Room to Speak

Read a speaker's choices, then plan your own.

11-12.SL.4.b "Demonstrate effective nonverbal communication (eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, presence, and proximity)."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two moments of eye contact, circle two facial expressions or hand movements, and number two changes in posture or position to track how Maya adjusts her delivery to the room.

At the School Board

1 At a crowded school board meeting, senior Maya Ortiz waited to speak about the bus stop outside East High. Students had reported that cars often rolled through the nearby crosswalk. As her name was called, she set her notes on the lectern and planted both feet instead of rocking back and forth. She glanced at her first line, then looked toward board members and families seated behind them. "The stop is busy before sunrise," she said. Her voice carried across the room, but she did not stare at any one person long enough to make the exchange feel like a challenge.

2 Maya held up a sheet of student observations but kept it low enough that her face remained visible. When she described a driver turning across the crosswalk, her brows drew together; she did not smile at the account. She traced the crossing motion once with an open hand, then returned that hand to the lectern. A board member leaned forward to see the paper, so Maya moved one step nearer the front edge of the speaking area, without entering the board's space. She paused while the member read the largest figures and made eye contact before continuing.

3 During questions, one board member asked whether a new sign would solve the problem. Maya turned her shoulders toward him and listened without flipping through her notes. Before answering, she looked briefly at the students who rode that route, then back at the board. Her expression softened as she acknowledged the sign might help, but she opened both palms when explaining why students also wanted a crossing guard. When a microphone squealed, she stopped, stepped back, and waited for the sound to pass. She resumed from the marked speaking spot, facing the entire room rather than the nearest board member alone.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How do Maya's stance and eye contact at the start help her address both the board and the families?

2. How do Maya's expression and hand movement reinforce her account of the driver at the crosswalk?

3. Why does Maya move nearer when the board member leans forward, but stop short of the board's space?

4. When the microphone squeals, what does Maya do before resuming, and how does her position help her continue addressing the room?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine proposing a phone-free game table at lunch to classmates who may be skeptical. Write five sentences describing what you would do with your eyes, face, hands, posture, and position as you speak, and explain the intended effect of at least two choices.

Room to Speak

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two moments of eye contact, circle two facial expressions or hand movements, and number two changes in posture or position to track how Maya adjusts her delivery to the room. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How do Maya's stance and eye contact at the start help her address both the board and the families?	**Her steady stance makes her appear composed, while looking toward both groups includes the families without neglecting the board.**
2	How do Maya's expression and hand movement reinforce her account of the driver at the crosswalk?	**Her drawn brows show concern, and her single open-hand motion makes the driver's path easier to follow without distracting from her account.**
3	Why does Maya move nearer when the board member leans forward, but stop short of the board's space?	**Moving nearer helps the member see the paper, while keeping her distance respects the board's space.**
4	When the microphone squeals, what does Maya do before resuming, and how does her position help her continue addressing the room?	**She stops, steps back, and waits for the sound to pass. Returning to the marked spot lets her face the whole room.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would stand with my shoulders relaxed so I look ready to hear objections. I would make eye contact with classmates on both sides of the room so no group feels left out. When I mention that joining is optional, I would smile to show that I am not judging anyone's lunch habits. I would gesture toward an empty table with an open hand, then lower my hand while people consider the idea. I would stay near the front rather than walk between desks, giving classmates space to respond.

Accept interpretations grounded in specific actions from the passage. For Part 3, look for five distinct, practical nonverbal choices and an explanation of the intended effect of at least two.