# Developing Standards for the Teaching of Public Speaking in Small High Schools.

-by-

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CONTENTS

# Part I

# I N T R O D U C T I O N

Nearly all people recognize the value of being able to speak before an audience. Most persons are faced at sometime with situations requiring them to express their thoughts before an audience. Such speaking may be merely answering questions, expressing opinions, making short talks, or giving prepared addresses. Many of such interviews and talks might be more favorably received by the listeners, if the speakers had some training in the fundamentals of public speaking.

Although speaking in public is not very different from a conversation carried on within a small group, it has elements which cause fear, embarrassment, and sometimes loss of status.

When we examine or analyze a successful speaker, we find that he appears to have the same type of ease and unconcern that one experiences when chatting with another person. He is actually talking with the group of individuals.

He senses the kind of reaction that would come from them if they were expressing themselves individually. He carries his trend of thought successfully because his purpose is clear. He looks directly at his listeners and senses how they are reacting to what he says. The feeling that he is getting a favorable response makes his speaking easier and therefore more successful.

## P U R P O S E  O F  S T U D Y

The purpose of this study is primarily to help individuals to become better speakers by focusing the attention of their teachers upon:

1. Some objectives for developing abilities in public speaking.
2. Some teaching procedures to be used in accomplishing these objectives.

## S O U R C E S  O F  M A T E R I A L S

1. The courses of study of the states belonging to the Southern Association of Secondary Schools. These states are Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.

2. Text-books written by authorities in the field of public speaking.

3. Professional magazines giving attention to problems of public speaking, particularly the Quarterly Journal of Speech.

4. The standards as stated for the Virginia Literary League in its literature.

5. Newspaper articles.

## METHODS OF STUDY

1. a. Tabulation of objectives for developing abilities in public speaking according to frequency and per cent of their being mentioned in the courses of study of the states belonging to the Southern Association of Secondary Schools.

   b. Tabulation of objectives for developing abilities in public speaking and the frequency and per cent of their appearance as found in text-books, magazines, and newspapers by authorities in the field of public speaking.[1]

   c. Ranking these objectives for developing abilities in public speaking by a jury of college students.

2. Tabulation of findings, with percentage of agreement,[2] on teaching procedures among authorities in the field of public speaking.[3]

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1. See bibliography.
2. Percentage of authorities that listed or mentioned the various procedures.
3. See bibliography.

# S U M M A R Y

## Some Objectives for Developing Abilities in Public Speaking

In order to arrive at certain objectives in public speaking, the courses of study of the states belonging to the Southern Association of Secondary Schools, and authorities in the field of public speaking[1] were used as a basis for selecting objectives for developing abilities in public speaking. Six basic objectives were established:

1. The ability to present a talk with ease, poise, and confidence.
2. The ability to collect and organize material.
3. The ability to use a large vocabulary.
4. The ability to enunciate and pronounce words clearly.
5. The ability to use gestures properly.
6. The ability to make proper contact with the audience.[2]

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1. See bibliography

2. This data is tabulated in appendix.

The courses of study placed an emphasis of 91 per cent upon collecting and organizing material, and the ability to present a talk with ease, poise and confidence. The authorities, or writers of textbooks, magazines articles, etc., also placed the most emphasis on these two objectives. The jury of college students ranked these also as the most essential for students of public speaking.

## Part III

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHING PROCEDURES

As a result of this study, the following recommendations are made to teachers of public speaking. Those recommended by the authorities are shown in Appendix Table II.

1. Have the students consider their audience, if possible, in advance: e.i. they should ask themselves: What will they be interested in? Will they approve or disapprove of what I have to say? Will they need convincing? Will it be a mixed group, or listeners with the same interests?

"The nature of the audience must dictate the developing of your speech."[1]

2. Have the students choose suitable subject. It must be suitable to the audience, and must be one which the speaker knows something about, and in which he is interested. Have them choose it as far in advance as possible, so they may be able to concentrate upon it by turning it over in their mind.

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1. Barber, Sara M., Speech Education, Little, Brown and Company, 1939, p. 342

The general opinion of the authorities regarding the choice of a subject may be emphasized by the following quotations:

"The speaker should choose topics of interest to himself, as well as to his audience."[1]

"The contestant is urged to select a topic about which he has some knowledge and personal convictions."[2]

3. Show the students how to find suitable material: e.i. there are many sources for this: such as Reader's Guide, World Almanac, Who's Who, dictionaries, encyclopedias, magazines, text-books, library books, newspapers, publications issued by the Federal Government, Radio Commentators, biographies, life experiences, illustrations, trips, and stories.

