LITERACY SKILLS

PRIMARY PUBLIC SPEAKING, DEBATING AND MEDIA STUDIES

Braidwood Central School 2014

Please keep this booklet handy for ongoing reference during the year. It includes relevant dates and information, as well as tips for helping your child/children with their speaking tasks.
Public Speaking, Debating and Media Studies

Persuasive thinking, writing and speaking are important parts of literacy studies in New South Wales public schools. These activities help our students engage with the wider world, develop well-organised critical thinking skills that prepare them for report and essay writing in high school, give them confidence to speak in front of an audience, and learn to work in teams. At Braidwood Central we encourage all students in Year 3 and older to take part (Years 5 & 6 for debating, and Years 4, 5 & 6 for media studies), with emphasis on everyone gaining from the experience. There is also the opportunity for those who show enthusiasm and ability to go on the represent the school in Department of Education competitions. Our students in primary and secondary have done well in these competitions in the past, including some going as far as the State Finals.

During week 3 of Term 1, we are very fortunate that James Smith, from Masters Academy, will visit Braidwood Central to give special workshops to encourage interest and engagement in public speaking and debating.

Term 1: Public Speaking

During Term 1, all students in years 3 to 6 are helped to write a speech and present it to their class. Keen students will also be given help learning to give short impromptu or spontaneous speeches.

The framework for public speaking in primary is the Department of Education’s Multicultural Perspectives Public Speaking Competition. While BCS encourages every child to take part and develop their skills, those who enjoy and excel at this important aspect of learning have an
opportunity to speak at our Public Speaking Evening at the end of term. Two students from Years 3/4 and two from 5/6 are chosen to represent the school at the Zone Finals (in June), and have a chance to go on to Regional and State levels.

The speaking tasks include:

- **A prepared speech to be written in class and at home.** (Due the end of week 7 and spoken in class during week 8.)
- **Impromptu speeches to be practiced in class this term and, if possible, at home.**

The prepared speech:

Years 3/4 speak for 3 minutes (with a reminder bell at 2 minutes).

Years 5/6 speak for 4 minutes (with a reminder bell at 3 minutes).

The topics for the prepared speeches must be chosen from a list of ten:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years 3/4 Topics</th>
<th>Years 5/6 Topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Racism is bullying</td>
<td>Asylum seekers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiculturalism and the FIFA World cup</td>
<td>The meaning of Australia Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathising with other people</td>
<td>Getting a multicultural education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How kids can make a difference</td>
<td>Learning different languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmony Day</td>
<td>Religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every family has a story</td>
<td>Multiculturalism in the media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My overseas connections</td>
<td>The same but different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When does a migrant become an Australian?</td>
<td>UnAustralian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiculturalism at school</td>
<td>Stereotypes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What makes a community?</td>
<td>Living between cultures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Impromptu speeches:

To encourage a variety of responses, impromptu topics are general and not multicultural. All students are given the same topic and just 5 minutes to prepare. Years 3 and 4 attempt to give a 1 minute speech (with a reminder bell at 30 seconds). Years 5 and 6 attempt a 2 minute speech (with a reminder bell at 1 minute 30 seconds).

Terms 2 and 3: Debating

During terms 2 and 3 students in Years 5 and 6 (and continuing in high school) have the opportunity to volunteer for debating. Everyone is welcome to take part, with emphasis again on participation. Some regular class time will be set aside for practice, as well as some lunch breaks. While the children will miss some normal classroom time, this activity is a natural extension of literacy work done in class. Debating is of great benefit to students in developing the critical thinking skills and concepts involved in learning how to intelligently organise and argue different sides of a case, and work as part of a team.

