

CHALLENGE

A Herff Jones Impact Resource For Students

March, 2004

MARCH CHALLENGE:

Student Elections & Public Speaking

Spring is the time that many student activity organizations are holding elections. Every organization needs to have printed election procedures. There are almost always complaints from parents, students, and others about how elections are conducted. In some school districts these complaints have even led to lawsuits or threats of lawsuits.

Any time an election is held, whether it is for Student Council officers or the Homecoming queen, there needs to be uniform election procedures. Principals who have had to spend time with an irate parent understand the need for written procedures. Written procedures should include:

1. How to qualify for an office
2. The number and types of speeches to be given (nominating, acceptance, etc.) and the length of each speech
3. Types and numbers of campaign materials (posters, buttons, etc.) allowed
4. Where these materials can be used and when

5. Election day guidelines for the actual voting. If your student activity group does not have guidelines (and even if they exist it is always good to look at them for updates and improvements) form a committee to look at the issues.



Contact neighboring schools for copies of their procedures. Another great place to get help is at the Supervisor of Elections office. Ask someone from that office to do a workshop for your group (or perhaps the entire school) on election procedures and how an election is conducted. Many times the Supervisor of Elections will have the actual voting equipment brought to the school for use by the students in their election.

When conducting a student election there should be a designated polling place (gym, cafeteria, etc..) and the hours that the polls are open should be

posted and announced. Have a list of eligible voters (class rolls) and the student ID cards can serve as voter registration cards, which is presented before receiving a ballot. If voting machines are not in use, have a locked ballot box with a monitor for the box. Be very careful that the ballot box is never left unattended. Have a counting committee - never let one person or just students alone count the ballots. These procedures make elections more professionally conducted and also prepare students for voting at age 18.

SPEAKING IN PUBLIC

Sometimes students are afraid to run for office or take leadership roles because they fear standing up before their peers and giving a speech. There are four categories that can describe a speaker. Decide which one best describes your situation.

1. **AVOIDER.** An Avoider does everything possible to escape having to get in front of a group of people.

(continued on Page 2)

This newsletter is a joint effort of Jackie Burch and Herff Jones, Inc.

SPEAKING IN PUBLIC

(continued from Page 1)

2. ***RESISTER.*** A Resister has fear when asked to speak. It can be a strong fear. They never want to speak and when they do, it is with great reluctance and pain.
3. ***ACCEPTER.*** The Acceptor will speak and give presentations when necessary but doesn't seek opportunities. But after speaking they will sometimes feel that they have done a good job.
2. ***SEEKER.*** A Seeker looks for opportunities to speak. The Seeker understands that a little anxiety before speaking is actually a stimulant for more enthusiasm during the speech. Seekers try to build their communication skills and self-confidence by speaking often.

Here are some pointers that could improve your speaking skills:

- Understand that anxiety before a presentation can be used to your benefit during the speech.
- Learn how to organize thoughts and data in a logical and concise manner.
- Develop the necessary skills to communicate enthusiasm about the ideas presented and

- Transform question and answer sessions into an enjoyable and productive part of the speaking process.
- Construct visual aids that have impact and learn to use them effectively.

DEALING WITH ANXIETY



Anxiety is a natural state that exists anytime one is placed under stress. For many, standing before a group to speak is the ultimate stress. For some it is stressful even when it is as simple as “tell the group something about yourself.”

Learn to make stress work for you and the presentation will be enthusiastic and dynamic.

TIPS FOR REDUCING ANXIETY

Organize- lack of organization is one of the major causes of stress. Knowing that your thoughts are well organized will give more confidence

Visualize - mentally rehearse your presentation

Practice - stand up as if an audience is in front of you and do your presentation. Have someone critique it or videotape the presentation

Breathe - sounds simple but some speakers go a long time before a breath. Take deep breaths before starting the presentation

Focus on relaxing - when taking deep breaths, tell yourself, “I am relaxed.” Clear your mind of everything except this statement

Release tension - before starting your presentation, try to release the tension from your body. Do this several times

Move - speakers who stand in one spot and never gesture experience more tension and they appear tense even if they are not. When speaking from a lectern one should move to the side for emphasis and gesture

Eye contact with audience - look in a person's eyes when speaking. Connect with them. Make it personal and personable. Learn to react to the interest of the audience

QUOTE OF THE MONTH



“If you have no confidence in self, you are twice defeated in the race of life. With confidence, you have won even before you have started.”

~ Marcus Garvey

