills without any judgement.

As a reminder that we are all human, everyone will take turns sharing a mistake that they made at some point. The mistakes can be anything that the student feels comfortable sharing. The teacher will go first, and everyone will have 30 seconds to share their story.

If the students have not met each other prior to this activity, then you can also have the students share three fun facts about themselves.

This is meant to be an introductory activity to public speaking, and it will also strengthen relationships between the students.

Below is a list of ELA GCOs that high school students would achieve through thisactivity.

GCO #2: Students will be expected to communicate information and ideas effectively and clearly, and to respond personally and critically. Page 30

GCO #3: Students will be expected to interact with sensitivity and respect, considering the situation, audience, and purpose. Page 31

Confidence by Practicing

This is meant to be done as an introduction to public speaking.

Confidence is an important part of public speaking, but your students will not develop confidence overnight. Some students may already be fully confident when presenting, but most students will develop confidence overtime.

Some students do not realize that about 70% of people have a fear of public speaking. However, the only way to gain confidence is to face your fears.

What can you do to help?

* Explain to the class that everyone gets at least a little bit nervous or scared by the idea of presenting
* Explain that the only way to overcome their fear is to face it by practicing
* Explain that people want to hear their presentations and ideas
* Explain that mistakes mean that we are human

As students continue to improve their public speaking abilities through short speeches and activities, they will gain confidence.

Attached below are some short speeches that reinforces the idea that the main way to gain confidence is through practicing. There are two video options. The first speaker was about 20 at the time that his speech was filmed, and the second speaker was 12. It is recommended that you use the video in which the speaker is closest to the age of the students.

[How I Overcame My Fear of Public Speaking | Danish Dhamani | TEDxKids@SMU - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=80UVjkcxGmA)

[Finding Your Voice From a Kid Who Had Stage Fright | Eamonn Kennedy | TEDxStJosephsSchoolYorkville - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JjKF56TwkWI)

Below is a list of ELA GCOs that high school students would achieve through thisactivity.

GCO #1: Students will be expected to speak and listen to explore, extend, clarify, and reflect on their thoughts, ideas, feelings, and experiences. Page 29

GCO #3: Students will be expected to interact with sensitivity and respect, considering the situation, audience, and purpose. Page 31

GCO #4: Students will be expected to select, read, and view with understanding a range of literature, information, media, and visual texts. Page 32

Fight or Flight Responses

Instructions:

Have the students watch the following video.

[The Stress Response- Fight or Flight - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mtRrxNTnyh8)

After the students have watched the video, have a class discussion about it. Ask them if there was anything in the video that they thought was surprising.

The video explains that we previously needed stress in order to survive. Stress enables the fight or flight response, which was necessary for humans survive dangerous situations such as being chased by a tiger.

Although our methods in life have become more advance and are generally no longer in danger of being chased by wild animals on a daily basis, the body has not lost its ability to feel stress. Instead, we feel stressed out about different things.

Stress is a normal response for many situations, such as public speaking, but even cavemen needed to relax in order to bring their stress levels down.

After the students realize this, ask them what they can do to reduce their stress about public speaking.

Since diet, exercise, and sleep are some of the contributing factors to relaxation, challenge the students pick one way that they will manage their stress with, and challenge them to do it for a full month. This can be as simple as getting eight hours of uninterrupted sleep or exercising for half an hour each day.

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Spider Story

Instructions:

Under the direction of the teacher, the students will have individual speeches that connect to form a story.

It starts by the teacher starting a story. For example, they could say *as three aliens travel from outer space they noticed…* before their story can be completed, the teacher will select another student to continue the story. For example, the student might say *they noticed a giant radio tower emerging from a volcano….* Each student gets 20-30 seconds of storytelling before another student is selected to continue the story.

The story will very likely be humorous and full of unexpected surprises as each student add their own twists. This activity is designed to help students become comfortable with public speaking while also developing their creativity and story telling skills.

Students can be encouraged to be creative and to use their imagination, but the content must be appropriate for a school setting.

Below is a list of ELA GCOs that high school students would achieve through the *Spider Story* activity.