In Term 3 there will be an interschool debating competition. BCS enters two teams to allow more students to participate. Everyone who
has volunteered will be involved in our debating group at school, but not everyone will be able to take part in the competition (each team will have four members with one or two reserves). The teams will be chosen on the basis of interest, ability and regular practice. Those who miss out will be better prepared should they wish to develop their skills next year (whether still in Primary or High School). While the teams are often made up of a majority of students from Year 6, any Year 5 students who do particularly well may be selected. This year’s Year 5 students will form the experienced core for next year’s competition. Every effort is made to be fair to students and to explain the process of selection.

Towards the end of Term 3 (in late August) there is a special debating camp at Batemans Bay, organised for primary students in our region. A group from our school usually attends and all interested students may take part to develop their skills. If one of our teams wins its zone competition (as they have for the last two years), its members are expected to attend the camp to take part in the Regional Finals. The cost is approximately $190 for two days of workshops and one night’s accommodation (all meals are included in this fee). More information will be sent home in time, including possible assistance with expenses. In the past, the camp has proved a valuable and enjoyable learning experience for those who have attended.

During the debating practice, topics may be sent home for discussion and preparation. Your support with this will be greatly appreciated.

Term 4: Media Studies

During Term 4, Years 4, 5 and 6 will take part in Media Studies classes to further develop their engagement and thinking about the wider
world. We will examine newspaper, radio and video articles that express different points of view on important issues. Students will compare and evaluate the articles, summarise their main points and express their own opinion in response.

**Frequently asked questions about public speaking**

*Does my child have to write a speech?*

Some students will find this task difficult. Writing a speech is a demanding process and getting up and speaking in front of your class can be daunting. The school’s expectation is that every student tries their best with this task and makes an effort to develop the skills required. Shy students can request to give the speech privately to their teacher.

*Why are all the topics for the prepared speeches multicultural?*

Because multiculturalism is not as immediately relevant an issue in a rural school like ours as it is in our cities, our students sometimes find the topics challenging. None the less, Australia is one of the most multicultural countries in the world and the Education Department expects primary students to develop an understanding of the issues. (Funding for the competition is dependent on the topics being multicultural.) Each year a number of new topics are selected to give students variety. Also, there is room within the set topics for country kids to express their particular experience and point of view as long as they connect their argument back to multiculturalism. To help with this, there will be class time devoted to studying multicultural issues.
How are the students who will represent the school chosen?

Last year, our Public Speaking Evening trialled a new method of choosing the four students who represented BCS at the Zone Finals. The evening was a great success and this year will follow a similar pattern where the process of judging is broader and more relevant to the competition criteria. All students will present their speeches in class and have the opportunity to practice impromptu speaking. The four students from each year who best perform in both tasks will be chosen by their teachers and tutors in public speaking. These sixteen students will be invited to give their prepared speeches at the Public Speaking Evening to extend their experience of speaking to an audience and showcase their achievements to the community. Certificates will be awarded on the evening, and over the following week all students will be offered constructive feedback on how they spoke. The four students selected to represent the school at the Zone Finals will be announced at an assembly after careful consideration by staff and tutors. Those students will be helped to further develop their prepared speeches and given further coaching in impromptu speaking before travelling to the finals in June.

Why are there impromptu speeches?

The impromptus are intended to help students learn to think on their feet. The topics are usually (but not always) metaphorical. That is, they have both a literal and a second, hidden meaning. This is designed to encourage complex, lateral thinking.

For instance, students in years 3 and 4 might get a topic such as ‘Fairy-tale endings’. It is hoped that students will understand the literal meaning of the end of a children’s story and the metaphor of
everything turning out for the best. Their job then is to apply that to something they know and hope for, whether it’s in their own life, their community or the wider world, and then tell us that story. Impromptus are difficult but many children enjoy their challenge once they begin to get the hang of it.

Tips for students for public speaking

Writing and presenting a speech

Writing a speech is a chance for you to tell other people what you think. Being able to do that clearly is a really important skill. Your school wants to help you get better at that. In primary you have to select a topic from the list provided (unless you get special permission from your teacher to choose another topic), so think carefully about which one suits you best, then try to develop your ideas about it by talking to your teacher, parents and anyone else who has good ideas.

