



NSDA photo: 2018 National Tournament

Best Practices of Running Speech & Theatre Contests

National Federation of State
High School Associations



Take Part. Get Set For Life.®

Adam J. Jacobi, *Executive Director*
Wisconsin High School Forensic Association
Board Member, National Speech & Debate Association

PEDAGOGY

“Forensics is assessment
in a multi-institutional
setting”

– Brendan Kelly, Ph.D.,
Chancellor, University of South
Carolina Upstate (former Director of
Forensics, University of West Florida)



PRE-PLANNING



School floor plan (map): *walk* every usable space, take notes. Start from bus through awards (you take things for granted).



See if nearby buildings (e.g., elementary schools) are available



Check master calendar; know what other events may be sharing building



Master key; ensure elevator access; meet with key administrator(s), physical plant and school safety staff



CONTEST STRUCTURE

- **Festival** – rubric-based rating
- **Tournament** – comparative ranking
- **Elimination:** benchmark for advancement (cumulative rank, points, etc.)
- **Timeframe:** how many rounds (preliminary + elimination); league/local standard for elim based on field size



SCHEDULING ROUNDS



Number of students/section time allotted (maximum length of each performance)



Smaller sections keep things moving



Keep sections as balanced (equal) as possible

SOFTWARE OPTIONS

- SpeechWire
- Tabroom.com (free*)
- Joy of Tournaments
(requires Windows PC)
- Work with IT people to ensure network is open or computer stations available



REGISTRATION

Rules

Expectations

Cross-entry guidelines (including sign-in sheets on doors)

Invite reasonable number of schools and hold to entry limits

INCLUSION & DIVERSITY



Adjudicators self-identify as
diversity enhancing

Implicit bias

Ballot note: “PLEASE NOTE We are all influenced by IMPLICIT BIAS, or the stereotypes that affect our decisions in an unconscious manner. These biases disproportionately impact our marginalized students in a negative way. To reduce bias when judging, please focus on concrete positives and negatives (what was said), rather than “gut feelings” (what you feel).” (CHSSA)



Implicit biases

are pervasive. Everyone possesses them, even people with avowed commitments to impartiality, such as judges.

BIAS IN FORENSICS

Bias manifests across race/ ethnic, gender, & other lines. Some facts about gender impacts in debate¹:



Aggression

Female-presenting debaters are criticized on ballots for being "aggressive" at a rate 2x higher than male-presenting debaters.



Emotion

Female-presenting debaters are criticized on ballots for being "emotional" at a rate 10x higher than male-presenting debaters.



Tone

Female-presenting debaters are 2x as likely to be criticized for *how* they debate, rather than the substance of their arguments.

A quick note on Implicit Bias

WHAT IT IS: The attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. Activated involuntarily, without awareness or intentional control. Can be either positive or negative. Everyone is susceptible.

What you can do

- ✓ When assessing the performance of someone from a marginalized group, try to focus on concrete positive and negative factors and your memory of what actually happened, rather than relying on overall "gut" feelings.
- ✓ Notice when your decisions or comments might have been caused by bias or stereotypes, and make an intention to think positive thoughts when judging members of marginalized groups.
- ✓ Bias is a habit. Like any habit, becoming aware of the habit and being motivated to change are necessary first steps.



WEBSITE :
www.chssa.org

¹ Lynn, Julia, and Rich Kawolics. "Competing Standards: A Critical Look at Gender and Success in Debate and Extemporaneous Speaking." *Rostrum*, vol. 92, no. 4, Apr. 2018, p. 30.



IMPLICIT BIAS CULTURAL COMPETENCY

Gender Styles

Feminine vs.
masculine
communication
styles

Cultural Appropriation

Appearance

Attire, etc.

Literature Sources

“Classic” works tend to
feature White male
heroes



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GENDER IDENTITY



Gender neutral
restrooms

Pronoun usage
(Tabroom.com)



WELLNESS / FOOD



Reasonable schedule
(sleep = important)



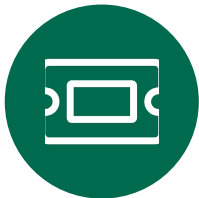
Healthy food options:
perform at peak
(students *and*
adjudicators); always
have enough!



Offer plenty of water



Dietary needs:
allergies/religious
exceptions, e.g.,
gluten-sensitive



Food security: vouchers for
students who cannot afford
food (subtle, so no stigma) -
build cost into over
tournament fees.



Every
champion
deserves a
chance

IN CALIFORNIA

1 in 5

KIDS GO TO BED HUNGRY

FOOD INSECURITY

THE FACTS

Food insecurity impacts speech & debate students who spend weekends away from home at competitions.

Food insecure youth suffer academically and socially.

No child should ever have to choose between competing in an event they love and having access to a meal.

OUR PLAN

At our annual State Championship tournament, we will provide completely free meals for students in need.

Because we do not want any young people to feel singled out, we are arranging with our food trucks a voucher system that all students can use, regardless of need. Not only will this help coaches with team meal planning, but it will also help make sure that no one's need-based usage is disclosed.



The California High School Speech Association is a non-profit, all-volunteer association comprised of over 300 member schools. We govern school-based speech and debate competition throughout California.

LEARN MORE AT CHSSA.ORG

HOW YOU CAN HELP



Donate Today

We need your help to make this program accessible to as many students as possible. For that, we are asking for your generous donation.



