Speaking and Listening in Fourth Grade

Speaking and listening skills are very important for academic and future success.  Speaking practice will take place during several opportunities to orally present in class during quarterly recitations, classroom discussions, small group sharing, and class presentations.  While one student is speaking, the rest of the class is listening.

Students will have a selection of recitations to choose from this year with varying lengths.  Our goal is to allow the student an opportunity to recite something that is of greater interest and to avoid the monotony of hearing the same recitation up to 28 times in one day.

Recitation packets are given out the first school day following the end of a quarter.  Each quarter, the amount of words will increase.  Your child’s teacher will ask your child which recitation he or she has chosen so the teacher can be ready on the due date.

Recitations are to be presented on the day they are due.  If a child is sick, the recitation must be given the next day the student returns to class.  However, If a student chooses to do it the next day, the grade they earn will be deducted 20% in accordance to the late policy in the Fort Caspar Academy Handbook.

Recitation Word Lengths

First Quarter =  90 - 115 Second Quarter =  125 - 137

Third Quarter =  146 – 178 Fourth Quarter =  196 - 298



**Here are some resources to help your child be more successful.**

**The Importance of Public Speaking for Kids**

By: LuAnn Schindler

No matter what the future holds, learning the importance of public speaking is a skill that will help your child. Communication skills remain high in the list of proficiencies that employers expect employees to master. By introducing your child to public speaking at a young age, you will give him a variety of experiences and self confidence.

**Conquer Fear**
Introducing your child to public speaking can help him conquer any fear or self doubt associated with talking in front of a group. It is natural to get a little nervous before a presentation, but practice can help a child to conquer fear.

**Build Confidence**
Public speaking opportunities are a great way for your child to build self confidence. Maslow's hierarchy of needs ranks self-worth as the highest priority for an individual. Speaking engagements give a child satisfaction for a job well done. And with each experience, your child's confidence level will increase. Whether the speech is a simple recitation of a snippet of information or a demonstration speech, these spoken-word experiences foster a child's feelings of self-worth.

**Model Behavior**
Introducing your child to public speaking at a young age will teach them the power of words. Model ways public speaking can benefit adults. Your child will earn to voice an opinion or concern in an appropriate manner. This skill set will benefit your child as he progresses through school to the real world. Public speaking is the cornerstone of the world of work. Most positions require a job interview. An early introduction to public speaking will build your child's confidence and prepare them for real-world applications.

Opportunities to speak abound. Teach your child at an early age that speaking to a group is an easy task with preparation. It will build his confidence and prepare him for his future.

**How Kids Can Build Good Public Speaking Skills**

By: LuAnn Schindler

An introduction to good public speaking skills at a young age helps your child learn several valuable, lifelong lessons. Learning to speak in front of a group of people will boost self confidence and prepare your child for school presentations and real-world applications.

**The Lesson Plan**
At some point during your child's school years, he will be required to make a presentation. Encourage your child to perform at home by having them recite a poem or nursery rhyme. Standing up in front of an audience, even if it is only one person, will increase your child's confidence. That is a powerful lesson! Students who feel comfortable presenting or demonstrating learned knowledge tend to be outgoing and meet a challenge head on.

A basic form of public speaking begins in preschool and continues through early elementary grades. This activity is show and tell. This is an excellent opportunity for a child to show an item of importance and explain it to an audience. As your child moves through the grades, more advanced public speaking chances arise, like school demonstrations and science projects.

**Get Organized**
Organizations, including 4-H, provide kids the chance to gain leadership skills, and often, public speaking opportunities are the building blocks for these skills. 4-H members present a demonstration about each project to club members. The speech might be as simple as showing how to make a cake or as complex as how to prepare a dairy cow for competition.

Most county 4-H offices sponsor a speaking contest that is split into age groups. The goal of these short presentations is to build public speaking skills, including verbal and non-verbal skill sets. Winners of local contests advance to state and national competitions.

**Extra-Curricular Opportunities**
When your child enters junior high or high school, most schools offer public speaking, sometimes known as forensics, as an extra-curricular event. Rules vary from state to state, but most offer a wide range of events including public speaking or interpretation events. Contests of this type build self confidence and differ from other types of team competitions where only the top performers compete. Instead, all students who participate perform at each contest, with the exception of a state or national tournament.

Organizations, such as the National Forensics League, encourage students to become effective speakers and influential citizens. This organization views public speaking as a stepping stone for leadership while building critical thinking skills.

A wide range of activities are available to parents who want to help their child enhance public speaking skills. Whether your child is in pre-school or a high school freshman, diverse opportunities await.

We will also assess listening skills once a month during listening assessments.  The students will be read a short piece of writing taken from a McCall-Crabbs book.  They will then have three minutes to answer the multiple choice questions related to the story.  The listening score will be tabulated and recorded on a spreadsheet.  The score will not be entered as a grade, and the paper will not be sent home.  The scores are then averaged to be added to the report card at second and fourth quarters to report on the standards.