Planning your speech

Plan your speech so it’s like a story with a beginning (introduction), middle (arguments or points) and end (conclusion) which show some logical development and build to an interesting high point. Think about making your opening sentences and your conclusion capture everyone’s attention.

- Include some personal story (something that matters to you that you’ve experienced), but don’t just talk about yourself. Having a story helps the audience understand and connect with you.
• Include some connection with the local community and the wider world. This shows your interest and knowledge in things around you.

• Some interesting and relevant facts are important to help prove your points.

• Link and develop your points as much as possible. Make connections between the story you tell and the facts you use to inform us.

• Think about the words you write. You’re going to say them out loud. Don’t use big words you don’t understand well or too much slang. Use a conversational, entertaining writing style, showing conviction, humour, and enthusiasm, and perhaps a surprise or two. If you can enjoy sharing your thoughts it helps the audience enjoy what you have to say.

• Don’t spend time introducing yourself or saying good evening or another greeting, or to say thank you when you finish. Your name and topic is always announced before you speak. Use all your time to persuade the audience.

• It is important that you put the speech on palm cards and number them (in case you drop them or accidentally move two at once!) Holding up a big piece of paper can block the view of your face and make it harder for everyone to hear you.
Giving your speech

Most of us find speaking to a group of people a bit frightening. Being nervous is normal but the more you practise the easier it will get. Here is some advice to help you be brave and give the best speech you can.

- **Before you start speaking, settle yourself** and look at the audience (as you would if you were talking to a friend). If you’re shy about looking right at people’s faces, then you can look at the wall behind everyone.

- **Speak loudly** so everyone can understand you - you need to be heard even at the back of the room.

- **Take your time** – it might be hard to believe it but even if you think you’re speaking too slowly, everyone else will probably think you’re just right.

- **Pronounce your words clearly.** We tend to rush and blur our words when we’re nervous. Look up when you come to a pause in your speech (somewhere where you won’t lose your place).

- **Be expressive.** Vary your tone of voice to suit what you’re saying – this shows you mean it and helps everyone understand you. Also use your free hand to add emphasis but don’t wave it about - you’re not conducting an orchestra. Too much gesturing distracts the audience from what you’re saying.

- **Try not to fidget** or scratch or sway about – this is also very distracting for the audience. Hold your palm cards in one hand and change them with your other one.

- **When you finish, pause** and look at the audience again – don’t hurry away.

Practising in front of a mirror can help you learn how to do all these things.
Impromptu Speeches

Enthusiastic students will also be trying short impromptu (unprepared) speeches. Your teacher and visiting tutor will help you practice. You all will be given the same topic and will have five minutes to think about what to say. Everyone finds this challenging but it can be fun if you relax and let your mind be inventive. It’s a good idea to practice impromptus with anyone who can help you – parents and friends can help you invent and think about topics, keep time for you and listen to you.

Here are some examples of topics given in the past:

Years 3/4

My Hero, My greatest Challenge, Fairy-tale endings, Where I live, Reach for the stars, Take a chance, Coming second, Slow and steady wins the race.

Years 5/6

Home is where the heart is, Life – be in it, At the Crossroads, It’s what’s on the inside that counts, Think big, The best things in life cost, The moment of truth, The cabbage is mightier than the rose, Time out.

Some of these topics seem difficult or complicated, but don’t panic – look for the meaning in the topic (there may well be a hidden second meaning) and try to think of two or three connected things you can say. Use some of the same strategies suggested for your prepared speech. One place you can look for extra topics is in the headlines of stories in the newspaper – they often hide extra meanings. Old proverbs and expressions are often like this too. (For instance, ‘Every cloud has a silver lining’ is a saying that means something more than is obvious.)
If you have any questions about Primary public speaking or debating at BCS, please feel free to contact Sarah Sweeney at school, or Julian Davies, the debating and public speaking tutor (at home on 4842 7189).