
PASTA NEWSLETTER

45 - December 2005

PASTA is the acronym of the Professional Association of Student Representative Council Teacher/Advisors. Founded in New South Wales, Australia, in February 1995, our Association exists to support in whatever ways possible those who work with and support programs of student participation, representation and leadership.



SEE OUR MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION AND APPLICATION FORM ON THE WEBSITE

PASS THE PASTA

The second decade of PASTA purpose approaches. All of you who are reading this column are, as always, warmly invited to join and/or contribute your ideas to us, either through the medium of technology or, if convenient, by meeting in person for our 2006 AGM (on the last Saturday in February at the Professional Teachers' Council offices in Leichhardt, Sydney).

The ongoing challenge of raising the profile of SRCs and, as a consequence, the recognition and rewards of being an SRC Adviser, is still a real one.

To help meet this challenge, PASTA held its first self-run Professional Development Day at Hornsby – in school time. It was attended by over 40 teachers - half from non-government schools, more than half from primary schools – and the participant evaluations confirmed the long-held view that far more such days, more oriented towards practical 'classroom-oriented' activities that can be carried out with and by SRC representatives, are essential. Clearly, those who took the time to join us then had no doubts about the value of the SRC as a curriculum area.

The much appreciated presence of so many primary and independent school teachers suggests additional PD days targeted to those sectors would be warranted. As well, there is a need to have a smaller group inclusive of these sectors to simply help 'rewrite', review and respond to the massive amount of material already available that gets

ignored simply because of jargon making it not appear, or seem relevant only to high school or government schools when in fact, with a little bit of informed tinkering (and more communication), its purpose – **and** its language - could make it more widely accepted.

Many similar comments reflect advisers' overwhelming desire for activities instead of 'keynotes' and lecture style presentations or explanations of policy and theory. This mirrors what PASTA has been arguing for years should be happening within schools and district workshops, at PD activities for teachers in conjunction with the government school State SRC Conference, at such PD days as these and in teacher training generally.

PASTA welcomes communication with anyone who might help us plan and implement more such 'hands-on' activities day for Fresh Start Day in Term 1 (normally conducted in conjunction with the NSW DET Pupil Well-Being Unit) and/or other separate PD days.

Other useful initiatives would be for all District and School personnel involved in this area (PEOs, SEOs, Executive staff as well as SRC Advisers) to consult with/ask for help from/borrow resources from teachers and curriculum directorate personnel in the fields of Drama, PD/PE/Health, English and those from whatever subject background who have experience with Peer Support, Peer Mediation, Schools in Parliament and similar activities.

Check out 'How To Join' page on our Website:

<http://hsc.csu.edu.au/pta/pasta/>

or contact the PASTA Secretary: esheerin@ozemail.com.au



Though the Civics and Citizenship curriculum movement appears not to have taken up the challenge (or been allowed the creative opportunity) that PASTA and others lobbied for years ago, that is, to formally credit active citizenship endeavours on school reports, there are undoubtedly some teachers within its teaching ranks who have excellent skills with group work, such as do those who have experienced these invaluable activity programs in an intensive/comprehensive way while students themselves.

Are you crediting these activities on your student reports? Really? If so, please let us know. We would like to explore that issue in more depth throughout the coming two years.

NEED MORE? Inside this final *PASTA Newsletter* for 2005 are some very practical hints from Australian Bruce Elder on how to encourage and improve public speaking **plus** reminders on membership. Please get in touch more. The world needs it. (And we'd like some of it too!)

Charles Kingston
PASTA Vice President



PASTA MEMBERSHIP

Tax Invoice: ABN 49 398 096 539

PASTA membership gets you a full year of regular publications, access to resource modules and professional development opportunities, while at the same time showing your real support for our main job of lobbying for more time, training, resources and recognition for SRCs and advisors.

A full membership form is on our Website's 'How To Join' page at:

<http://hsc.csu.edu.au/pta/pasta/>

For now, just complete the details below and send your payment to:

The Secretary, PASTA
50 Balmoral Drive
Gorokan, NSW 2263

NAME: _____

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TYPE (inc. GST):

- Student/Concession (\$27.50)
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(indicate which)

One of the biggest difficulties faced by SRC members is getting up in front of an audience and giving a speech. It's amazing the number of times you hear students you feel have great potential say "I wouldn't mind being on the SRC but not if I have to give a speech.." The following is an extract from a publication by Australian Bruce Elder titled "Communication and Job-seeking Skills" that may help you if you have such students in your school.

