

Speech & Debate

Speech and debate is an academic activity typically available to students in middle school, high school, and/or college. Similar to athletic sports, speech and debate activities are challenging, competitive in nature, and require regular practice, coaching, dedication, and hard work.

Speech involves a presentation by one, two, or sometimes a group of students that is judged against a similar type of presentation by others in a round of competition. Speech events range from limited preparation events that require extensive knowledge of current events to dramatic and humorous interpretation, which challenge students to find powerful moments in literature and recreate them for an audience.

Debate involves an individual or a team of debaters working to effectively convince a judge that his or her side of a resolution is, as a general principle, more valid. Students in debate come to thoroughly understand both sides of the resolution, having researched each extensively, and learn to think critically about every argument that could be made on each side.

Each event in speech and debate features a different form of public speaking and requires a unique skill set and talent. While students often develop a passion for specific events, many compete in multiple categories throughout the course of their academic careers.

Competitive Events Descriptions

Dramatic Interpretation

Using a play, short story, or other published work, students perform a selection of one or more portions of a piece up to ten minutes in length. With a spotlight on character development and depth, this event focuses on the student's ability to convey emotion through the use of a dramatic text. Competitors may portray one or multiple characters. No props or costumes may be used. Performances can also include an introduction written by the student to contextualize the performance, and state the title and the author.

Duo Interpretation

Two competitors team up to deliver a ten-minute performance of a published play or story. Using off-stage focus, competitors convey emotion and environment through a variety of performance techniques focusing on the relationships and interactions between the characters. No props or costumes are used. Performances can also include an introduction written by the students to contextualize the performance and state the title and the author.

Humorous Interpretation

Using a play, short story, or other published work, students perform a selection of one or more portions of a piece up to ten minutes in length. Humorous Interpretation is designed to test a student's comedic skills through script analysis, delivery, timing, and character development. Competitors may portray one or multiple characters. No props or costumes may be used. Performances can also include an introduction written by the student to contextualize the performance and state the title and the author.

Original Oratory

Students deliver a self-written, ten-minute speech on a topic of their choosing. Limited in their ability to quote words directly, competitors craft an argument using evidence, logic, and emotional appeals. Topics range widely, and can be informative or persuasive in nature. The speech is delivered from memory.

Poetry

United States Extemporaneous Speaking

Students are presented with a choice of three questions related to current events in the United States and, in 30 minutes, prepare a seven-minute speech answering the selected question. Students may consult articles and evidence they gather prior to the contest, but may not use the Internet during preparation. Topics range from political matters to economic concerns to U.S. foreign policy. The speech is delivered from memory.

International Extemporaneous Speaking

Students are presented with a choice of three questions related to international current events and, in 30 minutes, prepare a seven-minute speech answering the selected question. Students may consult articles and evidence they gather prior to the contest, but may not use the Internet during preparation. Topics range from country-specific issues to regional concerns to foreign policy. The speech is delivered from memory.

Lincoln-Douglas Debate

In this one-on-one format, students debate a topic provided by the National Speech & Debate Association. Topics range from individual freedom versus the collective good to economic development versus environmental protection. Students may consult evidence gathered prior to the debate but may not use the Internet in round. An entire debate is roughly 45 minutes and consists of constructive speeches, rebuttals, and cross-examination.

Policy Debate

A two-on-two debate that focuses on a policy question for the duration of the academic year, this format tests a student's research, analytical, and delivery skills. Policy debate involves the proposal of a plan by the affirmative team to enact a policy, while the negative team offers reasons to reject that proposal. Throughout the debate, students have the opportunity to cross-

examine one another. A judge or panel of judges determines the winner based on the arguments presented.

Public Forum Debate

Public Forum involves opposing teams of two, debating a topic concerning a current event. Proceeding a coin toss, the winners choose which side to debate (PRO or CON) or which speaker position they prefer (1st or 2nd), and the other team receives the remaining option. Students present cases, engage in rebuttal and refutation, and also participate in a “crossfire” (similar to a cross examination) with the opportunity to question the opposing team. Often times community members are recruited to judge this event.

Congressional Debate (House and Senate)

A simulation of the U.S. legislative process, students generate a series of bills and resolutions for debate in Congressional Debate. Debaters alternate delivering speeches for and against the topic in a group setting. An elected student serves as a presiding officer to ensure debate flows smoothly. Students are assessed on their research, argumentation, and delivery skills, as well as their knowledge and use of parliamentary procedure.

Weekly Schedule

Meeting and Practice Schedule:

Mondays: 3:15 - 3:45 Team Meetings

3:45 - 5:30 Debates - PF, LD, (1st Monday of the Month will be research only and all other Mondays will be practice and finding more evidence), Oratory

Tuesday: 3:15 - 4:15 Student Congress

4:15 - 5:30 Extemp

Wednesday: 3:15 - 4:15 Humor

4:15 - 5:30 Duo

Thursday: 3:15 - 4:15 Poetry

4:15 - 5:30 Drama

- Must compete in 2 events (minimum) every week.
- 10 minutes or more time slots will be set up for you to sign up for each of your events.
- You must practice each event once per week with a coach to be eligible for that week's competition.