

THE SENIOR SPEECH

Each senior at Laurel School presents a speech to the Upper School as a requirement for graduation. More than that, the senior speech should also be a valuable and gratifying experience for the student, her family, and the entire Laurel community. Remember that there are several audiences: classmates, the larger student body, the faculty, family, and guests. For the speech to be a success, the student should understand the purpose of a senior speech and be guided by the following principles.

A successful senior speech may educate, inspire, provoke, or intrigue the listener, but above all it should convey to the audience the speaker's own interest in, passion about, or commitment to the topic. In all cases, the final consideration should be the question: **IS THE TOPIC AS IMPORTANT FOR THE AUDIENCE TO HEAR AS IT IS FOR THE SPEAKER TO PRESENT?**

Memorable senior speeches over the years have covered a range of social, political, and cultural topics. An appropriate subject raises issues of importance for the entire audience. A personal anecdote may serve as an illustration of a point but should not comprise the speech.

It is important to remember that this event is the Senior **Speech**, not the senior PowerPoint® presentation. Therefore, multimedia in the speech is highly discouraged. We hope that the senior speech will be the intellectual capstone of a student's Laurel experience. Remember, your speech lives on long after you leave Laurel; a copy is preserved in the archives for future students and visitors to read.

Because the senior speech is so important, the Laurel faculty has developed a set of guidelines intended to assure a smooth process of speech-writing and rehearsal. To help students meet their deadlines, each senior and her parents will receive a letter explaining these guidelines and a calendar with the student's individual deadlines.

With respect to topic selection, there is no restriction. However, students are reminded to use discretion in their choice of topic in consideration of the students and adults who will hear the speech. In some cases, the student may be required to make a change in order to respect community sensitivities or standards of good taste. In addition, there are three other requirements for speech content:

1. If your speech contains references to or descriptions of individuals in the Laurel community, you must speak with them and obtain their permission **in writing**.
2. When you are presenting an opinion on an issue, you must ascertain that your facts and information are accurate. Claims must be supported by credible evidence, or must be clearly identified as the speaker's own opinion.
3. When you quote a person or an outside source, that source should be clearly and appropriately credited within the speech.

Here is the process and timeline for speech preparation, with consequences that are intended to help students stay on track:

1. In the spring of the junior year, you indicate your preferences for a senior speech advisor and date. Every attempt is made to give students their first or second choice of advisor, but this is a difficult task with large classes.
2. Any requests for change of date must be made in writing to the Senior Speech Coordinator not later than **four weeks before the date of the speech**.

3. No later than four weeks before the speech date, you will meet with your speech advisor to discuss your topic and to brainstorm possible structures. The speech advisor may ask for a rough outline following this meeting.
4. No later than three weeks before the speech date, you will turn in your first rough draft and meet with your speech advisor. The first draft must be submitted via email both to your adviser and to Mr. Kawolics. At this time, you must also provide the following information:
 - a. the name(s) and contact information for your introducer(s).
 - b. your selection of music or performance for your speech. Please note that the music you choose should complement your speech, and not be merely a pop song that distracts from the significance of the occasion. Musical selections must be approved by the senior speech coordinator, and may be assigned to an a cappella group, the choir, glee club, or orchestra depending on the song and group availability.
5. Two weeks before the speech date, you will turn in a second draft that addresses the feedback from your advisor. You must also submit a rehearsal plan, indicating who will rehearse your speech and when. Your speech may be rehearsed with your advisor or with one of the other faculty members who have volunteered to help with rehearsals. At this checkpoint, if progress is not being made, your parents will be contacted, and you will be assigned to proctored study halls until you are caught up on your speech. Your parents will also be informed that your failure to do so will result in your forfeiting your speech date, and you will instead be required to give your speech to a faculty panel during the senior project period.
6. One week before the speech date, you will submit your final draft by email to your advisor and to Mr. Kawolics. The senior speech coordinator will forward a copy to the librarian for the archives. If your speech is not nearly complete by this time, your date will be forfeited.
7. In the final week before your speech, you will attend at least one rehearsal. Your rehearsaler may also require you to schedule an additional rehearsal. Consequence for failure to rehearse is cancellation of your speech.
8. Although it is traditional for the speech adviser to preside at your speech, you may ask any faculty member or administrator to do so. Courtesy dictates that you inform your speech adviser of your choice well in advance of your speech.
9. You are expected to fulfill your regular academic responsibilities after giving your speech.
10. Each senior speech will be video recorded by the school. We request that independent photographers not record the speech, since video equipment can be distracting.
11. Anyone appearing on stage must be appropriately attired. Senior speakers must be in uniform or may wear civvies appropriate for an interview. Introducers and musical performers who are Laurel students must be in uniform or, if the speech takes place on a civvies day, must be dressed appropriately.
12. Delivery of a speech that differs substantially from the written copy provided to your advisor will be considered a significant integrity issue.

GUIDELINES FOR SENIOR SPEECH INTRODUCTIONS

1. An introduction should showcase the speech and the speaker, not compete with the speech. The content of the introduction should be tasteful and appropriate to the occasion. Maudlin reminiscences and silly stories are not appropriate. The introduction is not a roast, nor is it a history of or a testament to a personal friendship. The introduction should be addressed to the audience, not to the senior speaker.
2. The introduction is given by no more than two individuals and is limited to two minutes. (Remember, the speech itself is only ten minutes.) To adhere to the two-minute rule, a text should not be longer than one typed page, double spaced, 12 point font.
3. The introduction of the speech must be approved by Mr. Kawolics at least 48 hours before the speech. If the introduction is not approved then, the introduction is cancelled. This guideline applies to outside introducers as well.
4. No multimedia will be allowed in introductions.
5. If the guidelines are not adhered to, the senior will be assigned a faculty member who will give the introduction to the speech.
6. Delivery of an introduction that differs substantially from the approved version will be considered a significant integrity issue.