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RADIO ANNOUNCING

Description of Event

The event of Radio Announcing is open to all PHSSL schools, and every member is invited to participate. This event is held on the State level only, and there is no qualifying procedure except for registering. Description of Radio Announcing is in Article B12, PHSSL Bylaws. Every member school may enter one (1) student in Radio Announcing. No charge for name changes in Impromptu, Radio Announcing and Student Congress. A \$50.00 nuisance fee will be assessed for drops.

Students who participated in PHSSL District and/or Regional Tournaments and who did not qualify to the State Tournament may be entered in Radio Announcing.

To register students in Radio Announcing, the coach completes the registration form and mails the registration form to the State Office by the stated deadline. No registrations will be accepted after the deadline date.

Article B15 - Radio Announcing

Section B15.1

A school may enter one student in radio announcing.

Section B15.2

There shall be only a state contest in radio announcing.

Section B15.3

All contestants will complete in two preliminary rounds:

- a. Round I. Student will read a two-minute prepared newscast. Script is prepared by the student, covering the current events of the time period Sunday through Round I of the State Tournament.
- b. Round II. Fifteen minutes before the contestant is to appear before the microphone, he/she shall be given a copy of a radio broadcast script provided by the Executive Director.
- c. Semifinal Round. Students will read the same two minute prepared newscast as in Round I. NO changes will be permitted in the script from Round I to the Semifinal round. Selection for the Semifinal Round will be based on the lowest cumulative rank from Rounds I and II.
- d. Final Round. Approximately six students will be selected to compete in a Final Round. Fifteen minutes before appearing before the microphone, the student shall be given a script provided by the Executive Director.

Section B15.4

The student may receive assistance from a pronouncing guide, but may not seek the help of any other person. Failure to abide by this rule will result in disqualification from the tournament.

Section B15.5

The names of the contestants shall be sent to the Office of the Executive Director no later than the deadline date set in the League's calendar. No charge for name change, however, a \$50.00 nuisance fee will be charged for any dropped students.

Section B15.6

The PHSSL Radio Announcing Handbook is to be considered a part of the PHSSL Constitution and Bylaws, and therefore all constitutional provisions are applicable to the Handbook.

Procedures Used at the State Tournament

Since many students are competing in this event for the first time at the State Tournament, the following list of procedures may give you an idea of the way this event is conducted. A few suggestions are also included.

1. After registration, a mandatory meeting of all radio announcing contestants is held to go over any last minute changes. Often last minute studio or time changes must be made. This meeting also involves a very important role call. The procedures are reviewed, and students may ask questions about any aspect of the competition. This is a big help to most students, as they will be responsible for finding these facilities for each round.
2. Make sure that you report at least 20 minutes before you are scheduled to compete. Check the time very carefully on the sheet you will receive at registration.
3. Each student must have his/her own script. Students will also be asked to fill out copies of the ballot.
4. Round II is a sight-reading script, prepared by the Radio Announcing staff. The purpose of this round is to determine the student's ability to read aloud a script after minimal preparation. This script is a typical example of one that would be read on the air. Approximately fifteen seconds are available to sign-on, segues (transitions), and sign-off.
5. Check the time and place for the sight-reading. You should report to the room at least 20 minutes before you are scheduled to compete. **IT IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT THAT YOU ARE NOT LATE FOR THIS ROUND--LATENESS WILL RESULT IN LOSS OF PREP TIME.**
6. You may want to bring a stop watch or digital watch with you to the sight-reading. Although the script is written with the two-minute time limit in mind, you may want to allow for sign-on, sign-off, and brief transition lines. The script itself should not be altered in any way. The watch will help you stay within the time limit.
7. You will be given your script approximately fifteen minutes before your scheduled "air time." During this preparation period, you can edit the script (e.g. add a sign-on, transition lines, sign-off. However, you should not make any changes (e.g. adding your own news story in place of the script).

