

Forbes Magazine reports that ten percent of Americans thrive on public speaking. Another ten percent fear it. Eighty percent worry, sweat, and get butterflies but manage their stress about speaking in public.

What lessens anxiety about public speaking -- and improves a speaker's skills? More frequent speaking and listening instruction and explicit teaching of communication skills makes the difference.



"Interview Day" in language arts teacher Paul Lichy's Interpersonal Communication class.

One bane of the 21st century, social media, hinders the development of face-to-face communication and speaking skills. College of Dupage Speech Professor Steve Thompson warns that "a student's desire to communicate only via their phone or social media may be their preference, but it's not going to cut it in the real world." Students need to develop their formal and informal speaking skills to improve their educations and their lives.

Colleges require "speech."

Whether college-bound seniors know it or not, a speech course is generally required for graduation at many two-year and four-year colleges.

More than 50 percent of Wego seniors enroll at the [College of Dupage](#) annually, and these students will be required to successfully complete a speech course to earn an Associate in Applied Science, Associate in Arts, or an Associate in Science degree. Unfortunately, many students do not take a formal communications class in high school, so they have to develop these skills *in college* rather than *before* college. COD Speech Professor Lauren Morgan says, "COD's fundamentals speech class may be [students'] first exposure to the field of communication." Wego students have the opportunity to enroll in Interpersonal Communication for one semester at WCCHS. This course enables students to develop basic speaking skills and learn how to manage and overcome the fear of speaking in public. However, communication skills are critical beyond high school.



Running lines in English teacher Mark Begovich's Drama class.

Approximately 30 percent of Wego grads enroll in a four-year college or university, and many are required to meet a communications requirement. The College of Business Administration at the University of Illinois at Chicago requires a communication course, "Professional Presence" described as a "workshop style, experiential course using simulations and adapted theater exercises of graduating difficulty that teach students to refine their professional presence." At Illinois State University, an "Oral Communications" course is one of the "general education" requirements for graduation, and Benedictine University has "Speech Communications" as one of its gen eds. Indiana University's College of Arts and Sciences also requires "Public Oral Communication."

Even graduate and medical school students need to develop strong speaking skills. The *US News and World Report* article "Why Premeds Should Hone Their Public Speaking Skills" from May of 2019 lists a variety of reasons that communication skills are critical: medical school interview, clinical rotations, delivering research findings, lecturing, not to mention improving "bedside manner." Enrolling in a communications course in high school better prepares students for future education, job interviews and promotions.

What Employers Want from New Hires

Employer rating of skill proficiency required to be placed in a mid-level position



GMAC Corporate Recruiters Survey (2017)

Get a job.

One of the universal goals of education is to prepare the next generation for the world of work. However, employers are increasingly less satisfied with prospective (and current) employees' ability to communicate. According to the Association of American Community Colleges and Universities, "oral communication is one of the most sought-after skills in the workplace with more than 90 percent of hiring managers saying it's one of job candidates 'must-have' skills."

Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC) Recruiters surveyed 1,000 recruiters looking for prospective employees on college campuses, and communication skills were ranked as the most valued by employers.

When employers ranked twenty-five job-related skills, four of the five top rated skills were communication skills --

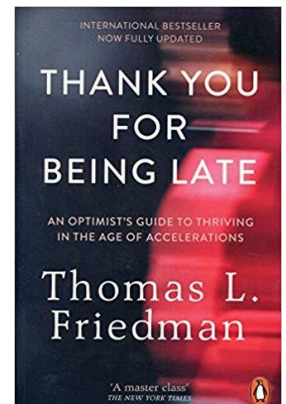
1. Oral communication
2. Listening skills
3. Written communication
4. Presentation skills.

Oral communication skills were most highly rated for jobs in consulting, health care, service industries, and technology as well as government or nonprofits.

Bloomberg Research, the Associate of MBA's Employer's Forum (AMBA), and the National Association of Colleges and Employers Research (NACE) also report that oral communication skills are highly sought after when screening resumes and

choosing candidates for job interviews.

The necessity of these skills in today's job market is echoed by Thomas Freidman, author of *Thank You for Being Late*. Freidman offers that reading, writing, and arithmetic have been replaced by "creativity, collaboration, communication, and coding;" while the Illinois Communication and Theater Association (ICTA) cites *US News and World Report* coverage that demonstrates employers often find that job candidates "cannot effectively carry on a conversation" or "productively ask questions, actively listen, and maintain eye contact." Data overwhelmingly illustrates that effective speaking skills are critical for success at work.