The teacher should have the students draw on all subject matter fields, such as economics, sociology, history, current events, etc., since

1. Winans, J. A., Public Speaking, The Century Company, p. 79
2. Virginia High School League Handbook, The University of Virginia, p. 87

they will give him a broader knowledge of his subject. As a procedure, teachers should see to it that newspapers and magazines are available to their students.

"On some subjects the newspapers may be the only sources of up-to-date materials."[1]

4. Require outlined extemporaneous speeches, rather than memorized ones.

Most speeches have three main divisions: an introduction, which will prepare the hearer's mind for the main discussion; a body, which will cover the main substance of the speech; and a conclusion which will cover such application of the main substance as warrants a separate division. In short speeches, the introduction and close may be ommitted.

Just why the outlined speech is essential, is well-expressed by this writer:

"A speech should have an orderly arrangement. The effect upon an audience will be more easily made, more deeply impressed, more clearly retained,

1. Sarrett-Foster-McBurney: Speech A High School Course, Houghton Mifflin, p. 166

if the successive steps of the development are so well marked, so plainly related, that they may be carried away in a hearer's understanding. It might be said that one test of a good speech is the vividness with which its framework is discernable."[1]

The following is a typical outline:

WE NEED A SALES TAX

I. Introduction
   A. The need for Education.
      1. The plight of school buildings.
      2. Inadequacy of teacher's salaries.
      3. Free textbooks.
   B. The need for Roads.
      1. Primary roads.
      2. Secondary roads.

II. Body of Speech
   A. How our present educational program is met.
      1. State help.
      2. Personal property tax.
      3. Tax on real estate.

1. Stratton, Clarence, Public Speaking, Henry Holt, 1925, p. 164

B. What a sales tax could do.

1. Increase our state help many times.
2. Decrease our personal property tax.
3. Greatly lower our real estate tax.
4. Much could be done to assist schools and roads if we had a sales tax.
   a. We could start a school building building program.
   b. Salaries could be raised for teachers and administrators.
   c. The county could furnish free text-books.
   d. We could have a road building program.
      (1) Our secondary roads could be hardsurfaced.
      (2) We could repair our main highways.

C. All the people share the cost when we have a sales tax.

1. The wealthy would pay their share.
   a. By paying property tax.
   b. Contributing to the sales tax.
2. The poor would contribute to the sales tax.

D. A sales tax is an equitable tax.

1. All people support it.

2. All people benefit from it.

3. Many people now evade paying any tax.

a. They move from place to place.

b. They never own any real estate.

E. States that have a sales tax in general are the most progressive.

1. In education.

a. They have better building and equipment.

b. They pay higher salaries.

c. The counties furnish free text-books.

2. In highways.

a. They have more hard surfaced roads.

b. The roads are better kept.

c. The rural areas have better roads.

III. Close

A. You can share in establishing a sales tax.

1. Vote for candidates that endorse a sales tax.

2. Write and talk to your state senators, and members of the House of Delegates.

3. Urge your friends to support a sales tax.

B. A sales tax is the only solution to the educational and road problem of our state.

"To make good outlines, one must be absolutely clear in his mind as to the exact relationship between headings and sub-headings, and must conform to that relationship with rigid consistency."[1]

5. Require the students to practice the speech before final delivery. Let them give it before the class, or create an audience situation, by sending some students into a vacant room. See that they practice it over and over again. Practicing before a mirror may prove helpful. Have them speak aloud to themselves alone, since that fixes the concepts more firmly in mind, and develop their mental faculties.

6. Provide frequent opportunities for speaking before an audience. Many times students refuse to speak, because they feel nervous, or embarrassed. Teach them that the more frequent appearances they make before their listeners, the less nervous and embarrassed they will be.

"Above all, he (the student) must not run away from the thing he fears. Putting off the day when he will speak weakens the will-to-fight. He

1. Dolman, John, A Handbook of Public Speaking, Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1948, p. 34

must seize every opportunity to speak in private as well as in public."[1]

7. Show the students how to use the dictionary: e.i. how to translate the diacritical marks into the sounds they indicate. A procedure for this might involve having the students copy from the dictionaries the indicated pronunciation of words, with key words to illustrate the use of diacritical marks; and then pronounce them as indicated by the diacritical marks.

