Teaching Tip Series

Make Student Presentations Meaningful

Student presentations of their work (whether individual or group) are a common feature of the SPS classroom. Presenting their work to the class provides students with a valuable opportunity to hone their communication skills and gain comfort in speaking in front of an audience, which is crucial for today's workplace. In addition to gaining experience as a presenter, students can gain valuable learning experiences from the student presentation process by listening to their peers' presentations (Girard, Pinar, & Trapp, 2011). Below are some suggestions on how to ensure that student presentations are meaningful and effective:

- **Provide guidance on preparing for a presentation.** If students do not have much (or any) experience presenting in front of an audience, they may not know how to prepare or what is expected of them. Discuss the importance of preparation, how to structure presentations in your field, body language, and so on. It may be helpful to share your own experiences in preparing for class or presentations in your field, and to ask students to share their experiences. Existing resources (e.g., Chivers & Shoolbred, 2007) may provide additional support for students.
- **Discuss how the presentations are relevant to the class's learning objectives.** Final projects allow students to apply the class content to a real-life task. Ask your students to explain how they have applied what they have learned in class to their projects.
- **Use peer evaluation to increase engagement.** Research has shown that giving feedback to peers increases student engagement and also helps students gain a different perspective on the role of presentations in the classroom (Baranowski & Weir, 2011). Provide students with a rubric (like the one given below) to guide them in providing feedback to their peers.
- **Make the final projects iterative.** Rather than having students give presentations as the final step in the project, use the presentations as a way to get feedback for their final project. Have the other students in the class ask questions and give suggestions that the presenter(s) can incorporate into the final version of their project. You could even include how students incorporate feedback into their final project as a part of the grading criteria.

References

Baranowski, M., & Weir, K. (2011). Peer Evaluation in the Political Science Classroom. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, *44*(04), 805–811. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096511001302

Chivers, B., & Shoolbred, M. (2007). *A Student's Guide to Presentations: Making your presentation count*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Girard, T., Pinar, M., & Trapp, P. (2011). An Exploratory Study of Class Presentations and Peer Evaluations: Do Students Perceive the Benefits? *Academy of Educational Leadership Journal*, *15*(1), 77–94.

Office of Faculty Affairs

Colleen Davy I cd3082@columbia.edu
Delores Amorelli I da2711@columbia.edu
Zach Kornhauser I zk2124@columbia.edu

Comment sheet for peer presentations

Name(s) of Presenter(s):
Topic of Project:

How would you rate the presenters in each of the following areas?

	Developing	Proficient	Masterful
Clarity. Was the presentation easy to follow? Was the content of the project clear based on the presentation?			
Visual presentation. Were the visuals (Powerpoint slides, handouts, etc.) helpful in presenting the material? Did they enhance your engagement with the material?			
Preparedness. Was the presentation well-rehearsed? Did the presenter(s) seem to have planned out the presentation with regards to flow, pacing, and sequencing?			

What suggestions do you have for the presenter(s) on how to revise the final version of the project?