



Congress Handbook

Philosophy: The Sheyenne Congress Team believes all students can be positively transformed through active engagement in current events and public discourse.

Purpose: The Sheyenne Congress Team will foster public speaking and performance skills by creating a passion for Congress and Forensics. Team unity, engaged students, and cooperative learning environments will ensure all students have a positive experience.

Goals: The 2020-2021 team will be focused on growth, improvement, and whole-team successes over individual successes. Trophies become the by-product.

Vision: We will create a growing team that becomes more and more competitive by living the legacy we want to create while also positively promoting the team.

Head Coach – Kelsey Johnson

Assistant Coach – Krista Hulderman

Go Mustangs



IMPORTANT CONTACTS

Kelsey Johnson – Head Speech Coach
kelseyjohnson@west-fargo.k12.nd.us



Remind App

Text: @SHSCong to 81010

Follow the directions it texts you to get connected to our group. You do not need a smartphone to do this. Parents/Guardians can join, too!

Krista Hulderman – Assistant Speech Coach
khulderman@west-fargo.k12.nd.us
Sheyenne Classroom 2304

Coaches can push out information to all group members (students & parents/guardians) at once. Group members can text or message us using remind.com or the Remind App. **Phone numbers aren't shared.**

HOW CONGRESS WORKS

Congress competition is divided into different chambers. There is one senate, usually reserved for the top speakers on a team. Then, there are six different houses. House 1 is for the most experienced speakers while House 6 is usually a smaller house reserved for the less experienced speakers. Coaches will work with students to determine the best placement based on a student's skill set and experience.

Chambers have different resolutions and bills that will be debated. Think of this competition like how the state senate or national senate discusses and debates resolutions and bills. Resolutions and bills are written and submitted by students and voted on by students in December.

Students come to each tournament with research, outlines, and speeches prepared for that day's docket of resolutions and bills. They are able to have technology and research with them during the competition, so nothing ever needs to be memorized.

Students can also run for Presiding Officer (PO). This person is in charge of running the chambers using simplified Parliamentary Procedure (all things we'll teach students at practice!). If a student is voted to be the PO, they basically "win" the day and get to keep the gavel as a trophy. However, the other senators and representatives in the chamber can also "win" the day by debating, moving legislation along, and being active members in chambers.

Students earn points for placement by speaking during the round. The more times they speak, the better their chances of placing higher. There are rules in place to ensure everyone gets an opportunity to speak throughout the day, though. Superior speaker awards are given to students placing in the top 8 of each senate and house.



COMMUNICATION POLICIES

- We prefer to be called by our first names as coaches. So, no need for the formalities. 😊
- Face-to-Face communication is incredibly important on our team. We believe more conversations need to be structured this way, and we want to model that as coaches, too.
- Email (or Schoology) is the fastest way to contact Kelsey and/or Krista, especially during the school day.
- Sheyenne Congress will continue using Remind (remind.com and the Remind App) this year. We require all team members to sign up, and we encourage all parents/guardians to sign up.
 - Text @SHSCong to 81010 and follow the directions it sends you.
 - Please use first and last names when signing up (and capitalizing names!)
- We will update Sheyenne and Liberty's school announcements as necessary.
- We started sending out e-newsletters in the past and will continue to try to be more consistent with that this year. Make sure we have your email addresses to get your copy!

FEES AND COSTS

Fine Arts Fee: All team members must pay a \$60.00 participation fee for Congress once per year. This is *not* the same fee for Debate & Speech; it's two different fees. However, you can check if your family has hit the Family Max amount (\$300). These fees can be paid using myschoolbucks just like you do for lunch fees. Talk to Krista if you will have difficulty paying this fee as we can help you out.

Tournament No-Show Fee – This one is avoidable! Every tournament entry costs the team money. Generally, the team registers for a tournament one and a half weeks in advance. If you tell Kelsey (or Krista) you are attending, then back out without good reason (i.e. sick, family emergency), you owe the team \$25 to cover the lost entry fee and cannot attend another tournament until that fee is paid.

TRANSPORTATION INFORMATION

All practices will take place at Sheyenne HS, Room 2304 (Krista's classroom.) Liberty students will need to come to Sheyenne for their practices. In a COVID-19 world, alpha groups not meeting in person can attend practice virtually or come in for face-to-face practices. Team members are required to ride the bus to and from tournaments, even those taking place in the metro area. If there are extenuating circumstances, the coaches must be made aware so proper planning can occur. Students will *never* be allowed to drive themselves to out-of-town tournaments. Bus pick up and drop off at Sheyenne is door 26 on the south side of the building.

