Dear Parents and Guardians,

 Welcome to Public Speaking! I’m your child’s teacher this year, as Public Speaking is a year-long class. However, it’s a bit of an odd class, in that it only happens twice a week, for 25 minutes at a time. This poses a number of challenges, but we’ll find a way to make it all work.

This class is also different from many of the core classes and electives in that it’s very individualistic. What I mean by that is that the focus is on students’ growth individually, as opposed to comparatively to their peers.

The class is, not surprisingly, about how to speak to large (and small) groups of people effectively and professionally. We’ll be talking about voice, tone, pacing, body language, and gestures, among other elements. But the way I see it, in the realm of individual public speaking, students should only be compared to their earlier selves. So grading is different than in other classes – if there’s improvement over the course of the marking period’s presentations, then that’s a good thing, and will be reflected in that student’s grades. The goal for each scholar is to get more comfortable, and therefore better, at public speaking. The class is interactive and student driven, with presentations done for the entire class, who then discusses what the speaker is doing well, and what areas can be improved upon.

Doing this kind of thing – presenting live to the class for instant feedback – will be difficult over Zoom, for a number of reasons. I’m currently brainstorming possible solutions and accommodations, including the FlipGrid app, which allows students to record their presentations ahead of time, share it with me, and then I could play it for class. Just as with every other class, we’ll hit bumps in the road (both human and technological), but we’ll work through them and find a way for the class to succeed.

On my webpage is a link to join our Remind group. Remind is a free texting app, and I encourage you to join for our class. You can text me quickly and easily about any concerns you may have, and I can do likewise.

I look forward to working with you all! I’m very much looking forward to this year, and I hope my kids are, too, despite their possible trepidation with speaking in front of groups, large and small.

Sincerely,

Nate Kester