

Reflection Example – I. Messages (Oral Communication)

The outline of my speech, “The Red Cross Wants You,” (linked on the right) represents an example of my ability to design an effective oral message, in this case a persuasive speech developed as an assignment in my Advanced Public Speaking class. This speech was designed to be presented to college students at Monmouth a few days prior to the visit by the Red Cross Bloodmobile. The purpose of the speech was to get students to sign up and then show up to donate blood. As with any speech, gaining favorable attention by the audience at the start of the presentation is essential. As you can see on my outline, I used an emotional story (pathos) to gain student empathy with an accident victim who my audience could identify with because she was a Monmouth College student several years ago. There seemed to be no good reason to disguise my purpose so I made the thesis stand out clearly in the introduction: “Donating blood is a safe, painless way Monmouth students can save lives and you can do it by signing up for the bloodmobile THIS WEEK.”

As you can see both the content of the introduction and the content of the body fit well with my thesis, my audience and my purpose. For example, since this is a persuasive speech that calls for individual action about a topic that nearly everyone supports, I chose to use the Motivated Sequence. In the body of the speech I laid out the need step by describing the problem of blood shortages facing the Red Cross, I included material to allow the audience to visualize the consequences of that problem in a way that would build identification with my audience and get them emotionally involved with the topic. In dealing with objections, I used credible sources both from the Red Cross and from respected fellow students to reassure listeners that donations do not hurt or make you sick or interfere with school work or sports. Most importantly, in my call for action at the end, I passed around a sign-up sheet and indicated that reminders would be sent out in order to get public commitment and create dissonance for those who were reluctant to sign up or show up.

Reflection Example – III. Application (Persuasive Campaign)

A good example of my ability to apply the knowledge I have gained through courses in the Communication major is found in my term project paper for Persuasion class describing the local persuasive campaign I developed (and later actually used) called “Be a Big.” The campaign plan (linked on the right) outlines the approach I used to build support for the “Big Brother/ Big Sister “ organization on campus and to recruit additional students to volunteer to work with a local child in need. One feature of the campaign plan that shows my ability to apply communication knowledge is that the campaign is organized using the standard professional phases of campaign planning: developing a concept (rhetorical situation) and setting goals, conducting an audience analysis (segments), developing persuasive appeals and implementing theories that linked to my target audience (promotion), and constructing an activation plan for how to pull it all off. For example, in the audience analysis section I discovered that the segment, education majors, has a special motivation to work with kids since it can help them in their chosen careers, an appeal I used in letters I sent to Ed majors as described in the Activation section. I also researched both the audience’s attitude toward the “topic” (Big Brother/Sister programs) and attitude toward the desired “behavior” (volunteering time). This shows that I know how and when to apply the Theory of Reasoned Action. You can see in the promotion section of my paper that I discuss how I will reinforce the audience’s positive view of the organization (topic) while reassuring them that being a “Big” will not require too much of their time. In the promotion section I also demonstrate that I understand and can apply other sorts of professional persuasion concepts such as identification, dissonance, and Hovland’s Learning Theory, and appeals such as reciprocity and “ask for a mile.”