

Dear Administrators,

We would like to thank you for support of your school's Speech and Debate program over the years. As tournament administrators, we are aware that we cannot run successful tournaments without the support of so many schools. We believe, as you do, that Speech and Debate programs offer students immeasurable benefits during the best of times. During these challenging times, we believe that these programs are even more necessary.

Please know that we support you over the next few months as you make difficult decisions. Starting the new school year while balancing the safety of all with the need for students to be educated is a daunting task. We understand that you will also face difficult budgetary questions. We support you in this difficult time.

Your Speech and Debate program has been an excellent educational experience for your students. Debate teaches them to think analytically; Extemporaneous Speaking exposes them to current events; Original Oratory allows them to express their ideas in a logical and coherent way; Interpretative categories teach students about human relationships. All the events make students comfortable speaking before an audience. There is also an important social component to this activity. Students from schools have formed long lasting bonds with each other.

When schools closed after the outbreak of the pandemic, students lost the social contacts, not only in their classes, but also in extracurricular activities. We believe that Speech and Debate can help students to restart those relationships.

While we were forced to cancel many tournaments in the wake of COVID, we have been able to convert to an online format. We have been involved with the administration of the national Tournament of Champions, the Massachusetts State Championship, the Reagan Great Communicators Debate series, and many other smaller tournaments. Later this month, many of us will be involved with the administration of the NSDA National tournament, a tournament with over 4,000 students competing. We have learned best practices over the past month of tournaments.

Since we do not know the situation in September, we are prepared for any situation. If we are limited to the number of students who may enter a school due to social distancing, we are prepared. If schools are only permitted to allow their only own students into the school, we are prepared for distance tournaments. If no one is permitted into schools on weekends, we have plans for schools to meet online before tournaments. Our online programming has been set up to assure student privacy while online. We are also in discussions about questions of equity.

We would like to discuss the opportunities with you for your school's program in the upcoming year. Some local leaders of the National Speech and Debate Association along with Scott Wunn, the Director of the NSDA will be available to discuss our plans for moving forward. We will offer a zoom conference on Wednesday, June 24, 2020 at 6:00 pm. We will record the program and make it available online.

The link for the Zoom meeting is:

<https://zoom.us/j/92902063458?pwd=bU9hYXdvSVMoNmoxT1JGT29WMVk4Zz09>

Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you for your time.

Sarah Donnelly

New England NSDA Chair

Bro. John McGrory

NYC NSDA Chair

Mary Gormley

New Jersey NSDA Chair

Joseph Vaughan

Mid-Hudson NSDA Chair