NDHSAA POLICIES – ABRIDGED

NDHSAA has several policies in place for students who participate in co-curricular activities:

1. Students must maintain passing grades. Middle school students competing on varsity activities have stricter rules.
2. Students must live in Sheyenne zoning boundaries. Homeschooled students, transfer students (especially from a private school), and exchange students are usually those needing to be double checked. If there are questions, please talk to Kelsey ASAP.
3. Students cannot use drugs, alcohol, or illegal substances (or any associated paraphernalia) while participating in NDHSAA & school sanctioned activities.



CONGRESS LETTERING POLICY

Lettering is an honor that shows a student's commitment and excellence in an extracurricular activity. A student can earn a letter in Student Congress, Debate, and Speech. In order to letter in Congress:

1. Competitors must give 4+ speeches at each tournament (East, West, and State) and/or place at the state tournament. Serving as Presiding Officer will also count.
2. Competitors must regularly attend practices by being at every Mandatory Monday Meeting and coming to six hours or more of practices (beyond Mandatory Mondays) before each tournament.
3. Competitors will have all dues and fines paid by the end of the season.
4. Competitors will follow the National Speech and Debate Association's Code of Honor in regard to the five pillars: Integrity, Humility, Respect, Leadership, and Service.

**In a COVID-19 world, we will adjust the lettering policy appropriately depending on how our season unfolds.

NATIONAL SPEECH AND DEBATE ASSOCIATION

Students in grades 7-12 are eligible to be Association members. These Sheyenne and Liberty students will join the ranks of people like Nelson Mandela, Josh Gad, Oprah Winfrey, John F. Kennedy, and Zac Efron. The forensics teams (Congress, Debate, and Speech) will pay each eligible student's lifetime membership fee once a student earns 25 degree points. This year, the forensics teams have purchased the additional Team Resource Package, allowing students access to a myriad of information to become better speakers and debaters.

The Association's Mission:

The National Speech & Debate Association connects, supports, and inspires a diverse community committed to empowering students through speech and debate.

The Association's Vision:

We envision a world in which every school provides speech and debate programs to foster each student's communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creative skills.

The Association's Equity Statement:

The National Speech & Debate Association is committed to modeling and fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion for all speech and debate communities. We are continuously transforming our organization to reflect and operationalize the values of equity, integrity, respect, leadership, and service. We will take responsibility. We will heed, learn, and evolve. We will work conscientiously to model and foster an inclusive and equitable speech and debate experience for all.

Students earn degree points each tournament or through service activities like judging, peer coaching, and theatre. These points add up to earn different degrees until students reach the highest degree, Premier Distinction at 1,500 points. Coaches earn points from students in order to earn Diamond Degrees. Through membership, students are also capable of earning scholarships and other national distinctions and recognition.

Students in grades 9-12 who show extraordinary talent in congress activities as deemed by the coaches will be invited to attend the North Dakota Roughrider National Qualifier November 6-7 held at the Baymont Hotel in Mandan (we hope). The Qualifier determines which students will move on to National Competition. This year's National Tournament is held in Des Moines, IA (we hope), June 13-18 (plus additional days for travel).



PRACTICE SCHEDULE AND REQUIREMENTS

Coaches expect students to attend every Mandatory Monday and at least six additional hours of face-to-face or virtual practice before each tournament. This allows students autonomy to choose when to practice while still being involved in other activities. Remember, the effort you put into your season directly correlates to the results you'll receive. All practices will happen at Sheyenne High in 2304, Krista's classroom, or virtually via Teams.

Tuesday, September 8 – Interest Meeting Alpha A-K	4:00-5:00	Room 2304
Thursday, September 10 – Interest meeting Alpha L-Z	4:00-5:00	Room 2304
Mandatory Monday Meetings – Every Monday **This is in-flux. Stay connected via Remind and Schoology for updates.	Starts at 3:45	Room 2304
Practice Times Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays	3:45 to 5:30	Room 2304 or Teams
Monday, September 28 – East Congress at a Fargo Ramada	Day Time	Fargo, ND
Monday, October 12 – West Congress at Mandan Baymont **This is unlikely going to happen due to COVID-19.	Day Time	Mandan, ND
November 5-6 – State Congress at State Capitol Building **This is in-flux.	TBA	Bismarck, ND
November 6-7 – NSDA District Congress Qualifier Tournament **This is in-flux.	TBA	Mandan, ND

Because we understand students are involved in other activities during the congress season, we are willing to work with a team member's unique schedule if necessary. However, early communication with Kelsey and Krista is vital for this to work. Coaches have the right to remove team members from tournament events if they have not made an effort to complete practice requirements. The key is communication with coaches.