Your Donation Is Tax Deductible

Your charitable donation to our registered 501(c)(3) will be just in time for last minute, end of the year tax write offs.



Your Donation Makes A Future Impact

Our goal is to increase access to this program every year and eventually pilot similar programs at local tournaments across the state.



SPECIAL NEEDS

- Reasonable: “accommodations should not fundamentally alter the sport, heighten risk to the athlete/others, or place opponents at a disadvantage” (standard NFHS rulebook advice in sports)
- Privacy:
 - FERPA (coaches must have school permission via parent/student consent)
 - Confidentiality: manager, adjudicators – accommodation(s)/modification(s) *only* (explanation not needed)



INNOVATIONS



- Monitored **quiet rooms**
 - Individuals on autism spectrum
 - Place to pray privately
- Therapy dogs (paraded through the tab room, too)



HARASSMENT / DISCRIMINATION

The NSDA is committed to providing its participants, judges, coaches, and staff the opportunity to pursue excellence in their endeavors. This opportunity can exist only when each member of our community is assured an atmosphere of mutual respect. The NSDA prohibits all forms of harassment and discrimination. ...



HARASSMENT / DISCRIMINATION

Accordingly, all forms of harassment and discrimination, whether written or oral, based on race, color, religion, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, marital status, citizenship, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, or any other characteristic protected by any applicable federal, state, or local law are prohibited, whether committed by participants, judges, coaches, or observers. ...



HARASSMENT / DISCRIMINATION

Individuals who are found to have violated this policy will be subject to the full range of sanctions, up to and including removal from the tournament premises.



HARASSMENT / DISCRIMINATION



Equity officer –
investigates,
documents



Consistent with institution
sexual harassment/violence
policies, reporting, law
enforcement involvement
(Title IX Coordinator)



REFEREE / RULES ADJUDICATION COMMITTEE

Individuals familiar with
rules, in leadership

Concerns over rules
infractions → potential
disqualification

Concerns with adjudicator
application of rules to
evaluation/decision



“



*2019 NSDA
Director's
Commendat
ion Honoree*

Karson Kalashian's Questions:

1. Does this help **kids**?
2. Does this help **coaches**?
3. Does this help the **tournament**?



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NSDA Conference Photo



ADJUDICATION OF VIOLATIONS



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- Letter vs. spirit of law
- Empathy
- Innocent until proven guilty
- Impact on other contestant(s)
- Intention: not everyone is cheating

CRISIS PLANNING

Have a plan in place that includes chain of command, key people, and communication protocols.

NFHS resources

HOST SCHOOL STUDENT ROLE



Norm for your area



Geographically sparse
areas tend to allow
students to participate
at their own



Qualifying contests –
your students should
have the opportunity

JUDGES / ADJUDICATORS

Orientation/reminders (write while students perform, being constructive, protocols for rounds)

Shadowing experienced/master adjudicators

In Speech & Debate, never comment on attire (socio-economic, gender issues)

Training - write specific comments; avoid "good" or "weak" and explain what they should do

Help line: e.g., Google Voice – allows texting/calls – can be routed to multiple tab people

Ballot intake: catch errors/problems; comments (friendly/constructive as expect judges to be!)

 **NFHSLEARN.COM**

National Federation of State
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**NATIONAL
SPEECH & DEBATE
ASSOCIATION**
NATIONAL FORENSIC LEAGUE

Adjudicating Speech and Debate



Descriptive Words/Phrases for Adjudicators

By Adam Jacobi



Content

layered meaning
evoke emotion
thought provoking
persuasive arguments
credible evidence
balanced perspective
timely source
coherent
cohesive
nuanced
dynamic
cutting
defined central narrative
compelling plot
range
clever
combination
compilation
unified
convincing
proficient
mastered
insightful
wealth

Effective Presentation

effective tactic(s)
executed thoughtfully
drew me in
expressive
articulate
believable
characterized
credible performance
committed character
energetic
lively
animated
honest
genuine
realistic
authentic
natural
understated
whimsical
rhetorical
passion
vivacious
vigor
intimate

Developing/Improving

artificial
awkward
broad / vague
faulty
flawed
hindered
incoherent
misguided
monotonous
repetitive
scarce
absent
incomplete
lacks
reassess structure
requires
potential
pulled me out
distracted
gimmicky
gratuitous
incongruous
reevaluate motives
identify purpose

Avoid: good • great • weak • needs work • practice more



Partners: Data entry person / reader



Audit team



Backup plan if computers/Internet go down



TABULATION

www.nfhs.org

AWARDS CEREMONIES



Pronunciation key (respect, cultural sensitivity)



Keep moving, but honor each student



One-clap / champion ovations



Invite administrator(s)



Play music to set the mood (make sure you have permission to use)



GOLDEN RULES

Ask for help – partner when possible to divide responsibilities (hosting versus scheduling/prep)

Engage in community partnerships (art students make table centerpieces for judge lounge)

“Throw a party and let the rest fall as it does!”
You are an ambassador for your school!

How do you want to be treated at other contests?

Start small, then build!
(KISS: Keep It Simple, Sweetheart!)

Assign people of diverse backgrounds to play important roles



OTHER RESOURCES



NSDA: Extemp
Questions,
Impromptu Prompts



NSDA: Awards



Facebook: Speech
Coach Forum (High
School)

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NFHS



PRESENTATION INFORMATION

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