1. Who are you talking to?

In communicating you are aiming to get the message across from the sender (the speaker) to the receiver (the listener - the audience), keeping barriers to a minimum. One of the most common communication barriers arises when the speaker assumes that he or she knows what the audience understands. You explain how a VCR works, assuming that everybody knows what a VCR is. Did you think before you prepared your talk that there are people who really don't know what it is? In communication terms, this is the old 'field of experience' problem - if I know what it is, I think everyone else knows it too. When you are speaking to people, especially people in the same line of business, you will often assume that they are familiar with the subject matter and the technical terminology. ('Gee! They're social workers just like me. Of course they know what I am talking about.') You should realise that all your assumptions may be false.

The way to avoid this problem is to talk to people before you give your talk and find out what they know and don't know. You'll have to speak to several people. If you talk to only one person, you may be talking to the one person in the group who knows a lot (or a little) and this will not help you to gauge the knowledge level of your audience. While checking on the knowledge level of the work group, you should also check their level of interest. In many instances people will attend a meeting, not because they want to, but because they've been told to.

COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY

2. Where are you talking?

All communication is affected by location and audience. In adjusting your communication according to the audience, you have to decide what level of language and style to use. This will vary according to the circumstances and occasion of a talk or speech. Establish the kinds of anecdotes, examples and information which will appeal to your audience.

Understanding the situation is part of the research which should go into any well-prepared talk. In the workplace you need to tailor your talk to the time and the venue. If you are asked to talk to the safety committee during their weekly one-hour meeting, the person who has asked you to speak should say 'We only want you to talk for about ten minutes. It's going to be held in the canteen just before lunchtime. The audience just want the facts.' It is your job to meet these requirements and to tailor what you want to say to fit these circumstances.

The location, and the facilities provided, will have a major bearing upon your ability to give an interesting report. A consideration, and one too often overlooked, is the personal comfort of your audience. A room that is too hot or too cold, uncomfortable seats, lights that are too bright or too dim, no coffee facilities and a group of people who are not used to sitting down, are all factors that will cause barriers to effective communication. No matter how interesting you are, the audience will spend most of their time wrestling with the physical conditions of the room.

The size of the room can also have a bearing on the level of communication. If you are talking in a corner of a very large room

with a very small group of people, you will feel you are on the edge of a desert of silence. Similarly, being in a small room which is full of people, with some of them forced to stand, will also affect the overall performance. If people are standing, you may decide to cut your talk short.

3. Keep to the topic

This would seem to be so self-evident as to be hardly worth mentioning. Nevertheless, everyone has had to sit through a talk where a person has wandered off the subject and rambled on about something totally unrelated. Your talk should be clear, logical and to the point, and you yourself should be articulate.

There is nothing worse, for example, than a person in a meeting who decides to discuss at length items that are not on the agenda. The same goes for giving a talk. In most instances the topic of the talk is already determined and you should simply work out what you want to say about the topic and proceed to talk about it.

4. Organise your material

There is just as much need to organise the material for an oral report as for a written report. See suggestions earlier in this chapter on ways to structure a report.

5. Grabbing the audience's attention

Every form of mass media, from newspapers and magazines to TV and film, tries to catch the interest of the audience right from the beginning. This goes for a talk too. You will attract the attention of your audience by producing an exciting and interesting opening.

More detailed information on creating speech cards, overcoming nerves, making your talk interesting, and organising the information, is given in Chapter 12, 'Speaking in Public'.

6. Being nervous is natural

No matter how well you have prepared, when you finally stand up in front of people you will be nervous. Everyone is. Following the rules given below will help to ease your nervousness and make the presentation a much more pleasant experience.

- Look at the audience.
- Pause to take deep breaths.
- Respond to the interested looks and body language of your audience.
- Use gestures. Moving your arms around will make your voice more interesting and will make you more relaxed.
- Keep saying to yourself: 'I have something interesting to say and I want to share it with these people'.

The video ***Be Prepared to Speak: The Step-by-Step Video Guide to Public Speaking*** is a sensible introduction to the basic steps involved in speaking in public. Prepared by Toastmasters International, it looks specifically at a talk being given to a business lunch. This is far beyond the scope of this module but the principles are the same. After watching the video, discuss the following questions.

- How can information from this video be applied in my workplace?
- How important is research?
- What is a realistic way to practise before giving a speech?
- What is the best way to take and use notes when delivering a speech?

Now that you've got some kind of working knowledge of the theory of talking to a group of people, let's see how you deal with it.

Exercise 9:

Preparing and delivering a speech

You have five minutes to prepare a speech. You can either write out the speech, or make notes, or just think about it and then get up and talk. The skills required are:

- to get the audience's interest at the beginning
- to make the material interesting so that you sustain audience interest
- to deliver your talk without repeating yourself
- to organise the material so that it has a sensible sequence
- to speak clearly so everyone in the room can understand you.

Elder, Bruce: *Communication and Job-seeking Skills* (pp 69 - 71), 1995, Macmillan Education Australia Pty Ltd.

The *PASTA Newsletter* is edited by Ken Page and distributed bi-monthly as a supplement to *Connect* magazine.

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