8. After Round II, all contestants should report to the room listed in the program for the announcement of the semifinalists. **MAKE SURE YOU ATTEND THIS ASSEMBLY.** A few times in the past years, chosen students did not compete in the round because they did not attend this meeting.
9. The Semifinal Round is another reading of the prepared script used in Round I. No changes will be permitted in the script from Round I to the Semifinal Round. Semifinalists should report to the room listed in the program for the announcement of the finalists.
10. The final round is another sight-reading and is conducted in the same manner as Round II. The final round is held immediately after the announcement meeting.
11. In all rounds a fifteen-second leeway (over or under) is given to all students with no penalty of placing first. If a student is 16 to 30 seconds over or under, s/he cannot place first but may rank 2-7. If a student is more than 30 seconds over or under, s/he cannot place in the top 7. Students are ranked 1 through 7. All others are ranked 8.

SAMPLE RADIO ANNOUNCING SCRIPT

HERE IS THE LATEST NEWS ...

THE INFLATION NUMBERS FOR FEBRUARY ARE NO SURPRISE TO ANALYSTS. THEY PREDICTED A THREE-TENTHS-PERCENT INCREASE IN CONSUMER PRICES, AND THAT'S WHAT THE GOVERNMENT REPORTED TODAY. THE BIG DIFFERENCE WAS ENERGY PRICES, UP ONE-POINT-SIX PERCENT, WHILE FOOD PRICES DROPPED A BIT.

THE COMMERCE DEPARTMENT REPORTS HOUSING STARTS ROSE FOUR-POINT-ONE PERCENT IN FEBRUARY. THAT FOLLOWS A 22-PERCENT DROP IN JANUARY, BLAMED ON SEVERE WINTER STORMS AND THE CALIFORNIA EARTHQUAKE.

INTERNATIONAL NUCLEAR INSPECTORS SAY NORTH KOREA WOULD NOT LET THEM SEE A KEY NUCLEAR PROCESSING PLANT. THE FACILITY IS A RADIOCHEMICAL LABORATORY WHICH IS BELIEVED CAPABLE OF PRODUCING PLUTONIUM -- A KEY COMPONENT IN NUCLEAR WEAPONS. AN OFFICIAL WITH THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY CONFIRMS THAT INSPECTORS WERE BARRED FROM TAKING SAMPLES AT THE FACILITY.

GENERAL MOTORS AND WORKERS AT TWO OHIO BRAKE PLANTS ARE BACK AT THE BARGAINING TABLE, TRYING TO END A TWO-DAY-OLD STRIKE. ONE ANALYST SAYS G-M COULD LOSE BIG PROFITS IF THE STRIKES FORCE A SHUTDOWN OF TWO ASSEMBLY PLANTS.

STOCK PRICES HAVE OPENED HIGHER. THE DOW JONES INDUSTRIAL AVERAGE IS AHEAD THREE POINTS IN TODAY'S EARLY GOING. ADVANCING ISSUES ON THE NEW YORK STOCK EXCHANGE HOLD A THREE-TO-TWO LEAD OVER LOSERS. THE NASDAQ COMPOSITE INDEX IS UP TWO POINTS AND THE STANDARD-AND-POOR'S 500 INDEX IS UP A FRACTION.

SOME MIDWESTERN VOTERS SEEM READY TO PAY MORE TAXES. DAWN CLARK NETSCH, RUNNING ON A PLEDGE TO RAISE INCOME TAXES, HAS WON THE DEMOCRATIC NOMINATION FOR GOVERNOR IN ILLINOIS.

ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER YITZHAK RABIN (YIT'-sahk rah-BEEN') VISITS PRESIDENT CLINTON AT THE WHITE HOUSE TODAY AS THE TWO LEADERS LOOK FOR WAYS TO REVIVE THE MIDEAST PEACE TALKS. ARAB NEGOTIATORS PULLED OUT AFTER A JEWISH SETTLER SHOT DOWN WORSHIPERS IN A WEST BANK MOSQUE IN LATE FEBRUARY.

GENERAL MILLS HAS TEAMED UP WITH HERSHEY FOODS FOR A NEW CHILDREN'S CORN PUFF CEREAL. THE TWIN CITIES-BASED CEREAL MAKER HAS LICENSED THE REESE'S PEANUT BUTTER BRAND NAME FROM HERSHEY. REESE'S PEANUT BUTTER PUFFS WILL BE AVAILABLE NATIONWIDE BY THE END OF JULY.

