

Preparing for the Kids' Forum

Here are suggestions to help you prepare your child to get the most from the Kids' Forum.

LET YOUR CHILD PRESENT ONGOING WORK

The Kids' Forum was started to support you and your children with your ongoing academic work. Its purpose, in other words, is to reinforce what you're already doing in your curriculum—provide a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. Accordingly:

- You need not create a special "project" for presentation. In past forums, children have shared with the group all kinds of existing work, including
 - sharing a picture they've drawn;
 - reporting extensively on topics they have spent months studying;
 - reciting rote information, such as math facts or poetry;
 - recreating science experiments.
- Almost any subject is acceptable for presenting—poetry, narrations, history reports, book reports, art work, science experiments, music, etc.

TAILOR YOUR CHILD'S PRESENTATION APPROPRIATELY

Rule of thumb: If you need to be very involved in the presentation—with continual prompting or actually taking part—the presentation may be too ambitious for your child at this time.

- Try and create a presentation that your child feels **comfortable—and confident**—presenting independently of you.
- It's perfectly acceptable for your child to refer to written notes, or even read a well-written composition, when the material being presented represents a large quantity of information. Such presentations are typically followed by a question-answer period, with the child taking questions from the audience.

CONSIDER THE AUDIENCE

Teach your child that an important aspect of making a presentation is presenting information the audience will find interesting and maintaining the audience's attention.

- If your child is going to present rote information—such as lists of memorized material or facts—please choose a sampling of what he or she has learned for presentation.
- Give some thought to the most engaging manner in which your child's information can be presented. There are many alternatives to a simple recitation of information—e.g., a physical or visual demonstration, an interactive quiz for the audience, and so on.

TIME LIMITS

In recent months the forums have been extremely well attended, with enthusiastic presentations from lots of children. We therefore face time constraints. So we suggest tailoring your child's presentation to run **no longer than** the following:

- Children Pre-K-K: 2 minutes
- Children Grades 1-6: 6 minutes
- Children Grades 7-12: 12 minutes

Each Forum will include one presentation that is 15 minutes in length. A presentation with this duration must be reserved in advance. Children of any age are eligible for such a time slot, but only once per child per school year, please. To reserve such a slot for your child, please contact Diane Speed: dspeed@salientcomm.com

PRACTICE STANDING AND PRESENTING AT HOME BEFORE THE FORUM

Rehearsal time is indispensable—and the rewards will be reaped by your child, not only in terms of his or her effectiveness when presenting, but also of self-confidence, sense of accomplishment, and pure *pleasure*. With young children, even simple actions—like standing at the front of the room while holding an item or paper—can take practice.

Here are a few suggestions for things to focus on in your mock-presentations:

- **Volume.** The right volume may sound very loud to your child. Children usually need to be shown how loudly they must speak to heard by everyone.
- **Enunciation.** Remind your child that the people listening will not know much about the poem or subject he or she is presenting; they may be hearing about it for the very first time—so they will understand only if *every word* is enunciated clearly.
- **Props.** Even showing a picture or map to an audience takes practice: the child must hold the picture in a way that feels completely unnatural—the picture must face the audience, where the child may have difficulty seeing it. The child must become comfortable with the stance of the weatherman on TV, who stands to the side, allowing the audience the best view. Always rehearse with the actual props the child will be using, and give your child a chance to practice whatever challenges may be associated with using those props effectively.

HOW WE DEAL WITH RELUCTANCE

Some children may have butterflies in their stomachs about presenting. This is perfectly natural, and our intention is always to be sensitive about nervousness—encouragement, but no pressure.

- Children will be given more than one chance to make their presentation if they get cold feet. We have found that children sometimes push through their nervousness and decide to make their presentations to the group. When they finish, you can tell they feel ten feet tall.
- As is always stated at the Forum, no one is required to make a presentation, but all will be welcomed and encouraged.