



The Illinois Communication and Theatre Association, a professional association representing high school and higher education teachers of communication and theater, supports the teaching and learning of oral communication skills for all Illinois teachers and students. Formal oral communication instruction is fundamental to creating understanding between all people and helping each of us to be effective participants in a democratic society.

The Common Core Standards for English Language Arts and the ACT College Readiness Standards have identified oral communication skills as central to success in education and career. The standards, which have been outlined by educators and researchers across the nation, support the importance of oral communication skills to a student's education. Additionally, as the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career develops assessments that are to be adopted by the State of Illinois, speaking and listening skills will be directly assessed. ICTA stands committed in the belief that all students should receive formal instruction from trained and highly qualified faculty in the strategies and arts of oral communication.

ICTA believes that formal oral communication instruction provides a unique and efficient process to help students understand the importance of strategically sharing ideas, beliefs and other messages for information, persuasion and entertainment appropriate for a variety of audiences. To accomplish this, oral communication instruction begins with fundamental skills of building, sending and receiving messages through strategic research, construction, organization, analysis, and delivery. Additionally, formal oral communication training promotes student's higher order thinking skills. Most importantly, it fosters the ability to understand the impacts of messages on ourselves and others by providing immediate feedback and the ability to instantly adjust content and delivery that are unique opportunities in speaking and listening contexts.

Currently, the State of Illinois, like many other states, does not offer an endorsement specifically for teachers of oral communication. This allows anyone who has fulfilled the requirements for an English Language Arts endorsement to teach an oral communication course, regardless of his or her training. Problematically, teachers can be endorsed to teach formal oral communication skills without having taken an oral communication course.

Therefore, ICTA proposes:

The Illinois State Board of Education adopts a new model for endorsing qualified oral communication teachers using the following guidelines:

- A Professional Educator License should be required.
- Teacher candidates would fulfill course work and take the corresponding content area specific exam in one of two English Language Arts areas: 1) English and 2) Speaking and Listening. This is modeled after the strands identified in the Common Core State Standards.
- This model mirrors multiple content area endorsements in the hard and social sciences.
- Each ELA candidate would take the specific endorsement exam. There would be no exclusion that a single candidate could not take additional exams, but the corresponding course work would need to be completed.

Educators and employers often cite oral communication abilities as being keys to the success of students and employees. Formal oral communication instruction is the best way to accomplish those goals. Thus, ICTA recommends having a speaking and listening endorsement for candidates seeking licensure with an English Language Arts endorsement who meet a specified number of credit hours in communication. This endorsement aligns with the implementation of the Common Core State Standards, which promote the teaching of speaking and listening in English Language Arts courses.