Ten Suggestions for Preparing Students for Radio Announcing

By Janet Dicenzo

1. After selection the student who will compete in Radio Announcing, tell him/her to listen carefully to two or three-minute news spots on a variety of radio stations. They should use their observations in planning and writing their two-minute prepared script.
2. At least two weeks before the contest, they should read newspapers and magazines for interesting ideas or events that they may want to include as their "soft news story" or "public service" segment. Remember that the news must be taken from events that happen the Sunday through the Thursday before the tournament. However, contrary to some opinion, the entire script can be prepared before leaving for the State Tournament. This allows for the student to practice and become familiar with it.
3. Everyone should be familiar with the rules of the event. The final copy of the script must be ready by the time your school registers on the day of the tournament.
4. The student should include his/her name (but not the school) as part of the sign-on. Remember that many professionals agree that the lead story is the most important part of the broadcast because it grabs the attention of the listener.
5. The student should keep his/her audience in mind as he/she write his/her broadcast. Since the audience (judges) hear only the script, they rely upon the students to be clear and precise in their language. The sentences should be varied (but mostly simple, not complex or complicated; the script relatively cliché-free; and direct quotations should be written in an easy-to-understand manner (e.g. "quote/unquote"). Radio journalism requires that the broadcast be honest, accurate, and fair. Finally, most news is written in the present tense. Consult one of the accompanying references for other suggestions.
6. The students should compose an interesting sign-off for their broadcasts. They should include their names and station call-letters.
7. The students should practice reading aloud often. This may also be the best way to prepare for Round II (the sight-reading script). They should mark their scripts for pause and emphasis. Preparation for the events helps them to sound more confident and relaxed.
8. The students should maintain a conversational tone while reading their scripts. They should not attempt to affect a "radio voice." This may lead the judges to "tune them out" during the broadcast.

9. The students should practice reading aloud names in the current news. This may help them with some of the "tongue twisters" that they may encounter in the sight-reading script.
10. The coach should acquaint the students with a few relaxation and "stretching" exercises. These may be very helpful on the day of the tournament.

RADIO ANNOUNCING TIPS

by

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As with any speech-related activity, there are some people who show a natural talent for radio announcing and there are those who have to work very hard to attain that “natural” style. This article is written primarily for those in the latter category, to help them gain a better sense of what makes a good radio announcer. I use the term “sense” because there is no such thing as a list of checkpoints that, when each point is checked, necessarily produces a good announcer.

It may encourage you to know that most professional announcers make it a point to continually monitor what the “competition” is doing: Are they doing something during their announcing that could work well for me? Is there something they use that doesn’t work and I should try to avoid? The point here is that what “works” in radio is constantly changing. You need not feel you must sound exactly like a Paul Harvey or a Wolfman Jack to be a successful announcer. I would, however, suggest you do some “monitoring of the competition” to gain a few pointers.

Before you try to write your own radio script, try this little experiment. Choose a newscaster on one of your local radio stations and tape approximately three minutes of one of the better newscasts. Write down the exact words the newscaster uses in script form. Then, you play the newscast, reading the script and taping it. Go back and make comparisons. Was your newscast longer or shorter? Did you stumble over a few words? Did it sound like you were reading from a script, or like you were talking to a group of people?

This should begin to give you a feel for what works and what doesn’t. Try adjusting your pitch and rate to make the newscast the same length of time as the newscaster’s. You may find yourself out of breath, or you may find yourself making an effort to slow down. Make notes on your comparisons and use the guidelines in the rest of the article to help you work with any problems, or incorporate what works into your own script and delivery.

The rest of this article will be divided into three sections --- (1) preparation of script, (2) delivery techniques, and (3) studio techniques. It is important to remember that these are all interrelated; a good script is nothing if the delivery is poor, and beautiful delivery is worthless if the mic was not handled properly and the audience couldn’t understand the words.

Scripts

Perhaps the most important point here is to write in a conversational style. Even if yours is a hard news report, stiff, research-paper English is a no-no. You want to be conversational, but not chatty. Conversational means easy to listen to and easy to comprehend--it does not mean poor grammar (double negatives, leaving the "g" off words ending in -ing, etc.). Avoid colloquialisms.

