

The 78th Tokushima Prefectural Senior High School English Speech Contest

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The 78th Tokushima Prefectural Speech Contest was held on Sunday, October 13th, 2024. This year featured 27 participants from 17 different high schools across the prefecture. While the contest was held at the usual place at Tokushima General Education Hall as well as being held on the Sports Day long weekend, it was held on a Sunday instead of the usual Monday. In a similar way, while the speeches may, on the surface level, seem similar to any other year, the topics the students chose were modern and insightful. For example, several of the students presented speeches on AI in today's society. They spoke on both the advantages and possible dangers of its use, reflecting on the future they will live in. The criteria for their speeches were divided generally into two sections both of which greatly help any student. The first area that was judged was looking at the student's English grammar and delivery. Of course, having proper grammar is important to any speech, but it would be a mistake to think that alone would make for a winning speech. Likewise, pronunciation is important for communication, but mainly to the purpose of understanding. Native skills are not necessary for a good speech but if the judges are unable to understand the ideas, then it does not matter how good the subject is. Almost equally important to receive a good score was the delivery of the speech. The students were not only required to have proper pronunciation and grammar, but they were expected to give their speech in a manner that would captivate their audience. This requires them to engage with their listeners through eye contact and body language. Again, this alone would not be enough to get a high score, but it is excellent practice for the students to think beyond just the structure of the language. Secondly, half of the students' speech was graded on the content of their speech. A small percentage went to the topic chosen, while the rest of the score went to the construction of their speech. The genre of giving a speech is quite different from the skills needed for casual conversation, which give the students a great opportunity to think critically. That is, they are expected to give evidence and logic towards their ideas. Why is it a problem? How does it affect the student personally as well as society? Can they think of some solution that might help? While juggling these questions, the students must give their ideas in a format that the audience can hear once and follow easily. By balancing all these aspects, the students are able to develop ideas and skills in English rooted in the culture connected to the language as well as improve their language itself. I think the speeches this year demonstrated a more holistic understanding of the English language, and I look forward to seeing how students develop in the future.