Competitors should come to practice with the following items:

1. iPad or other device for research and writing
2. Headphones and music to help concentrate
3. Positive attitude
4. Great work ethic
5. A snack and something to drink

This season, we recommend students work with those in their chambers to share research, brainstorm speech ideas, and share resources (but not share speeches).



TEAM POLICIES

These are the team policies each team member and family promises to follow for the duration of the congress season. The policies in place will ensure that the Sheyenne Congress Team represents their community, their school, their fellow teammates, their coaches, and themselves with the highest regard.

1. All team members will be properly dressed & prepared for the weather (or possible weather) for bus rides.
2. All team members will be properly dressed in competition attire (similar to an athletic team's uniform) throughout the whole meet, including before, during, and after awards until the team picture has been taken.
3. All team members will be professional-looking at meets. This means pillows, blankets, stuffed animals, and pajamas will stay at home or on the bus regardless of what other teams' policies are.
4. All team members will show the highest form of sportsmanship in commons, in rounds, and during awards. This means that we will not gossip about others' speeches or complain about judges. (We often forget that judges are coaches who your coaches hold in high-regard. Complaining about a judge would be equal to complaining about your own coaches.) We will win and lose graciously. We will be appropriate and professional during awards ceremonies. Finally, we will understand that in order to be the best, we must beat the best...even if that may be someone on our very own team.
5. All team members will understand that while congress is very much an individual activity, we are also one team. When one of us is great, we're all great. Therefore, we will cheer our teammates on, we will encourage greatness amongst each other, and we will not become jealous of each other's accomplishments. (This is not to say you can't be *competitive* with one another!)
6. All team members will promise to practice outside of scheduled practice times using various feedback from others. Family members, friends, and even mirrors can help us all become better.
7. All team members will attend required practices on time and ready to work. Let's use the most of the time we have as productively as possible.
8. All team members will follow the highest standard of ethics when researching, writing, and performing. This means we will not plagiarize. We will not skew research study results to benefit our topics. We will not make up information.
9. All team members and families will understand and respect that coaches need to make tough coaching decisions from time to time in order to benefit the entire team. This may mean team members may not get to perform in chambers they want to at certain meets.
10. All team members and families will use social media in a productive, positive, and appropriate manner at all times, but especially when talking about the team, Sheyenne and Liberty schools, and West Fargo Public Schools in general. If you have to question its appropriateness, it probably shouldn't be posted.
11. All team members and families will support, promote, and publicize the positive things congress is doing to the masses! 😊



CONGRESS UNIFORM

When we attend tournaments, it is important to remember that the way you dress presents who you are. We believe you should dress in a way that authentically represents yourself. Dress **your** personal best. That said, it's important to remember these factors when determining what you wear:

- Clothing that endorses violence, guns, drugs/alcohol, etc. is not allowed.
- You'll need to get around at the tournament, so consider what will be comfortable and weather appropriate.
- Clothing should not be a distraction from your performance.
- If you have questions, please connect with a coach.

Skirts Covers all upper thighs and behind (even when bending over or sitting); comes in a full "power-suit" (preferably, but not necessary); appropriately ironed; allows full movement for blocking

Pants	Proper rise in back; hemmed so no pooling on floor/shoes; comes in a full "power-suit" (preferably, but not necessary); appropriately ironed; allows full movement for blocking; belts match shoes/ensemble
Shirts, Tops & Blouses	Covers shoulders; covers all cleavage (even when bending over) and midriff (even when raising arms); Button-up, long sleeved dress shirts; appropriately fitted so it's not too tight or too loose; appropriately ironed; allows full movement for blocking; hides or minimizes sweating (if you're prone to that!)
Jackets & Blazers	Properly fitted at shoulders and waist; comfortably buttons shut; matches rest of the ensemble; appropriately ironed; allows full movement for blocking (or take off right before speaking if it's restricting)
Dresses	Covers shoulders; covers cleavage (even when bending over); covers all upper thighs and behind (even when bending over or sitting); appropriately ironed, allows full movement for blocking; business-like
Shoes	Comfortable for all ranges of movement; heels don't click/interrupt when walking during speech; only wear heels <i>if</i> you know how to confidently <i>walk</i> in heels!; NO TENNIS SHOES OR CROCS
Jewelry & Accessories	Simple complimentary necklaces, earrings, and bracelets; complimentary ties; belts that match shoes
In General	Avoid flashy or distracting clothing or accessories that take focus away from your face. You want your audience paying attention to your words, not the sequins that keep flashing in the light.

Coaches reserve the right not to allow students on the bus and/or have students change if necessary.