Get an even better paycheck.

CareerBuilder, a job search corporation, reports that 49 percent of employers know if a job applicant is a “good fit” within the first five minutes of an interview. 90 percent of employers decide within the first fifteen minutes. This statistic reinforces the value of interpersonal communication skills, which not only help a job candidate get hired -- but also thrive at work.

This sentiment is reiterated by research and reality. *Forbes* writer Carmine Gallo says, “Anyone who is better at presenting their ideas can see a sudden, massive increase in wealth that is unprecedented in human history” largely because of the impact of communication skills in the workplace. University of Illinois economist and historian Deirdre McCloskey argues that “persuasion” accounts for 25% of the US economy, and it will increase to 65% in the coming years. US job markets are no longer driven by agriculture or manufacturing, so the need for marketing, sales, and service is greater than ever. Even Warren Buffet, the third wealthiest in the world with a net worth of \$82 billion advocates for improving one’s ability to speak effectively. Buffet states, “the one easy way to become worth 50 percent more than you are now -- at least -- is to hone your communication skills.”

Participate in democracy.

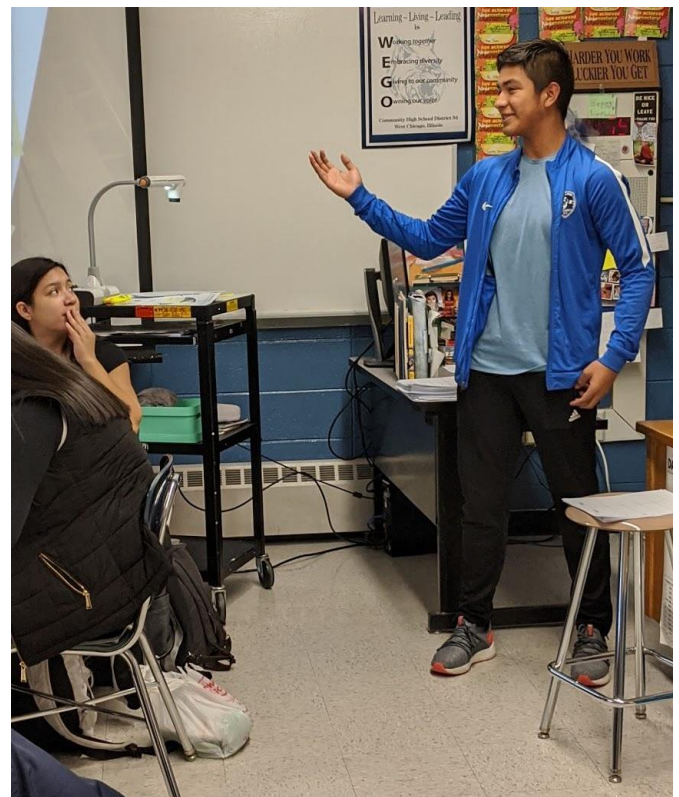
Adulthood is often characterized as a time of responsibility. An interpersonal communication class prepares students to engage in critical conversations and participate in the democratic process.

The ICTA warns that there is a “communication crisis” that goes beyond concerns about preparation for postsecondary education or employment. ICTA believes that students are not able to “actively and productively participate in democracy” without effective communication skills. They champion the need for a state law requiring interpersonal a communication course for high school graduation in Illinois.

Speak and listen.

Young adults who can communicate are able to more fully contribute to their communities. One way the Wego English department encourages students to “Find Your Voice” is by developing speaking and listening skills. Completion of a communications class at the high school level prepares students for college, work, financial success, and leadership. Current juniors in the Class of 2021 are encouraged to enroll in *Interpersonal Communications* for English credit next year, while underclassmen may choose it as an elective. And remember, as Emerson once said, “Speech is power.”

Articles from division administrators are provided on a regular schedule in our Community eNewsletter to keep parents and community members informed. Questions on this article may be directed to Ms. Mary Howard, language arts division head, at mhoward@d94.org or by phone at (630) 876-6363.



Lauren Stewart's English 3 Enriched juniors.