

The Importance of Public Speaking

I remember the first speech I gave in public. It was at a speech and debate tournament in Houston, Texas and I was twelve years old. I had three minutes to prepare a five minute speech. No matter how hard I tried or how fast I thought I could not think of three main points. The speech lasted thirty seconds. I didn't win the tournament that day but I did learn a few life lessons: public speaking is not for the faint of heart and it takes practice! If you are like most Americans one of your greatest fears is public speaking. Public speaking consistently ranks as one of the top fears for most Americans. Interestingly, public speaking also ranks as a critical skill hiring managers look for in recent college graduates. Public speaking is a skill that can give your scholar success in the college classroom and well beyond it. That is why Classical Preparatory School emphasizes the development of public speaking skills. Recent research shows that public speaking is critical to achieving success.

Recent survey data and scholarly research point to public speaking as both something people dread doing but must be accomplished at to get a top job. According to a 2014 study conducted by Chapman University, in which 1,500 people were interviewed, public speaking ranked as one of the top five most common fears in America. Yet, increasingly, public speaking is seen as a critical skill in America's workforce. The National Association of Colleges and Employers sought to identify the top ten skills major companies look for when hiring recent college graduates. While many factors topped companies' lists, in 2014, "the ability to communicate" ranked amongst the top four skills top companies look for in candidates. Fortunately, Classical Preparatory School seeks to alleviate your scholars' fears by teaching communications skills in a fun way through speech exercises and writing speeches.

Classical Preparatory School provides an unparalleled program for students to improve their communications skills. In both Speech I and Speech II, students watch and analyze famous speeches, prepare speeches on historical and contemporary events, and learn to "speak off-the-cuff" through frequent practice of impromptu speeches. In an impromptu speech, students are presented with a "prompt," usually a word or quote, and have five minutes to prepare up to a five minute speech. By practicing "speaking on your feet" students build an ability that will help them in college and beyond.

In college, many students will likely have to present speeches if they pursue a degree in Business, Communications, Marketing, Journalism, or Public Relations. Hopefully taking speech classes will help elucidate where your scholars' interests are and if they can see themselves doing public speaking, perhaps in a profession that requires it, in the future. What students learn in their speech classes will translate to success outside the college classroom as well.

Immediately after and oftentimes during college, students will be faced with competitive interviews for internships or research opportunities during the summers. In order to stand out from the crowd, students will not only need good grades, a good resume, enthusiasm and a drive to succeed, but they will also need the ability to speak "off script." Many students will feel compelled to spend hours pouring over interview preparation books and reading about thousands of interview questions and how best to answer them. However, any hiring professional will tell you the authenticity of a well-crafted, honest and personal response to any question is what they are really looking for. Practicing delivering genuine thoughts in front of your peers in the form of an organized speech helps students organize their thoughts and builds the skills necessary to become a genuinely well-spoken individual.

Preparing at least two speeches a week, often on contemporary political topics not only brings students a better understanding of their government and its history, but the wide world around them on which they must only choose how best to make their mark. That freedom is what Classical Preparatory School equips scholars with the ability to accomplish. That is why Speech matters. That is why with weekly practice, "we have nothing to fear but fear itself."