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|  ear | ***"We are given two ears, but only one mouth.******This is because God knew that listening was twice as hard as talking."*** |

Below are the requirements we will be working on during the year in every content area for Speaking and Listening  (4.SL).







**Chapter 6
Attributes of Good Listening**

*"listening involves hearing, sensing, interpretation, evaluation and response"*

Good listening is an essential part of being a good leader. You cannot be a good leader unless you are a good listener. You as a leader must be very aware of the feedback you are receiving from the people around you. If you are not a good listener, your future as a leader will be short. I might add that being a good listener is a skill important in many other settings. For example, being a good listener will enhance your social relationships of all types, marriage, dating, parties, work, etc.

Have you ever stopped to think that we require courses and training in our education in speaking and writing, but not in listening? Why not? Are such skills important? Yes! Can you or I improve our listening capacity through purposive efforts? Again, the answer is clear: yes! Do we know what it takes to be a good listener? Another, yes. Why do we leave the learning of good listening skills to hard-earned experience or chance? Probably, the only answer is tradition. The people who established "reading, writing and arithmetic" as the content of American schools did not recognize the need for other skills such as listening. And even today, how many parents will insist that their child develop good listening skills through training in schools or elsewhere? All to few!

Good listening includes a package of skills, which requires knowledge of technique and practice very similar to good writing or good speaking. Many people believe that good listening skills are easy to learn or automatically part of every person's personality. Neither is correct. The difference is that poor listening skills are often not as obvious to other people. If we cannot speak effectively, it is immediately obvious, but it may take a little time for other people to become aware that you or I are poor listeners.

Poor listening habits are very common. Indeed, poor listening skills are more common than poor speaking skills. I am sure that you have seen on many occasions, two or more people talking to (by) each other at the same time. People cannot talk and be an effective listener at the same instance. What is not so obvious is when you and I are only paying partial attention or don't fully understand. I am frequently amused and bemused in my classes, I can give a lecture on a complex topic and all too often very few questions are asked, but bring up a topic such as tests and hands will go up all over the room. Why? Is it that they listened to and understood the lecture, but not the announcement about a test? Obviously, not. The test has immediate relevance called grades, while the material in the lecture? Well, maybe some time in the future. I strongly suspect that the same conclusions can be drawn about many or most other conversations or other listening. There are some games that we use in the classroom and elsewhere in which we start some information through a line of people. Each one passes the information to the next. The end result is usually very different than what was started. Some of the differences are the result of poor listening skills.

There is shallow listening and deep listening. Shallow or superficial listening is all too common in classes and many other settings. Most of us have learned how to give the appearance of listening to the professor while not really listening. Even less obvious is when the message received is different from the one sent. We did not really understand what the message is. We listened, but we did not get the intended message. Such failed communications are the consequences of poor speaking, poor listening and/or poor understanding.

Good listening skills will vary from one communications situation to the next. For example, what is effective feedback will vary from one person to another. Some people to whom you are listening may need more feedback than other people.

Listening skills can always be improved. Perfection in listening, just as in other communications skills, does not exist.

There are several good books and many articles on good listening. The following skills and attributes are taken from the literature.

There are three basic listening modes: combative, attentive and reflective. Most of us would describe our listening as attentive, that we are interested in the other person's point of view. I have had many students come up to me in a combative mode when discussing grades. They clearly did not want to hear my explanations, but wanted to promote theirs. All to seldom do we take the reflective mode in which we take an active roll in the communications process. We are not just passive vessels into which information is poured, but we think critically about the topics, the messages we receive. This when real learning occurs.

The following attributes of good listening are suggestive of the skills needed. There is some overlap between the various attributes, but each suggests something different.

