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Presentation tips and resources

The art of presenting is a key element in providing a successful professional development experience to workshop participants. The following aspects of this art are discussed in this section:

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Presentation tips

Voice

This is probably the most valuable tool you have as a workshop leader and facilitator. Try to speak with a strong voice in a warm and expressive manner. Pay strict attention to diction and to vocabulary. At an IB workshop you will have a multicultural audience with varying degrees of language ability. It is essential that you speak clearly, distinctly and slowly. Avoid idioms and educational and cultural jargon. Listen carefully to what you are saying and provide emphasis where needed. Use simple sentences and restate key points. Try not to talk too fast but do vary your pace and tone for variety and interest. Pause between sentences for the audience to digest what you have said. Check regularly to make sure your group understands and is following what you are saying.

Body

Posture is important. You communicate with your body as well as your voice. Try to appear both alert and relaxed and make your movements slow and deliberate.

Eye contact: It is possible to communicate interest, warmth and sincerity through eye contact. Move your eyes smoothly and steadily around the room and look at people for at least one second. However, do be cautious as direct eye contact can be considered an invasion of privacy in some cultures.

Gestures: A lively style can convey your enthusiasm, capture the participants' attention and facilitate understanding for the participants. However, emphatic gestures are not always well received and should therefore be used with caution.

Posture: Facing your audience and leaning slightly forward communicates openness and approachability.

Proximity: Cultural norms dictate a comfortable distance for interaction with others. What is considered a comfortable distance may vary from one culture to another. In a small room, look for signs of discomfort caused by invading another's space. In a large area, move around the room to counteract the distance and increase the opportunities for learners to speak and interact.

Smile

This is your best resource and deserves a separate note. It is a powerful tool in social settings. If you smile often you will be perceived as likable, friendly and approachable. Smiling is contagious and others will often smile back. They will feel more comfortable with you and will want to interact positively.

Visual aids

You can be more effective as a workshop leader if your participants find the content interesting, engaging and easy to understand. Many of us learn through our sense of sight, so use visual stimuli whenever possible to stimulate interest, illustrate content and increase comprehension. For maximum impact, try to appeal to several senses simultaneously. Additional information on using visual aids can be found in the section entitled "Using visual aids".

Audience/participants

Demographics are important. Find out as much information about your group as you can from your regional office. Try to design the workshop to suit their expectations, needs and interests. They will appreciate and reward your efforts.

Facility/environment

As you plan the content of your workshop, consider the physical environment you will need. Make a list of your room requirements: the tables, seating, lighting and technical support necessary for you to be successful. Be sure to inform the regional office of your requirements before their deadline for this information.

Appeal to a variety of learning styles

Your audience/participants will be a mix of people so try to employ a variety of modes to help them learn. Visual people like to see things, auditory people like to hear and have things explained in a logical fashion while the kinesthetic types like to keep busy by writing, doing and thinking.

Be well prepared but be flexible

Remember that things rarely proceed according to plan. Be well prepared, with more material than you need, and be prepared to adapt as the situation changes.

Enthusiasm

If you truly enjoy your subject matter, if you are sincerely committed, your enthusiasm will

show. It will be evident in the sincerity of your voice, your smile and your body language. Enthusiasm is contagious and inspires others to action. So relax, smile and let your commitment and enthusiasm show!

Using visual aids

A visual aid is any object or piece of material you choose to use in your workshop to reinforce your message. An effective visual aid will help you to communicate, and the participants to understand, your message through the use of examples. It will provide structure, application and authenticity to your presentation.

The following are a few examples of visual aids that can be used to emphasize your message.

drawings/sketches photographs/pictures

maps graphs/charts

objects/realia models

The following is a list of some vehicles/media that can be used to present or deliver your workshop.

realia overhead transparencies

slides electronic slides/presentations

films/videos handouts

computer files Internet pages

web sites CD-Roms

flip charts

It should be noted however that you, in your role as the leader of the workshop, are the most important visual aid that the participants have. What you say and do, and how you act, will have a profound impact on the participants. Therefore, whenever possible, try to model the IB programme at the workshop. Try to create a Diploma/Middle Years/Primary Years Programme environment for the participants so that they too can visualize its reality. Provide visuals and realia that will enhance their experience and increase the participants' understanding of the programme.

Selecting the right visual format

A number of factors will influence the type of visual aid you choose. Try to tailor your choice of medium to the situation. The following are the most important considerations in choosing an appropriate visual aid.