8. Have the students look up unfamiliar words in the dictionary, to fix them in mind, to pronounce them correctly, to learn how to spell them, and to get the correct meaning. Be sure the word is dealth with when discovered, while it is fresh on the student's mind.

"When a new word is encountered it should be noticed with keen attention. If heard, its pronunciation will be fixed upon the ear. If seen, its spelling should be mastered at once. The next step

1. Sarett-Foster-McBurney, Speech A High School Course, Houghton Mifflin, 1947, p. 50

is to consult a dictionary for either spelling or pronunciation. Then all its meanings should be examined."[1]

9. Have students learn words in groups: e.i. we learn about trees from such words as sap, leaves, bark, roots, limbs, etc. We learn about government with words like legislature, cabinet, suffrage, etc.

10. Have students, in order to increase their vocabulary list, and make use of the words they hear from educated people.

11. Teach the students they may increase their vocabulary by listing one new word systematically each day, and exercising its use frequently.

12. Provide opportunities for students to read much material aloud.

13. Have the students put into active use the vocabulary they already have, by using many illustrations, and giving descriptions in detail: e.i. most untrained students in public speaking say words fail them when they take the floor; and, consequently, they become embarrassed. This is due largely to

1. Stratton, Clarence, Public Speaking, Henry Holt, p. 39

the failure of the students to go into detail with their outline. The students must use the words they know. Branch out on the headings and sub-headings, like a tree sending out its branches in all directions. This is summed up by Monroe in the following quotation:

"Most people know the meaning of ten times as many words as they actually use. Work to transfer words from the vocabulary which you merely understand, to the vocabulary with which you can bring out the latent imagery they contain. Great speakers are noted, not so much for the large words in the vocabulary which they employ, as for the skill with which they combine the simple words of the average man's vocabulary to say things vividly and with precision."[1]

14. Teach the students to convey exact meanings and impressions by a definite choice of words, rather than vague, general words.

"Definiteness of word usage results first, from the intense desire to convey exact meanings

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1. Monroe, Alan H., Principles and Types of Speech, Revised, Scott, Foresman, p. 257

and impressions. If we are content with vagueness and inexactness, our speech and writings are certain to reveal that fact; we merely transfer our own confusion and blurred impressions to our listeners."[1]

15. Teach the students how to choose appropriate words, so they will be understandable to the listeners.

This point is brought out by the following paragraphs:

"With respect to diction the quality of understanding is a variable one. For example, highly technical words which are immediately comprehensible to the doctor may be utterly meaningless to his patient. The question of whether or not the words we use are understandable to our listeners really resolves itself into the question of whether these are appropriate for our audience and to the subject at hand."[2]

"When we speak or write, we wish to make as many contacts as possible with our audience.

1. Seely and Hackett: Experiences in Speaking, 1940, Scott, Foresman, p. 89.
2. Seely and Hackett: Experiences in Speaking, Scott, Foresman, 1940, p. 91.

Since our first purpose is the transference of thought, we shall employ exact, accurate, and understandable words."[1]

16. Teach the students that gestures are made by the entire body: e.i. the body as a whole responds in one degree or another, as walking across the floor, etc.

17. Have the students give gestures with flexible wrists, with freedom for movement of the arms and legs, so the body is not cramped or tied up.

18. Show students that the head is used to point out, identify, or portray an emotional state.

19. Show students that the head is used to manifest emotions in public speaking through facial expressions: e.i. a frown may indicate the seriousness of a thought that is being conveyed.

20. Remind students to observe the facial expressions of good speakers and the effect they have on the listeners.

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1. Seely and Hackett: Experiences in Speaking, Scott, Foresman, 1940, p. 92.

21. Have the student practice before a mirror, as an aid in developing proper facial expressions. (They should be warned against overdoing facial expressions--"making faces.")

22. Insist that students keep the hands free to use gestures: e.i. keep hands out of the pockets, from behind them, etc.

23. Show the students how to time the gesture with the idea in emphasis: e.i. it must immediately precede the vocal evidence of thought and feeling.

24. Teach the students not to repress gestures, as gripping chains, putting hands behind the back, or in the pockets.

25. Show the students that they may impair their speech by playing with objects: e.i. playing with a watch chain, waving notes, etc.

26. Insist on the fact that gestures may detract from the force of an expression: e.i. pounding a book on the table so hard the listeners cannot hear the speaker.