1. **Concentration**. Good listening is normally hard work. At every moment we are receiving literally millions of sensory messages. Nerve endings on our bottom are telling us the chair is hard, others are saying our clothes are binding, nerve ending in our nose are picking up the smells of cooking French fries, or whatever, our ears are hearing the buzzing of the computer fan, street sounds, music in the background and dozens of other sounds, our emotions are reminding us of that fight we had with our mate last night, and thousands more signals are knocking at the doors of our senses. We have to repress almost all of these and concentrate on the verbal sounds (and visual clues) from one source - the speaker. And this concentration, if something that most of us have not been thoroughly trained in how to do.
Focus your attention - on the words, ideas and feeling related to the subject. Concentrate on the main ideas or points. Don't let examples or fringe comments detract you. All of this takes a conscious effort.
2. **Attention**. Attention may be defined as the visual portion of concentration on the speaker. Through eye contact (see below) and other body language, we communicate to the speaker that we are paying close attention to his/her messages. All the time we are reading the verbal and nonverbal cues from the speaker, the speaker is reading ours. What messages are we sending out? If we lean forward a little and focus our eyes on the person, the message is we are paying close attention.
3. **Eye contact**. Good eye contact is essential for several reasons: First, by maintaining eye contact, some of the competing visual imputs are eliminated. You are not as likely to be distracted from the person talking to you. Second, most of us have learned to read lips, often unconsciously, and the lip reading helps us to understand verbal messages. Third, much of many messages are in non-verbal form and by watching the eyes and face of a person we pick up clues as to the content. A squinting of the eyes may indicate close attention. A slight nod indicates understanding or agreement. Most English language messages can have several meanings depending upon voice inflection, voice modulation, facial expression, etc. Finally, our eye contact with the speaker is feedback concerning the message: Yes, I am listening, I am paying attention. I hear you.
Remember: a person's face, mouth, eyes, hands and body all help to communicate to you. No other part of the body is as expressive as the head.
4. **Receptive Body Language**. Certain body postures and movements are culturally interpreted with specific meanings. The crossing of arms and legs is perceived to mean a closing of the mind and attention. The nodding of the head vertically is interpreted as agreement or assent. (It is worth noting that nonverbal clues such as these vary from culture to culture just as the spoken language does.) If seated, the leaning forward with the upper body communicates attention. Standing or seated, the maintenance of an appropriate distance is important. Too close and we appear to be pushy or aggressive and too far and we are seen as cold.
5. **Understanding of Communication Symbols**. A good command of the spoken language is essential in good listening. Meaning must be imputed to the words. For all common words in the English language there are numerous meanings. The three-letter word, "run" has more than one hundred different uses. You as the listener must concentrate on the context of the usage in order to correctly understand the message. The spoken portion of the language is only a fraction of the message. Voice inflection, body language and other symbols send messages also. Thus, a considerable knowledge of nonverbal language is important in good listening.
6. **Objective** We should be open to the message the other person is sending. It is very difficult to be completely open because each of us is strongly biased by the weight of our past experiences. We give meaning to the messages based upon what we have been taught the words and symbols mean by our parents, our peers and our teachers. Talk to some one from a different culture and watch how they give meaning to words. Or another listening challenge is to listen open and objectively to a person with very different political or religious beliefs. Can you do that? Really? It is wonderful if you can, but relatively few people can listen, understand and appreciate such messages which are very different from their own. If you cannot, it is time to start because as a leader you will need to understand a wide range of opinions on often-controversial subjects.
7. **Restating the message**. Your restating the message as part of the feedback can enhance the effectiveness of good communications. A comment such as: "I want to make sure that I have fully understood your message...." and then paraphrase in your own words the message. If the communication is not clear, such a feedback will allow for immediate clarification. It is important that you state the message as clearly and objectively as possible.
8. **Questioning/Clarifying**. Questions can serve the same purpose as restating the message. If you are unclear about the intent of the message, ask for more information after allowing sufficient time for explanations. Don't ask questions that will hurt, embarrass or show up the other person.
Only part of the responsibility is with the speaker. You have an important and active role to play also. If the message does not get through, two people have failed the speaker and you as an active listener.
9. **Empathy - not sympathy**. Empathy is the "the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another...." Sympathy is "having common feelings..." (Merrian Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10th edition) In other words as a good listener you need to be able to understand the other person, you do not have to become like them.
Try to put yourself in the speaker's position so that you can see what he/she is trying to get at.
10. **Strategic Pauses**. Pauses can be used very effectively in listening. For example, a pause at some points in the feedback can be used to signal that you are carefully considering the message, that you are "thinking" about what was just said.
11. **Don't Interject**. There is a great temptation at many times for the listener to jump in and say in essence: "isn't this really what you meant to say." This carries the message: "I can say it better than you can," which stifles any further messages from the speaker. Often, this process may degenerate into a game of one-upmanship in which each person tries to out do the other and very little communication occurs.
12. **Leave the Channel Open**. A good listener always leaves open the possibility of additional messages. A brief question or a nod will often encourage additional communications
13. **You can not listen while you are talking**. This is very obvious, but very frequently overlooked or ignored. An important question is why are you talking: to gain attention to yourself? or to communicate a message?

**Summary:**   **Remember, we hear only what we want to hear and remember only part of what we heard. Good listening can improve both the content and quality of what we hear and remember.**

A good leader is good listener. A good listener may be or may not be a leader. But a good listener is usually popular which is an important step in becoming a leader. People like to be around someone who listens well. You and I can improve our listening habits. It will take concentration and hard work. Our listening habits are the results of years of often-unconscious behavior. Do we maintain eye contact? Do we really work at listening?

**Today is the day to start developing those good listening habits!**

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