Writing and Speaking Skills at BCS

Secondary Public Speaking and Debating in 2014

Persuasive writing and speaking are important parts of literacy studies in New South Wales public schools. These activities help you engage with the wider world, develop well-organised critical thinking skills that prepare you for report and essay writing, and give you confidence to speak in front of an audience and work as part of a coordinated team. The activities are also useful in preparing students for leadership roles, for being part of our agricultural show team, and representing the school in the community.

As an assessed part of the English course, writing a speech in Term 1 is a set task for all students in Years 7 to 10.

Debating is a voluntary extra-curricular activity open to everyone who is interested.

The emphasis is on participation and skill development for everyone, but for those who shows enthusiasm and ability there is the opportunity to go on to represent the school in Department of Education competitions in both public speaking and debating. Our students in both 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, James Smith, from Masters Academy, will visit Braidwood Central to give special workshops to encourage interest and engagement in public speaking and debating.

If you or your parents/caregivers have any questions about this program, please feel free to contact Vanessa Willetts, Head Teacher English, at school, or Julian Davies, debating and public speaking tutor, at school or at home on 4842 7189.
Term 1: Public Speaking

During Term 1, all students in Years 7 to 10 in secondary write a speech both in class and as homework, and present it to their class. You will have a say in choosing the topics for your speeches in consultation with your English teacher. If you engage enthusiastically with this assignment, there will also an opportunity to give your speech at the Radical Leaders evening to an audience of family and friends towards the end of term. Also later in Term 1 there will be workshops to help anyone who is interested learn to give short impromptu or spontaneous speeches.

After considering participation in all three aspects of this process, your teachers will then select the two students in each age group who will represent BCS in the zone competitions. Whether or not you are chosen to compete, detailed feedback will be available to help you further develop your skills.

Years 7/8

The framework for public speaking in Years 7/8 is the Department of Education’s Legacy Speaking Award, open to all students who are 14 or younger on 1 Jan 2014.

Speech lengths:

- Prepared speech: 5 minutes speaking time (reminder bell at 4 mins).
- Impromptu speech, 5 mins preparation, 2 mins speaking time (reminder bell at 1.30 mins).

Years 9-12

The framework for public speaking for Years 9/10 is the Department of Education’s Plain English Award, open to all students who are 15 or older on 1 Jan 2014.

Speech lengths:

- Prepared speech: 8 minutes speaking time (reminder bell at 6 mins).
- Impromptu speech, 3 mins preparation, 3 mins speaking time (reminder bell at 2 mins).
Terms 2 to 4: Debating

During terms 2 to 4 you have the opportunity to volunteer for debating. Our students have done amazingly well in the past, developing their thinking and team skills, travelling to other schools and reaching regional finals. Everyone is welcome to take part, with emphasis again on participation. Some class time will be set aside for practice, as well as some lunch breaks, with possible after-school sessions. We will play ideas games and develop techniques for building a strong debating case.

In New South Wales, debating is divided into three age groups: Years 7/8, Years 9/10 and Years 11/12. BCS has regularly fielded teams in the first two age groups, and the opportunity exists for keen students to continue in Year 11. (Year 7/8 debating takes place mainly in terms 3 and 4, Year 9/10 in terms 2 and 3, and Year 11/12 in terms 1 and 2.)

An interschool debating competition takes place later in the year. BCS regularly enters two teams in each age group to allow more students to participate. Everyone who volunteers will be involved in our debating groups at school, but not all participants will 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. While the teams are often made up of a majority of students from the senior year in each age group, younger students who do particularly well may be selected. 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 secondary students in our region. A group from our school usually attends: any interested students can take part to develop their skills. As well as training workshops for everyone who attends, the Year 9/10 Regional Finals take place at the camp. If one of our 9/10 teams wins its zone competition, the team members are expected to attend the camp to take part in the 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 closer to the time, including possible assistance with expenses. In the past, the camp has proved a valuable and enjoyable experience for those who have attended.