The importance of the head, arms and hands may be emphasized by Professor Wolbert:

"The hands are never really inert, even when their muscular twitchings are not visible. The arms share the same disposition to get into the conversation, always succeeding when the interplay becomes intense. The head cannot be kept out of the play."[1]

Pronunciation may be defined as using the correct quantities of vowels, sounds of consonants, and proper accentuation. Enunciation consists in pronouncing clearly each syllable that goes into making the words, and separating them from each other.

27. Have the student end words distinctly: e.i. "doing" instead of "doin'," "going" instead of "goin'."

28. Have the students make recodings of their voice; play this over piecemeal to the students stopping this "playback" whenever necessary to point out errors or to speak a line for them to indicate how the line should be spoken. After this has been repeated sufficiently, the same selection should be recorded again to show improvement.

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1. Woolbert, Charles H., The Fundamentals of Speech, Harpers, p. 110

29. Teach the students that when they question the pronunciation of a word made by a speaker, they should make a note of it and look it up.

30. Have the students practice persistently; say words over and over until the correct pronunciation has become a habit.

31. Emphasize the problem of pronunciation that concerns itself with new words brought into a language by changing conditions such as war, social, and scientific discovery, as for example, blitz-kreig, uranium, plutonium, atomomic energy, etc.

32. The new words that the students have learned to pronounce must be used repeatedly in conversation, to form correct speech formation.

33. Have the students watch the speech of others, for the proper pronunciations: e.i. Dale Carnegie, Lowell Thomas, etc.

34. Plan radio auditions to reveal faulty pronunciations.

35. Have the students refrain from combining words: e.i. "watyadoon" for "what are you doing?"

"Wanna go?" for "Do you want to go?" "Zatso" for "Is that so?"

36. Correct mushy and slurring enunciations by using word drills and tongue twisters repeated many times: e.i. SHE SHUNS THE SEASHORE SINCE SHE SAW THE SEA SHELL SHINING IN THE SUN.

37. Require the students to stay with a word, until they can properly enunciate it--pronounce each syllable.

38. Teach the students to form the habit of having their pronunciation and enunciation checked for difficult words before the delivery of the speech.

39. Insist that knowing the correct spelling of words aids in the proper enunciation.

40. Teach students to avoid haste in speaking, which may hinder the utterance of speech sounds.

"Stress is the amount of intensity, force, or prominence given to certain syllables. The standard dictionaries must be our guide. Get the dictionary habit. Of all speech errors, those of accentuation are the least excusable."[1]

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1. Murray, Elwood, The Speech Personality, J. B. Lippincott, 1939, p. 235

41. Have the students strive to gain control of the listeners in the introduction.

42. Emphasize to the students that one way of getting the interest of the listeners is by creating the feeling they are sharing their ideas with them.

43. Teach the students to prepare their speech to fit the occasion: e.i. a speech to a group of teachers might be : "Federal Aid to Education."

44. Insist on the students making their listeners feel they are talking to them personally; e.i. pick out certain ones in the audience and for a moment look them in the eye; then shift to another group.

45. Emphasize that reading a speech, reduces the effectiveness of the speaker, insofar as contact with the audience is concerned.

46. Have the students watch their audience, as their speech progresses to see their reaction toward what they are saying.

47. Have the students know the content of their speech, so they may avoid spending all their mental energy remembering the sequence of their ideas, and thereby neglecting their audience contact.

# C O N C L U S I O N S

This study shows that there is a high degree of agreement as to the objectives in teaching public speaking. The range of agreement on the six objectives used in this study is 91 per cent to 64 per cent.[1]

There is, also a fair degree of agreement as to the procedures, which may be followed to obtain these objectives. The per cent of agreement on the forty-seven procedures suggested in this study are as follows:[2]

| | |
|---|---|
| 90 per cent or above on procedures | 5 |
| 75 per cent to 90 per cent on procedures | 16 |
| 50 per cent or above on all others | 26 |

Therefore, if teachers desire to help individuals become better speakers, they may aid their students by focusing their attention upon these objectives, and by using the teaching procedures recommended.

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1 and 2. See appendix.