GCO # 1: Students will be expected to speak and listen to explore, extend, clarify, and reflect on their thoughts, ideas, feelings, and experiences. Page 29

GCO# 3: Students will be expected to interact with sensitivity and respect, considering the situation, audience, and purpose. Page 31

GCO# 5: Students will be expected to interpret, select, and combine information, using a variety of strategies, resources, and technologies. Page 33

Table Topics

Instructions:

Table topics is a personal favourite for many people. It’s a time to be creative and tell a story while giving a short impromptu speech.

How table topics work…

For table topics, students will be selected by random to stand in front of the class and respond to a question or prompt in whichever way they choose. The questions and prompts can be funny, serious, or even imaginative. Each student will receive their question or prompt just before they present. They can take a minute or so to think about their response before speaking. Once they start presenting their response to the class, you should limit their speaking time to 1-2 minutes. This ensures that multiple students will get a chance to participate while still allowing each student to have an introduction, body, and conclusion in their response.

Some examples of table topic prompts are down below. You can also have students write table topic prompts and questions that are put into a container to use the next time that your class does table topics.

* If you were an astronaut, what planet would you go to and why?
* What would you buy if you had a million dollars and why?
* Give an explanation as to why it could possibly be snowing in June.
* If you could have one superpower, what would it be and why?
* Describe something on your bucket list.
* Tell us about your favourite book.
* What would you do if you were the principle for a day?
* Should students have homework?

Table topics will help the students to gain confidence, which will improve public speaking skills. Each time you do Table Topics, encourage the students to focus on the specific aspects that were discussed during the day such as a speech structure, or vocal variety.

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Structuring a Speech

The following PowerPoint provides information about structuring a speech. Speech structures differ a bit from the typical essay format, so we recommend that you present the information to your students, even if they already have excellent writing skills.

[Structuring a Speech PowerPoint](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CRJ4909%5CDesktop%5CActivities%5CStructuring%20a%20speech%5CFormatting%20a%20Speech.pdf)

Below is a list of ELA GCOs that high school students would achieve through thisactivity.

GCO #2: Students will be expected to communicate information and ideas effectively and clearly, and to respond personally and critically. Page 30

GCO #9: Students will be expected to create texts collaboratively and independently, using a variety of forms for a range of audiences and purposes. Page 37

GCO #10: Students will be expected to use a range of strategies to develop effective writing and other ways of representing, and to enhance clarity, precision, and effectiveness. Page 38

Creating the body of a speech

\*The following is a handout for the students that they can use after the class has gone over the information from the *Structuring a Speech* PowerPoint. The PowerPoint can be accessed through the Centres of Excellence website. The links below also provide the handout in a pdf format, with and without lines, so that you can use the format that best suits your class.

Give the class some time to brainstorm their speech. They can brainstorm the speeches individually or in small groups while using the handout. As students decide what they would like to make a speech about, you can have them run their idea by you to ensure that it is appropriate for school.

[Creating the Body of a Speech - Without Lines](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CRJ4909%5CDesktop%5CCreating%20the%20Body%20of%20a%20Speech%20-%20Without%20Lines)

[Creating the Body of a Speech - With Lines](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CRJ4909%5CDesktop%5CActivities%5CStructuring%20a%20speech%5CCreating%20the%20body%20of%20a%20speech%20-%20With%20Lines.pdf)

After you’ve come up with your speech topic, you must develop your three main points.

For example, the three main points about the disadvantages of technology could be that technology distracts people from their tasks, technology can be hacked, and that technology doesn’t always work.

For each main point, you must have a few subpoints which have supporting facts for each point.

The supporting information can include

* Statistics
* Facts
* Visual aids
* Testimony
* Examples, stories, and anecdotes

Use the following outline to build the body of your speech.

**Main point #1:**

**Supporting information for main point #1:**

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**Main point #2:**

**Supporting information for main point #2:**

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**Main point #3:**

**Subpoints for main point #3:**

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Normalizing Silence

Instructions:

Have the class watch the following video below.

[How to Stop Using Filler Words - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NhZvoPARCEs)

After the video, have a class discussion on what she spoke about.

Some key points from the video are that we often feel that we have to fill silences, and as a result, we say filler words. Instead of using filler words, however, it’s more effective to have a pause. Those pauses are also more effective when we use eye contact because it ensures that the audience knows that the speaker is not finished yet.

