For Canaan Elementary’s second grade in Patchogue, N.Y.，today is speech day, and right now it’s Chris Palaez’s turn. The 8-year-old is the joker of the class. With shining dark eyes, he seems like the kind of kid who would enjoy public speaking.

But he’s nervous.＂I’m here to tell you today why you should … should…＂Chris trips on the＂-ld,＂a pronunciation difficulty for many non-native English speakers. His teacher, Thomas Whaley, is next to him, whispering support.＂…Vote for …me …＂Except for some stumbles, Chris is doing amazingly well. When he brings his speech to a nice conclusion, Whaley invites the rest of the class to praise him.

A son of immigrants, Chris started learning English a little over three years ago. Whaley recalls（回想起）how at the beginning of the year, when called upon to read, Chris would excuse himself to go to the bathroom.

Learning English as a second language can be a painful experience. What you need is a great teacher who lets you make mistakes. ＂It takes a lot for any student,＂ Whaley explains, ＂especially for a student who is learning English as their new language, to feel confident enough to say, ‘I don’t know，but I want to know.’＂

Whaley got the idea of this second-grade presidential campaign project when he asked the children one day to raise their hands if they thought they could never be a president. The answer broke his heart. Whaley says the project is about more than just learning to read and speak in public. He wants these kids to learn to boast（夸耀）about themselves.

＂Boasting about yourself, and your best qualities,＂ Whaley says, ＂is very difficult for a child who came into the classroom not feeling confident.＂