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Alabama:

State Department of Education,

Montgomery, Alabama

Florida:

State Department of Education,

Tallahassee, Florida

Georgia:

State Department of Education,

Atlanta, Georgia

Kentucky:

State Department of Education,

Frankfort, Kentucky

Louisiana:

State Department of Education,

Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Mississippi:

State Department of Education,

Jackson, Mississippi

North Carolina:

State Department of Education,

Raleigh, North Carolina

South Carolina:

State Department of Education,

Columbia, South Carolina

Tennessee:

State Department of Education,

Nashville, Tennessee

Texas:

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# A P P E N D I X

## Frequencies and Per Cents of Objectives Appearing in Courses of Study, Authoritative Writings, and Student Responses to Questionnaires.

### Table I

Showing frequency and per cent.

| | Eleven Courses of study analyzed | | Fifty-two Authorities Consulted | | Thirty-two College Students [1] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Objectives | fre-quency | per cent | fre-quency | per cent | fre-quency | per cent |
| 1. Ability to present a talk with ease, poise, and confidence. | 10 | 91 | 47 | 90 | 30 | 94 |
| 2. Ability to collect and organize material. | 10 | 91 | 43 | 83 | 27 | 84 |
| 3. Ability to use a large vocabulary. | 9 | 82 | 36 | 69 | 26 | 81 |
| 4. Ability to use good enuncia- and pronuncia-tion. | 8 | 73 | 41 | 80 | 25 | 78 |
| 5. Ability to use gestures properly. | 7 | 64 | 42 | 81 | 22 | 70 |
| 6. Ability to make contact with an audience. | 7 | 64 | 41 | 79 | 20 | 62 |

1. There were thirty-two members of a jury of students from the senior class at Radford College.

Teaching Objectives by Various Authorities, Together with Frequency and Per Cent of Authorities Mentioning each.

Table II

| | | Frequency | Per Cent |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Consider the audience in advance | 26 | 81 |
| 2. | Choose a suitable subject | 29 | 91 |
| 3. | Select a variety of material | 28 | 88 |
| 4. | Outline the speech | 30 | 94 |
| 5. | Practice before delivery | 29 | 91 |
| 6. | Speak often before an audience | 29 | 91 |
| 7. | Make use of the dictionary | 28 | 88 |
| 8. | Look up unfamiliar words | 26 | 81 |
| 9. | Learn words in groups | 16 | 50 |
| 10. | Watch the words of educated people | 20 | 63 |
| 11. | Learn one new word each day | 16 | 50 |
| 12. | Read aloud much material | 21 | 66 |
| 13. | Use vocabulary already known | 22 | 69 |
| 14. | Make definite choice of words | 19 | 59 |
| 15. | Use appropriate words | 21 | 66 |
| 16. | Use the body as a whole | 27 | 84 |
| 17. | Make gestures flexible | 24 | 75 |
| 18. | Use the head in gesturing | 28 | 88 |
| 19. | Manifest emotions by the face | 29 | 91 |

| | | Frequency | Per Cent |
|---|---|---|---|
| 20. | Observe facial expressions | 20 | 63 |
| 21. | Practice before a mirror | 17 | 53 |
| 22. | Keep the hands free | 17 | 53 |
| 23. | Time the gesture | 26 | 81 |
| 24. | Never repress gestures | 23 | 72 |
| 25. | Avoid playing with objects | 26 | 81 |
| 26. | Watch detraction of gesture | 16 | 50 |
| 27. | End words distinctly | 25 | 78 |
| 28. | Make voice recordings | 17 | 53 |
| 29. | Look up doubtful words | 24 | 75 |
| 30. | Practice words many times | 22 | 69 |
| 31. | Study new words in use | 17 | 53 |
| 32. | Make use of new words | 18 | 56 |
| 33. | Watch the speech of others | 24 | 75 |
| 34. | Use radio auditions | 17 | 53 |
| 35. | Refrain from combining words | 19 | 59 |
| 36. | Use word drills | 18 | 56 |
| 37. | Master each word learned | 23 | 72 |
| 38. | Practice before delivery | 22 | 69 |
| 39. | Learn to spell the word | 20 | 62 |
| 40. | Avoid haste | 16 | 50 |

| | | Frequency | Per Cent |
|---|---|---|---|
| 41. | Strive for contact soon---------- | 20 | 63 |
| 42. | Share your ideas---------- | 23 | 72 |
| 43. | Adapt the speech properly---------- | 27 | 84 |
| 44. | Talk personally to the audience----- | 25 | 78 |
| 45. | Avoid reading speech---------- | 27 | 84 |
| 46. | Observe audience reaction---------- | 32 | 69 |
| 47. | Know the content of the speech------ | 25 | 78 |