During the class discussion, ask the students what they thought about the video. The students will most likely say that they relate to the video in some way, and the class discussion will help the students to expand on the ideas from the video.

Some guiding questions for the discussion are below:

1. What changes did you feel when the speaker used a lot of ums and ahs?
2. Did you feel that the information was surprising or relatable in some way?
3. What are some changes that you would like to incorporate into your future speeches?

Although there are some guiding questions, ensure that you give the students the opportunity to reach those points on their own so that they can expand, elaborate, and connect their ideas.

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GCO #2: Students will be expected to communicate information and ideas effectively and clearly, and to respond personally and critically. Page 30

GCO #3: Students will be expected to interact with sensitivity and respect, considering the situation, audience, and purpose. Page 31

GCO #4: Students will be expected to select, read, and view with understanding a range of literature, information, media, and visual texts. Page 32

GCO #10: Students will be expected to use a range of strategies to develop effective writing and other ways of representing, and to enhance clarity, precision, and effectiveness. Page 38

Recognizing Filler Words

Instructions:

Give the students the following paragraph and ask them to make it clearer by eliminating seven words. Give them a minute to eliminate the words, and you will also have to tell them that they are not allowed to add or change any words. The first copy of the paragraph doesn’t have any highlights, but in the second paragraph the filler words are highlighted.

“I like totally love your shirt! Ah, in fact, I was wondering if you would be willing to lend it to me for the uh trip this weekend. I know that it’s like really important to you, but I promise that I would take really good care of it. Um, would you be willing to consider it, or ah could you tell me where you bought it? So, if you’re okay with it, I could pick it up tomorrow before the uh trip.

 “I like totally love your shirt! Ah, in fact, I was wondering if you would be willing to lend it to me for the uh trip this weekend. I know that it’s like really important to you, but I promise that I would take really good care of it. Um, would you be willing to consider it, or ah could you tell me where you bought it? So, if you’re okay with it, I could pick it up tomorrow before the uh trip.

After the students have picked seven words to eliminate, go through the paragraph as a class and ask them which words they eliminated and why. In order to guide the conversation, you can ask students if the words that they eliminated enhanced the paragraph in some way. If the student eliminated the correct words, they will realize that those words did not enhance the conversation, but instead those words interrupted the conversation.

Show the students the correct words and inform them that they are called filler words. Through the conversation, the students will gain a greater understanding of what filler words are and why they should be avoided.

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GCO #3: Students will be expected to interact with sensitivity and respect, considering the situation, audience, and purpose. Page 31

GCO #6: Students will be expected to respond personally to a range of texts. Page 34

GCO #10: Students will be expected to use a range of strategies to develop effective writing and other ways of representing, and to enhance clarity, precision, and effectiveness. Page 38

Power of the Pause

\*The information below can be given as a handout to the students. A pdf version is also attached.

[The Power of the Pause](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CRJ4909%5CDesktop%5CActivities%5CGrammar%20and%20deliberate%20pauses%5CThe%20Power%20of%20the%20Pause.pdf)

Most people are nervous to present speeches. In fact, 70% of the earth’s population say that public speaking is their greatest fear. Many people say that they would rather hold a tarantula than give a speech, and perhaps you would also rather hold a tarantula.

Because speeches and presentations make people anxious, people have a tendency to talk really fast during their speech. Although talking rapidly can make you finish your speech a few seconds later, it doesn’t help to reduce anxiety or nervousness, and it doesn’t give your readers time to fully digest the information within your speech.

There is, however, a simple solution that will help your audience take in the information while also helping you to stay calm.

It’s called *pauses.*

Deliberately placing a few pauses within your speech gives you chance to slow down and breathe while the audience takes in the information that was just said.

By *pauses*, I do not mean that you take a break in the middle of your speech while people eat lunch or a snack. Instead, a *pause* is only two to three seconds and is carefully placed within your speech.

Watch the following video until the 2:25 mark.

[Winning Table Topics Tips for Toastmasters - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qWtzp9CJkZg)

Did you notice anything about the speakers speaking speed? How did the speed and pauses enable you to connect with the information better?

