



Middle School

National FFA Organization

Lesson MS.41

FORMING KEY MESSAGES

Unit. Stage Two of Development—WE

Problem Area. How Do I Communicate My Thoughts and Ideas to Others.

Precepts. A2: Focus on results. A5: Communicate effectively with others.

National Standards. NL-ENG.K12.12 — Applying Language Skills — Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes.



Student Learning Objectives. As a result of this lesson, the student will ...

- 1 Define a key message.
- 2 Recognize the components of a key message.
- 3 Make a key message.



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Time. Instruction time for this lesson: 100 minutes.



Resources

National FFA Organization's Essential Learnings, 2003.



Tools, Equipment, and Supplies

- ✓ Overhead projector
- ✓ MS.41.Assess—one per student
- ✓ MS.41.AS.A—one per student
- ✓ MS.41.TM.A
- ✓ MS.41.TM.B
- ✓ MS.41.TM.C



Key Terms. The following term is presented in this lesson and appears in bold italics:

- ▶ Key message



Interest Approach

Today your class will start by completing an activity that will focus the students' attention on how commercials are made differently, depending on the audience for which they are intended.



Students, pay close attention, because today you will learn how to have your message understood by the person for whom it is intended. This can be important to you in many ways. Just think of the possibilities. When you ask your teacher for help, he or she will know what you need to know. When you argue with your brother or sister, he or she will understand why you think the way you do. Even when you talk with your parents, begging them to take you to the zoo, your chances for success will be much higher if you focus on the lesson for today. So, if you are interested in this, please spend today focusing on what you want from people. Think about past situations in which the other person disagreed with you or misunderstood you. Today's lesson will make you a wiser, more thoughtful person.



Our first activity will require you to be reflective and active learners. Please focus and think to yourself before talking out loud. Think about your favorite toy. Picture it in your head. Now think about the commercial you've seen on TV for that toy. Write down these four things:

Write the following on a writing surface:

My favorite toy:

For whom was the commercial made.

What did the commercial want you to do.



How did the commercial make you want to do it.

Ask a few students to share their answers with the class. Try to make connections between what the students are saying. After sharing responses, students will compare their commercials to a commercial intended for adults.

 Please share what you wrote with the class by raising your hand.

 Now, close your eyes and think of a commercial made for an adult. Some ideas for commercials may be for laundry soap, a new car, or a computer. Be reflective and think for 15 seconds about how that commercial is different from the one for your favorite toy. Now describe in your notes how the commercial is different from the commercial for the same three questions you just answered.

Ask a few students to share their answers. Try to make connections between what the students are saying. Once you feel comfortable with the students' level of understanding, move on to Objective 1 below.

 Now that you understand that messages are formed differently for different people, you can discover the best ways to form messages for the people with whom you work and play.

SUMMARY OF CONTENT AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

Objective 1. Define a key message.

Before students can make their own key messages, it is important that the teacher identify what a key message is. Give students the following definition and have them include it in their notes.

 Students, the first part of our learning requires you to be attentive and aggressive learners. Please sit on the front edge of your seats and raise your hand with questions as you discover the definition of a key message. Before you can actually start working with people and sending them messages, you must first understand what those messages are. Please think about this definition before transferring it to your notes.

Write the following notes on the board or show MS.41.TM.A.

I. Define key message.

A. Key message is the main point or objective of what you are communicating.

1. It is very specific.
2. It can be persuasive or informative.
3. Everything you say supports it.





Know that a key message is the main point or objective of what you are communicating. There are three things that you need to know about a key message. They include:

1. It is very specific.
2. It can be persuasive or informative.
3. Everything you say when communicating to the other person supports it.

Use a Choral Response Moment to see if they know how many components comprise a key message and what they are. Ask students to copy the definition into their notes.



Students, please now transfer the definition of a key message from the board to your notes.

Use a Hieroglyphics Moment to have students make symbols for the parts of a key message. Display on a writing surface.



Now that you know what a key message is, it is essential that you keep it not only in your notes, but also in your mind. Please make an icon or symbol in your notes for each of the following parts of a key message.

Write the following notes on the board, or show MS.41.TM.B on the overhead projector:

Key Message

Very specific

Persuasive

Informative

Supporting facts

Have students share their hieroglyphics with the other students and guess the relationship between the parts of a key message and the icons used to identify them.

Objective 2. Recognize the components of a key message.

Students will break into pairs to learn the components of a key message. As this is the most important part of the lesson, it would be best if the students did not choose partners themselves, but rather that partners were randomly assigned. After doing this, use a Little Professor Moment.



Students, the next activity will require patience, but it can also be fun. Please assume a state of mind that makes learning fun and exciting. In a moment, you will be responsible for teaching someone else about key messages! Listen for the number I give you. Remember your number and wait patiently for further instructions.

Number the students based on how many are in the class. Count up to half of the number of students in the class. For example, if there are 20 students in class, count one through ten and then start over.





Now that you have your number, please find the other person who has the same number and move your desks together side-by-side.

Start the *Little Professor Moment* by using the information below and recording it on a writing surface or show MS.41.TM.C on the overhead projector. Have the “professors” switch at each capital letter in the outline. Extrapolate on the outline as needed.

II. Recognize components of a key message.

A. Objective

1. What do you want to accomplish.
 - a. Inform.
 - b. Persuade.

B. Audience

1. Who is your target audience.
 - a. An individual.
 - b. A group.
2. What should you consider.
 - a. Their age
 - b. Their background
 - c. Their knowledge of the topic
 - d. Their ignorance of the topic

C. Supporting information

1. What information is most important.
2. What information will the audience find most important.
3. WIIFM: What’s in it for me.