The make-up of your audience

What the audience already knows about the subject matter, their expectations and their learning style(s) will determine the type and number of visual aids that are most appropriate. Your

workshop participants are educators who have come to learn about the IB programme. Visual aids should help them more fully understand and visualize a particular aspect of the programme.

The purpose of the session

If there are specific points to be highlighted, then an overhead transparency or PowerPoint slides might be appropriate. If the purpose of the session is to demonstrate an important procedure, a model or physical demonstration might be more appropriate. Using a variety of visual aids to suit different objectives is usually the most effective course of action. However, all visual aids should fit naturally into the presentation.

The setting for your presentation

The shape and size of the facility and the lighting and equipment available in the particular environment will have an impact on the type of visual aids you will be able to use. The costs of transporting visual aids and equipment to the workshop venue may also limit your choices.

Available preparation time

Your visual aids may take some time to prepare so begin work on them early in the process. You will need time to prepare, verify and edit the content, to check for spelling and clarity. Be sure to take the time to make back-up copies of everything you need.

The workshop leader's skill

Use only visual aids that you feel comfortable using. Practise with your visual aids so that you can integrate them smoothly into your presentation. If using presentation software for the first time, make sure you have practised using it enough to feel completely comfortable with the medium. Remember to have an alternative means of presenting in case the equipment does not work according to plan.

Creating overhead transparencies and electronic slides

A good visual aid is clear, simple and easy to understand. It should enhance your presentation and the participants' learning, not distract from it. The following are some general guidelines to help you create overhead transparencies and electronic slides (for example, in PowerPoint).

Make it BIG

The larger the text or image, the easier it will be to see from the back of the room. As a general rule, 36–48 point text should be appropriate. Be aware that text this size does take up a lot of room so you will be able to fit less text on a slide. Of course, if you stick to the six and six rule, (see "Limit the amount of text" below) it should not be a problem. When presenting a sketch or similar illustration, make it big and use bold outlines. Always strive to make your visual aids clearly visible and understandable by all members of the group.

Hint: to check for clarity, create the image or text on your computer in what you feel should be the right size. Expand it to fill the whole screen. Then, stand about two metres back from the monitor. If you can read the text easily, your audience should be able to do so too. If not, you can easily adjust the material.

Limit the amount of text

If you are using text on slides, use it sparingly. In the case of text, less is more. A good rule for all screens is to use no more than six lines of text per slide and no more than six words per line (the six and six rule). Avoid using too many text slides in a row; intersperse these, where possible, with graphics.

Keep it simple

Do not overload your visual aids with too much information. Put only one heading on each slide or transparency. As soon as the heading is seen, it should be clear what the purpose of the material is. Too much information can become messy and difficult to understand. This is especially true of data in charts and tables. Trim any extra material from tables and only present what is pertinent to your topic.

Use simple readable fonts

Avoid lettering styles that are ornamental. Use a font that your audience can comprehend instantly. For maximum clarity, use sans serif fonts (Arial, Tahoma, Helvetica) for the text and be consistent throughout the set of visual aids. Also, be aware that capital (upper case) letters are more difficult to read than lower case. Use lower case for any text of more than two or three words.

Write phrases only

By using phrases and not full sentences on your slide, you will prompt yourself to make additional, more comprehensive comments. If you write in sentences, not only will you have a fuller screen, you will also have nothing to add.

Be consistent

Ensure the visual aids have a consistent, professional look. Decide on the colour scheme, fonts, etc and use a consistent look/style throughout. For example, if using bullet points in your presentation, consistently begin each phrase with a verb or a noun. Your audience will then be able to follow the content and will not be distracted by changes in the format.

Use colour with care

Colour increases visual impact dramatically. It can be used to attract, highlight, contrast, emphasize and/or to create a mood (the ability of visual materials to provoke emotional responses is why they have such enormous power). Use colour with care but do use it; it is a powerful teaching/learning tool in the workshop situation.

A word of caution: you may have to adjust colours for presentation in different media. Your visual aids (software as well as overheads) will project differently from one projector to another and in different environments. Always test your presentation before the real thing.

Edit, edit, edit

Analyse the objective of each visual aid. Remember that in the case of visual aids, less content will have more impact. Edit once, twice and more if necessary. If you create your visual aids on a computer, it will be quicker and easier to change and update the material.

Key references

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