Remember the importance of time. You may have wondered why I suggested you try to match the newscaster's time in the earlier experiment. The point is that no matter how much or how little news there is, the broadcast scheduled allows a prescribed amount of time for the newscast, particularly on large, all-news stations. You must use all that time, or only that amount of time, to do your newscast, or you will throw off the station's schedule. This is why the Speech League competition sets a very strict time limit on your newscasts. With that in mind, then you write your script, don't give yourself more than you can handle in the allotted time. Consider your newscast to be an update, not the full-blown noon edition. Include, for instance, a local story or two, and a national story of major importance; perhaps a weather forecast, and maybe a few scores "from the ballpark." While you don't want to put in too much, don't go to the other extreme and include too little so you can leisurely deliver your newscast--this easy way out will be all too obvious to the judges, and will do nothing to improve your announcing skills.

When writing your stories, it is often helpful to keep in mind the "5 W's": Who, What, When, Where, and Why. If you limit yourself to answering these questions, you will generally be able to give your listener adequate information without becoming chatty or losing their attention.

Use transitional lines to link stories of similar content: "While taxes are a problem here in Anytown, they're also giving Congress a difficult time. Today on Capitol Hill..." Little phrases (e.g., "And on the national scene...", "And now the latest from the nation's ballparks...", etc.) also help to make the jump from various stories a little easier. Basically, just remember to keep it sharp and concise.

Delivery of Newscast

If you are like most people, you probably found you took longer to read the newscast in the experiment than did the newscaster. While we don't realize it, most radio personalities speak much more quickly than the average person, in an effort to get across as much information as possible in as short a time as possible. Your task is to discover how quickly you can speak and still keep your message clear, your pitch acceptable, and not overload your audience with information. These things together are all part of interpretation: how you emphasize certain phrases, when you pause to let the information sink in or to signal a change in topic, etc. Everyone has a different method of interpretation with the same hoped-for result: to make information stick in the listener's minds. Again, there is no hard and fast rule--it's whatever works for you.

Pitch is another factor that contributes greatly to overall effectiveness. It can be terribly annoying if it jumps around to try to project enthusiasm; it can be equally as annoying if it doesn't change at all to help the listener clue in to important information or topic change.

No matter what pitch you use, strive to make it one of confidence. Walter Cronkite, CBS's long-time news anchorman, was once voted "America's most-trusted individual." This high accolade had a great deal to do with his delivery: confident, authoritative yet still personable, and consistent.

You may find it difficult to sound confident and authoritative when you come upon foreign names you know you don't know how to pronounce. Don't worry about exact pronunciation (if and only if there is no feasible way for you to discover the correct pronunciation); say the word the best you can, then use that pronunciation throughout the newscast. Rehearse. There is nothing worse than stumbling over it or saying it slowly in an attempt to get the proper pronunciation; this only draws attention to the mistake. This is a good rule to follow whenever you falter on words. Unless it is critical information (e.g., a specific number, an incorrect identification), it is better to glaze over the error rather than to go back and draw attention to it.

Studio Technique

These are a few things you may want to keep in mind for your time in the studio:

--Noise of any kind is very audible. Do not bump the mic, rattle your script, or move your chair. You may want to remove any jewelry (bracelets, cuff links, etc.) that may either scrape on the table or jangle together or somehow produce noise.

--Write on your script: your introduction, transitions, etc. You will probably be nervous and whatever you can write down and not commit to memory will help. Many people tend to rewrite difficult-to-pronounce names in a form they can pronounce over the original, and cross out the original to avoid stumbling over it. Some people write cues to their script (e.g., "Slow here," "Serious here"). Be careful, however, of writing too much on the script and getting yourself confused.

--Do not speak directly into the mic, speak across the top of it. This, when you're careful not to get too close to the mic, helps prevent "popping p's" and "hissing s's." Work with your mics; know at what angle and distance from the mic you get the best full-bodied sound. There is no excuse for booming or tinny sound.

You will probably be nervous, particularly if this is your first attempt at radio announcing. Don't let it worry you - even professionals get butterflies. It's the waiting right before "air time" that will be most difficult; the actual newscast will be a lot easier than you expected. Who knows--if you're not careful you might even enjoy your moment in the spotlight!