After observing the speaker’s pauses and speed, think about how you can incorporate a few pauses into your next speech.

Below are some points that can help you to determine where to incorporate some pauses:

* After a question, so that the audience has a second to think about their personal response.
* After a humorous comment within your speech, so that the audience has time to laugh.
* After you revealed something shocking, like maybe you found out that you had to move. It allows the audience to take in the information while they think about what will happen next.
* If you want to build suspense. For example, “It was then that I realized, *brief pause,* that we had both gotten each other the same gift.”

Try incorporating a few pauses into your next speech and you will notice some positive differences within your presentations!

Emailing Chaos

Instructions:

Tell the class to get out a piece of paper and to write a series of email or text messages that have some meaning to them. The messages must contain a conversation that goes deeper than “hi, how are you?”

After the class has finished writing, project one piece at a time onto the board and ask the students to silently read the messages. Let the students know in advance that they will be shared with the class, and if students feel more comfortable, they don’t need to put their names on it.

Ask the students how they interpreted the tone of the conversation. It is very unlikely that all students will agree on the tone of the conversation, and from that you can discuss the importance that tone has on words. Each student was thinking about the tone that they wanted to portray when they wrote the messages, but when the tone isn’t presented to the audience, the audience may interpret the message very differently. Near the end of the discussion, have the student who wrote the messages read them with the tone that they wanted the messages to portray and see if the audience receives the messages differently from when the tone was not provided for them.

For this activity, the teacher can make a series of messages, but the students will be more engaged when they have to make the messages themselves. If this activity is being done during an online class, the same points can be made by having a class discussion about times that students have misinterpreted an email or message because of the lack of voice variation and tone.

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GCO #4: Students will be expected to select, read, and view with understanding a range of literature, information, media, and visual texts. Page 32

GCO #9: Students will be expected to create texts collaboratively and independently, using a variety of forms for a range of audiences and purposes. Page 37

GCO #10: Students will be expected to use a range of strategies to develop effective writing and other ways of representing, and to enhance clarity, precision, and effectiveness. Page 38

Radio advertisements

Instructions:

Listen to the following radio advertisements with your class and ask the students what aspects of the advertisements make them effective.

Some examples of what makes the ads effective are music, the tones and variations with the voices, and the fact that the companies knew their audience. For example, the advertisement about medical care had softer music than the advertisement about pizza.

When someone mentions that tone and voice variation impacted the advertisement, ask the students to elaborate. Did the students notice when quiet and excited voices were used? Did excited and enthusiastic voices catch the students’ attention or make them feel any different? Did it encourage them to want to listen to the entire advertisement or buy the product?

If the students are struggling to engage in the conversation, ask them some questions and then watch the ads again. After that all students will have something to say.

As the class discusses the commercials, note the points on the whiteboard.

[Pizza Hut Radio Ad - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2tV1maIR1jo&list=PLdb2VaO4d-cRUkibgB2M06tLKN4Lom98S&index=50)

[Toyota Radio Ad - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=npNBBrgYcRA&list=PLdb2VaO4d-cRUkibgB2M06tLKN4Lom98S&index=52)

[Family Doctor 30 Second Radio Ad - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U1Sk4ovc9GA)

After the discussion, break the class up into groups of 2-3 and assign each group a random product from the classroom. The product can be something simple such as a pencil, calculator, paper clip, etc.

Remind students that radio advertisements are unable to use visual aids but challenge them to use available tactics to capture the audience. The students will most likely realize that they should use different tones and vocal varieties, such as sounding upset or excited, as a way of capturing the audience’s attention.

The advertisements should only be about 30 seconds long, and after the students have watched all the advertisements, they can give anonymous feedback to each other using the following form.

The following form can be used filled out from the students for each group in order to help them reflect on how they used vocal variety and tone. The link below provides a pdf format of the form.

[Feedback / Reflection Form for Radio Advertisements](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CRJ4909%5CDesktop%5CActivities%5CVoice%20variation%5CFeedback%20and%20Reflection%20Form%20for%20Radio%20Advertisements%20.pdf)

Group:\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

One thing that I liked about the advertisement was:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

When I listened to your advertisement I felt \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ because:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Something that you could do differently in the future:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Below is a list of ELA SCOs that high school students would achieve through thisactivity.

