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Kids can gain life skills through drama

Tips help children — and adults — overcome 'No. 1 fear'

FLORESVILLE — It's not ghosts or goblins that children fear the most. Studies have shown that one of the biggest fears children — and most adults — have is the fear of public speaking. Having to stand up and speak in a room full of people can send a shivering chill down the spine of even the bravest of souls. The *Boston Globe* reported in January 2009 that the fear of public speaking is the No. 1 fear — ahead of such ghoulish things as spiders, snakes, and confined spaces.

Drama Kids International Inc., an international franchise organization whose proven drama skills program builds communication skills and confidence in children, offers parents tips to help develop strong speaking skills in their children to help them overcome their largest fear.

"Just like adults, children need strong communication skills to succeed in life," says Sandy Detamore, who owns and operates Drama Kids of Floresville. "By learning to speak with confidence, children will excel at basic school activities, such as giving a report to the class, reading aloud in a group setting, or participat-



COURTESY PHOTOS

Sandy Detamore, owner and operator of Drama Kids of Floresville, directs the children's Christmas program at the First Baptist Church of Floresville last December. The Drama Kids program can help children overcome the fear of public speaking and more.

ing in discussions. It's never too early to start practicing communication skills. Later on, they can apply these skills to a job-interview situation, or giving a presentation at a board meeting."

Detamore offers these tips that parents can easily adopt at home to improve their children's communica-

tion/speaking skills:

- Listen to what your child is saying.* Children must feel that what they say is important. Put down the paper, turn off the TV or car radio, and converse. Knowing that you are listening to them will reinforce their confidence in speaking to you and to others.

- Practice developing strong eye contact.* Require that your child look into your eyes whenever they speak to you. Then challenge them to do the same when talking to anyone else. Praise them when you see this happening.

- Develop articulation.* Use tongue twisters to em-


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The difference is dramatic!



Sandy Detamore

phasize articulation in a fun way. Concentrate on correct articulation. Do not allow the child to speak too fast at the cost of poor articulation.

- Ask open-ended questions that require more than a "yes" or "no" answer.* For example, "Tell me more about ..." or, "How did you feel when that occurred?"

If you need a subject to discuss, perhaps read a small story to your child, then ask hypothetical questions about what might happen next, or which character they liked. Older children can be involved in discussing national news events or school activities.

- Don't speak for your child.* Encourage children to speak for themselves. Have children place their own orders at restaurants. The practice of speaking to others in a clear voice is well worth the extra time that it may take to get your food.

Encouraging and practicing public speaking will definitely allow your child to gain comfort with this important skill and turn their fear into a sense of pride and accomplishment.

Drama Kids of Floresville offers age-appropriate classes for students ages 5 through 17. Classes meet once each week for an hour at locations throughout San Antonio and Wilson County. A summer camp and in-school program also are available.

For more information, contact Detamore by visiting <http://www.dramakids.com/tx6>.