



100 Years of Excellence

The National Speech & Debate Association (NSDA) is the largest speech and debate organization in the United States, supporting interscholastic tournaments, schools, coaches, and students since 1925. Students compete in over ten different speech, public speaking, and acting events and five debate events across the country.

Why Now: This Moment in Time Feels Different

We Have Lost the Ability to Engage

We form opinions before understanding the issues. We don't demand evidence or data. We don't try to understand the other side. Political discourse and dialogue is broken. Our democracy is suffering.

At the same time, we are failing the next generation. Our K-12 system is not adapting to the technological revolutions brought on by social media and Artificial Intelligence. Our students are falling behind compared to their peers around the world. They are not graduating high school with the skills they need to think critically, communicate effectively, and participate in our economy and society.



Being on the debate team has been one of the most transformative experiences of my high school years. I've learned not only how to craft and deliver arguments but also how to think critically, analyze complex issues, and communicate persuasively. Through countless hours of practice, research, and competition, I've gained a deep appreciation for the power of rhetoric and the impact it can have on shaping opinions."

— 2025 ALUM, South Dakota

Speech and Debate Can Address this Crisis

In our increasingly polarized world, speech and debate is more important today than ever. Speech and debate teaches essential life skills that allow young people to effectively communicate complex ideas in order to advocate for themselves, their local communities, and the world. Participants are specifically taught to:

-  **Listen and analyze issues from multiple sides**
-  **Demand evidence before forming opinions**
-  **Engage with those who disagree with them**
-  **Change their mind when they hear a better argument.**

The Peer-Reviewed Academic Benefits Transform Lives

 **.66**
INCREASE
IN GPA

 **25%**
INCREASE IN
TEST SCORES

 **80%**
MORE LIKELY
TO GRADUATE
COLLEGE

 **300%**
MORE LIKELY
TO GRADUATE
HIGH SCHOOL

Only **4,000 out of 25,000**
high schools in the U.S. have speech and debate
programs. Middle schools have even fewer.



Our Goal... Our 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. To make this world a reality, we have launched the National Speech & Debate Initiative to **double the number of students participating across the country in speech and debate over the next 5 years.**

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Our society desperately needs more people who are trained in speech and debate before they get to college and the workforce. The NSDA is the only national organization capable of addressing that in a meaningful way. They have the expertise, infrastructure, and credibility to realize a vision our country needs—access to speech and debate training for every student in our country.”

— **DAVID WILKERSON**, former Superintendent
of Waukee Community School District

Today

4,000 SCHOOLS
100,000 STUDENTS



5 Years

8,000 SCHOOLS
200,000 STUDENTS



Long Term

SPEECH AND DEBATE
IN EVERY SCHOOL

The National Speech & Debate Initiative

Over the next five years, the NSDA will:

-  **Recruit** and support new school programs
-  **Train** and support new and experienced coaches
-  **Develop** local speech and debate leagues
-  **Integrate** speech and debate into the classroom
-  **Advocate** for policy change at the state level
-  **Develop** technology to scale speech and debate



Bring Speech and Debate to Your School!

www.speechanddebate.org/administrators

Contact elisha.roberts@speechanddebate.org with any questions!