SCO #1: Students will be expected to speak and listen to explore, extend, clarify, and reflect on their thoughts, ideas, feelings, and experiences. Page 29

SCO #2: Students will be expected to communicate information and ideas effectively and clearly, and to respond personally and critically. Page 30

SCO #3: Students will be expected to interact with sensitivity and respect, considering the situation, audience, and purpose. Page 31

SCO #4: Students will be expected to select, read, and view with understanding a range of literature, information, media, and visual texts. Page 32

SCO #9: Students will be expected to create texts collaboratively and independently, using a variety of forms for a range of audiences and purposes. Page 37

Natural Body Language When Presenting

Have the students watch the following video. It addresses using natural body language when presenting, and the speaker presents the tips with a bit of humour. This lesson is great for all students, but especially for students who have social anxiety and are terrified of presenting.

[How to Use Body Language during Speech | Public Speaking - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wCU9X8QK-rg)

After the students have watched the video, get them to think about the body language that they use when they talk to their friends. Explain to the students that although incorporating effective body language into their speeches and presentations might seem like a big challenge, they already use effective body language when they communicate with their friends. This is because they are comfortable with their friends, but once students realize that they already know how to use effective body language, it should be easier for them to do it with speeches and presentations.

Below is a list of ELA GCOs that high school students would learn through this lesson.

GCO #4: Students will be expected to select, read, and view with understanding a range of literature, information, media, and visual texts. Page 32

GCO #10: Students will be expected to use a range of strategies to develop effective writing and other ways of representing, and to enhance clarity, precision, and effectiveness. Page 38

Open and Closed Body Language

The following five minute overview of body language will help students to understand the different aspects of body language and how body language communicates confidence.

[Body Language - CHANGE HOW PEOPLE SEE YOU!! - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mPHFIE1xoX0)

After the video, have a short class discussion about open and closed body language. Discuss how open body language manages to portray a relaxed, calm, and confident composure, while closed body language does the opposite.

After the discussion, have the students watch the following Ted Talk and tell them to pay attention to the body language that the speaker is using. Ask them if the speaker was using open or closed body language and how it affected their appearance.

[Try something new for 30 days - Matt Cutts - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UNP03fDSj1U)

Below is a list of ELA GCOs that high school students would learn through this lesson.

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Personal Feedback for the Students

This part is for you, as the teacher, so that you can ensure that you can provide your students with encouraging and supporting feedback.

Students love feedback! Feedback provides the students with guidance about what they did well and what they should focus on for improvement. The section will give you some pointers on how to provide your students with feedback.

First of all, it is important that you don’t overwhelm your students with a giant list of what they need to work on. Giving the student too many things to work on can diminish their self-confidence, and can discourage them from wanting to improve, even though you have great intentions.

Instead, focus on the positive and provide one or two specific aspects that the student could have done better. This will acknowledge the work and effort that hey have done while pointing them in the right direction.

When providing feedback, you should never end with an area for improvement. Instead, be sure to end the feedback with a positive note of encouragement.

A short piece of personal feedback could look like…

*Hello Bob,*

*The speech that you presented about astrophysics today was awesome! You included a lot of facts and information that were both interesting and informative! You incorporated great body language into your speech, such as emphasizing some of the points, which helped to engage the audience! I noticed that you were a little nervous, and as result you did use some filler words such as ums and ahs. I would like to encourage you to simply take a deep breath before you begin speaking next time to help you relax. Once you start to feel more relaxed, you will likely use less filler words. Overall, you presented a great speech today and I’m excited to hear more presentations from you in the future!*

*Sincerely,*

*Ms. Teacher*

Additionally, it is important to make the feedback specific for each student and to be aware of their comfort levels. Some students might engage in public speaking activities, such as the debate club, and they might already be quite comfortable with public speaking. Other students might dislike public speaking and have a lot of anxiety about it. The students who already feel comfortable and confident could be given a few more harder aspects to work on than the students who feel really anxious about public speaking.

Students will value the feedback from their teachers but be cautious about allowing peers to give each other feedback during class time. Some students might feel insecure about their peers knowing what they need to improve, and some students could also have anxiety if they’ve been bullied by their peers in the past.