***Round Table Impromptu Speeches – Instructions***

Materials needed/Set-up:

* Give each kid a note card or ½ a piece of scrap paper.
* Print a copy of the prompts you are going to use so that each kid has a page from which to choose.
* Move desks into groups of 4-5 kids each. You may want to assign groups to balance your talkers and quite students. You don’t want all your talkers at one table and all your quiet kids at one table as a time management issue for this activity. However, the first time you do this round table, kids may be more open to participating if they get to choose their groups and be with people with whom they are comfortable. So, you’ll need to decide what is best for your class dynamic.

Activity:

1. Have the kids each pick a number at their table so that they are 1, 2, 3, 4, etc. (That will be the speaker number they choose from on their prompt sheet.)
2. Explain the rules to the kids. (The first run through may be rough, but once they get the hang of the process this is a great one-day activity that you can do at different times of the year toward different purposes based on the skill you are teaching at the time – such as focusing on nonverbal communication one day, speech organization on another, and attention-grabbing introductions on yet another day.)
   1. Each student is going to get a piece of paper. On that piece of paper it will say: Speaker 1, Speaker 2, Speaker 3, etc. They need to look only at their speaker number. Under their number, there will be three choices (or more depending on prompts you are using). They need to pick ONLY ONE of the topic choices. (Students sometimes get confused by this and try to talk on all the choices, so emphasize that they are only using one.)
   2. You are going to start the clock and give them 2 minutes of preparation time. During that time they can outline their ideas on their notecard or scrap paper. Emphasize that they shouldn’t be trying to write out a speech word-for-word but organizing their ideas. If you have already taught them how to outline a speech, you can remind them of the steps. A simple organizational structure is: creative or attention-getting intro., state the prompt/topic, give three key points related to it, then conclude.
   3. Once preparation time is completed, each student will stand up in speaker order one at a time and present his/her speech to their table only (not the whole class). To control volume, it is good that you have a space for each table where the speaker will stand to direct their voice away from the other groups. Standing is required. Students are to present as if this was a formal speech situation as practice. The small groups aid with overcoming stage fright/building confidence and allow everyone to give a speech in a single class period. But, this isn’t an icebreaker activity. It needs to be treated like a formal speech, so students need to pay attention to their body language, eye contact, etc.
   4. Groups can go at their own pace. When a table’s first speaker is finished, the second one can go even if other tables aren’t done yet. This is where time management come into play and why you may not want all your talkers in a single group since their speeches will be longer.
   5. When a group is finished, the students should give each other peer feedback on their performance based on the skill the teacher is currently emphasizing in class. This, for example, is a great activity after learning about nonverbal communication. Peers can track each other’s nonverbal nervous habits, like twirling hair or hands in pockets, and give feedback on body language to improve.
   6. For time limits, you can give the kids a minimum goal (1 minute is usually good) and a maximum cut off (like 3 or 5 minutes). Let one student at each table time with either a stop watch if you have them or a cell phone on silent mode when allowed on campus. Only the student timing is allowed to have out a cell phone.

Trouble-shooting:

* Time management is the biggest issue. The teacher must actively circulate during this activity to be aware of the pacing of each group. (Plus, you can give a daily grade for this activity and must circulate to evaluate students.) If you notice that Table 1 is only on Speaker 2, while Table 5 is finishing, you can move kids around. Wait until Speaker 2 has finished at Table 1, then quietly interrupt, ask Speaker 3 to go ahead and start but explain that you are going to steal Speaker 4 to present to a different group. Bring Speaker 4 over to Table 5 so that they are still engaged. Now, Table 1 and Table 5 will be finishing around the same time.
* Once all round tables are done, you can go again with a new set of prompts depending on time remaining in class. Or, let’s say the instructions plus first round took all but 10 minutes of your period. With that last 10 minutes, you can ask tables to decide who gave the best speech. Then ask a couple of the best speaker nominees to come up and repeat their speeches for the whole class with discussion after of strengths and improvements, emphasizing constructive feedback and praising the student for being willing to put themselves up there. A great risk to celebrate. Important that classroom culture is one where kids feel safe to take this risk and where criticism is seen as room for growth, not personal attack. Teacher needs to make sure to find things to praise about the volunteer in case class only is critical. Sometimes you need to remind the class that this was an impromptu speech with only 2 minutes preparation, so it is impressive that with such a short time, that the student was able to … Some things to praise:
  + If student had a specific example or story to support ideas, you can praise the ability to elaborate or give details.
  + Anything positive about body language or nonverbal, from good posture to eye contact to not fidgeting to not overly relying on the notecard.
  + If there is any appropriate humor, you can praise the ability to connect with and engage audience. Also can praise engagement ability if student is appropriately animated in their vocal quality or their body language. You can praise for not being monotone or for having a friendly energy that makes others want to listen.
  + If the student divided speech into multiple points, you can also praise elaboration as well as organization.
  + Praise risk-taking and being willing to get up and speak in front of everybody.
* If using the famous people prompts, please update these each year with people that the kids you are currently teaching will know.
* This activity is easiest when using the “fun questions” prompts, so you might want to use these topics the first time you do this activity with your class. Kids have a hard time developing ideas when their prompt is a single word, such as with the “objects” prompts or “abstract concepts” prompts. Quotes can also be difficult (maybe the most difficult). If kids are struggling to develop ideas, their speeches will each be 30 seconds long, which doesn’t give much to evaluate or critique by their peers and doesn’t really provide the intended public speaking practice. It helps to give an example of how a speech might be developed using a topic not on the prompt list already. For example, for objects, you can use the “penny” as an example topic. If giving a speech on the penny, the penny would simply be the inspiration of what to talk about. You then spring off of that object to something related: a speech about Abraham Lincoln since he is on the penny; a speech about luck based on the idea of “see a penny, pick it up, and all day long you’ll have good luck”; a speech about the importance of being responsible with money or saving your pennies; etc. If a speaker is good at elaboration, he/she can then develop three points around the main idea that they’ve chosen, such as three points about Abraham Lincoln or three points about the idea of luck. If struggling with elaboration, each of these ideas maybe could be a point in the speech: Three things pennies remind me of: 1. Abraham Lincoln, 2. Good luck, and 3. Saving Money. Then, the speaker would discuss each. This example usually helps kids use their preparation time more effectively. You also can add to their preparation time – maybe give 5 minutes instead of 2 – on prompts that are more difficult.