

Extracurricular Activities, 2020-2021

PLEASE NOTE: Because of COVID restrictions, the MSA choirs will NOT be meeting in the fall semester. Please continue to look at our website for the most updated information.

High School Rhetoric Team (8th-12th graders)

Leader/Teacher: Barb Varnell, dbvarnell@comcast.net

Cost: \$20/year

Attention all high school students! Did you know that most colleges require a public speaking course at some point in your college career? In addition, if you go to ANY college for ANY major you WILL be doing some type of classroom presentations. You need to make sure you are comfortable speaking in front of people.

Even if you are not college-bound there is the possibility that you may have to teach Sunday School, go on a missions trip, present an idea before our boss, go into business for yourself, pray in front of people, or be called to give your testimony. All of these require speaking in front of others. Those people who do this well will be the people who became leaders and culture changers for Christ.

The Mount Sophia Academy Rhetoric Team (a fancy name for the speech team) is here to give you opportunities to learn how to feel more comfortable with speaking in front of people. The Rhetoric Team has a dual purpose- the first is to offer the students the opportunity to learn how to speak in front of people in a very low-key environment at its monthly meetings. We do this as a combination of teaching and fun speaking exercises. In our monthly meetings we train you in how to prepare speeches and presentations and practice exercises which will help desensitize you to speaking in public (while we have fun doing it). Even students who are scared silly have found that they can get comfortable with speaking before a group (some of them still may not like it, but they can do it).

The Rhetoric Team's second purpose is to offer the opportunity to participate in a number of different competitions (competitions look great on your high school transcript- especially public speaking ones). We offer four competitions a year including a chance to compete against other schools at the ACSI Speech Competition in the spring (held at Newark Church of Christ). These competition categories include humorous interpretation, dramatic interpretation, reader's theater, interpretation of children's literature, persuasive speeches, descriptive speeches, individual acting, duet acting, TV news team, and visual aid speeches.

Participation in speech related activities in high school is HIGHLY desirable to colleges. Colleges are looking for students to participate for MULTIPLE YEARS in the same activity, and the low-key nature of our team allows students to do this while fitting in all the academics they need.

Updated 8/5/20

The meetings include my teaching about some aspect of public speaking, but the bulk of the meeting consists of the students participating in various speaking exercises. Each student will do some type of speaking exercise(s) EVERY meeting; there will be plenty of opportunities during the school year for them to get comfortable with speaking in front of people even if they don't participate in the competitions. The exercises are not intense but meant to encourage each student to grow and become better. I only have a few rules for the team:

1. Everyone who is at the meeting **MUST** participated in the speaking exercises.
2. No talking when someone else is speaking up front (this includes using cell phones).
3. Everyone must smile and nod encouragingly at the speaker.

The team is a very supportive environment and includes students who have a variety of skill levels. I have students there who are literally shaking in their shoes the first time they get up and speak as well as students who have gone on to compete at the national levels in college (even one who has traveled around the world on the Air Force Academy debate team). We really have something for everyone! Most of my students participate each year they are in high school, which allows them to really improve (and looks good to colleges and scholarship committees).

The students who have participated have said that the team was one of the most valuable things they had done because they became comfortable being able to speak in any situation into which God led them in life. We have seen students blossom from being terrified into confident speakers. All this in a supportive environment where everyone is rooting for you to succeed (because everyone is in the same boat- group suffering is a wonderful thing!)

The monthly meetings will be on **Wednesdays** from **2 to 3:30** at MSA (Newark Church of Christ)- exact dates will be determined during the summer. **Due to social distancing policies, other times may also be scheduled – contact me.**