D. Type of communication used

1. How is the message transmitted.
 - a. Spoken.
 - b. Written.
 - c. Non-verbal.
2. How will the message be received.
 - a. Spoken.
 - b. Written.
 - c. Non-verbal.

Objective 3. Make a key message.

Students will make a key message. Their assignment is to write a paragraph of what they would say to their parents to propose a trip to the zoo.



Students, your last learning task of the day requires you to be thoughtful learners. You must think of what we’ve talked about and put it to use. Afterwards, you will role-play how to formulate and successfully use a key message. Understand that this activity can be fun only if everyone pays close attention to the instructions and begins by working on his or her own. To accomplish this, you will first have to pay attention to the following scenario. Put yourself in the story and pretend you are the person who desperately wants to go to the zoo.



Read the following case study to the class:



Begin by thinking of the zoo. The zoo is your favorite place to go, and it has just opened for the spring. You love to spend the afternoon walking around, looking at the different animals with your friends and family. More than anything, you would like to go to the zoo to see the new baby elephant. You want to go so much that you've already started bugging your parents to take you. Unfortunately, they have told you no. They say it is too expensive and that you need to spend this weekend studying for your science test.



Now that you have listened to the story, please formulate your thoughts as to what your key message should be, what you want to accomplish, who your audience is, what supporting information will be necessary, and finally, what type or types of communication would be best to use. Please use this worksheet to help guide you.

Pass out MS.41.AS.A.



First, identify your key message, objective, audience, supporting information, and types of communication. After you do that, write a paragraph at the bottom of the worksheet with the words you would use when giving your key message.

Have students work on their individual worksheets for three to five minutes. When the time has elapsed, ask them to work in groups of three or four to complete a role-playing exercise.



Quietly work alone on the worksheet for three minutes. Try to complete as much as possible.



Now that you've had the chance to work individually, choose teams of no more than four and create a skit or role-playing scene to demonstrate how you would use your key message.

Give students five minutes to develop the role-playing activity. Then have them use the rest of the time in class to perform it. Draw connections and celebrate student accomplishments.



Review/Summary

Ask students questions about the definition of a key message, what comprises a key message, and why key messages are important. Elicit questions if possible and integrate local or personal key messages into the summary.



Application

►Extended Classroom Activity:

If time permits, have students change the last scenario into talking to different audiences: a friend, a teacher for a field trip, etc.



►FFA Activity:

When attending an FFA meeting, have students identify the key message of what the advisor or officer is saying. Have them critique the speakers on their effectiveness.

►SAE Activity:

Challenge students to use key messages in their SAE projects. If they are in sales, customer service, production agriculture, or any other SAE, they can incorporate effective key messages into their projects.

✓ Evaluation

Use MS.41.Assess to test students' knowledge of forming key messages.

Answers to Assessment:

A key message is the main point or objective of what you are communicating.

1. False
2. False
3. True
4. True
5. False



FORMING KEY MESSAGES

►Part One: Fill in the blank.

Instructions: Complete the definition of key message.

A key message is the _____ or objective of what you are _____.

►Part Two: True or False

Instructions: Read each statement and decide if it is true or false. Write the word “true” or “false” beside the statement.

- _____ 1. Key messages can be only informative.
- _____ 2. Key messages are made the same for all people or audiences.
- _____ 3. Key messages can be sent by spoken, written, or non-verbal communication.
- _____ 4. An audience’s background about the topic is important to consider when forming the key message.
- _____ 5. An audience is always more than one person.



DEFINE KEY MESSAGE

The key message is the main point or objective of what you are communicating.

- ◆ **It is very specific.**
- ◆ **It can be persuasive or informative.**
- ◆ **Everything you say when communicating to the other person supports it.**



KEY MESSAGE

- ◆ **Is very specific**
- ◆ **Is persuasive**
- ◆ **Is informative**
- ◆ **Is supported by the facts**



RECOGNIZE COMPONENTS OF A KEY MESSAGE

Objective

- ◆ What do you want to accomplish.
 - ➔ Inform.
 - ➔ Persuade.

Audience

- ◆ Who is your target audience.
 - ➔ An individual.
 - ➔ A group.
- ◆ What should you consider.
 - ➔ Their age
 - ➔ Their background
 - ➔ Their knowledge of the topic
 - ➔ Their ignorance of the topic

Supporting information

- ◆ What information is most important.
- ◆ What information will the audience find most important.
- ◆ WIIFM: What's in it for me.

Type of communication used

- ◆ How is the message transmitted.
 - ➔ Spoken.
 - ➔ Written.
 - ➔ Non-verbal.
- ◆ How will the message be received.
 - ➔ Spoken.
 - ➔ Written.
 - ➔ Non-verbal.



CASE STUDY

Begin by thinking of the zoo. The zoo is your favorite place to go, and it has just opened for the spring. You love to spend the afternoon walking around, looking at the different animals with your friends and family. More than anything, you would like to go to the zoo to see the new baby elephant. You want to go so much that you've already started bugging your parents to take you. Unfortunately, they have told you no. They say it is too expensive and that you need to spend this weekend studying for your science/biology test.

A. Objective 1. What do you want to accomplish. a. Inform. b. Persuade.	
B. Audience 1. Who is your target audience. a. An individual. b. A group. 2. Things to consider a. Their age b. Their background c. Their knowledge of the topic d. Their ignorance of the topic	
C. Supporting information 1. What information is most important. 2. What information will the audience find most important. 3. WIIFM: What's in it for me.	
D. Type of communication used 1. How is the message sent. a. Spoken b. Written c. Non-verbal 2. How will the message be received. a. Spoken b. Written c. Non-verbal	

Write your Key Message here:

