

How to Host a **SPEAK.** Documentary Viewing Fundraiser

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE FOR HIGH SCHOOL
SPEECH AND DEBATE PROGRAMS



SPEAK.



About



The documentary *SPEAK.* tells the story of competitive speech and debate in a way that resonates far beyond tournament rooms, which makes it a powerful fundraiser: part celebration, part advocacy, and part community-building opportunity.

One program used this model to raise approximately \$2,000 with minimal overhead and strong student leadership. This guide details how to replicate it.

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Why This Fundraiser Works



1

MISSION-ALIGNED

It is mission-aligned. You are fundraising by showcasing what speech and debate already does best.

2

WIDE APPEAL

It attracts non-speech audiences. Attendees can include parents, alumni, judges, administrators, and community leaders.

3

SPECIAL EVENT

It feels like an event; it is not a bake sale or door-to-door candy bar sale fundraiser.

4

STUDENT LEADERSHIP

It gives students authentic leadership roles in promotion and execution.

STEP 1:

Assemble Your Event Crew



ASSEMBLE YOUR EVENT CREW

A *SPEAK.* viewing fundraiser is most successful when it is treated like a production, not a passion project carried by one exhausted coach. Assembling a small, intentional crew spreads the workload, builds buy-in, and models the collaborative spirit of speech and debate itself.

You do not need a large committee.
You need the right roles filled.



1

STUDENT LEADERS: THE CREATIVE AND OUTREACH TEAM

Students should be at the center of this event. Their voices, ideas, and energy are what make the fundraiser authentic.

Ideal student roles:

- ★ Design promotional materials
 - flyers and social media graphics
- ★ Create Instagram posts and stories with QR codes
- ★ Help draft messaging about why the event matters
- ★ Greet attendees and assist with donations on the night of the screening

Students often know best how to communicate excitement and urgency, and their involvement turns promotion into peer-to-peer storytelling rather than advertising.

Tip: This is an excellent leadership opportunity for team captains, seniors, or student officers.

2 SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS: ACCESS AND AMPLIFICATION

Administrative support can quietly unlock momentum.

How administrators can help:

- ★ Approve the event and venue use
- ★ Share the event in:
 - Weekly newsletters
 - Superintendent updates
 - School-wide emails
 - School loud-speaker announcements
- ★ Connect you with:
 - School media or communications staff
 - District-approved press channels

In one successful example, a superintendent's brief mention in a weekly update significantly expanded the audience beyond the speech team's immediate circle.



3 SCHOOL MEDIA OR COMMUNICATIONS STAFF: VISIBILITY BEYOND THE TEAM

If your school or district has a media or communications professional, invite them in early.

Their contributions may include:

- ★ Drafting a short press release
- ★ Sharing the event with local media or radio
- ★ Posting the event on the school website or social platforms
- ★ Helping frame the event as a community story, not just a fundraiser

This turns your screening into something people feel they *should* attend, not just something they *could* attend.

4 PARENTS OR BOOSTER CLUB MEMBERS: LOGISTICS AND SUPPORT

Parents are often the unsung heroes of successful fundraising.

Helpful parent roles:

- ★ Coordinating concessions or merchandise tables
- ★ Managing physical setup and cleanup
- ★ Assisting with check-in or greeting
- ★ Supporting follow-up thank-you communications
- ★ Working the event

If your program has a booster club or parent group, this event fits naturally within their mission and often aligns with their financial infrastructure.

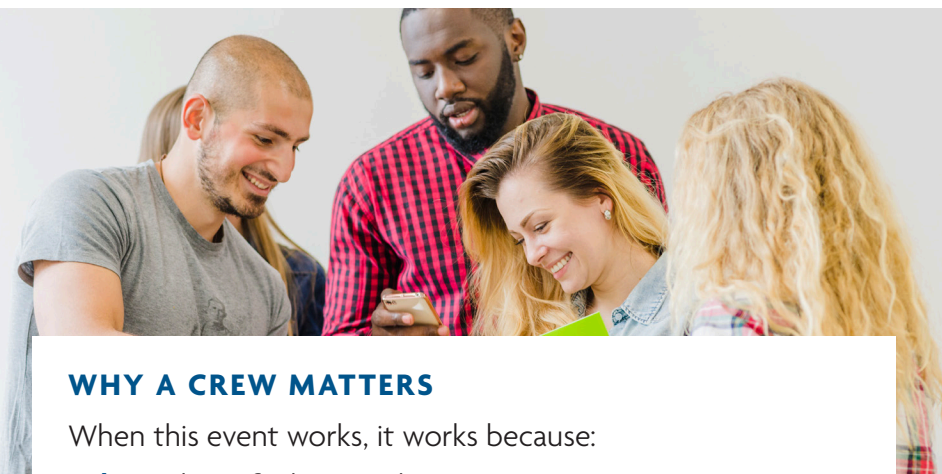
5

ONE POINT PERSON TO CALL CUES

Even with a strong team, clarity matters.

- ★ Designate one primary coordinator (often the coach).
- ★ This person keeps the timeline moving and ensures communication stays aligned.
- ★ Everyone else supports within defined roles.

Clear roles prevent burnout and duplication of effort.



WHY A CREW MATTERS

When this event works, it works because:

- ★ Students feel ownership.
- ★ Administrators feel invested.
- ★ Parents feel useful.
- ★ The coach is not doing everything alone.

A SPEAK. viewing fundraiser should feel like a shared celebration of student voices. Assembling the crew first ensures the rest of the process feels achievable, sustainable, and, importantly, enjoyable.

Once your team is in place, you're ready to move to Step 2.

STEP 2: **Secure Screening Rights**

SECURE SCREENING RIGHTS

Before anything else, you must legally obtain the rights to screen *SPEAK*. The film team has made it quite easy.

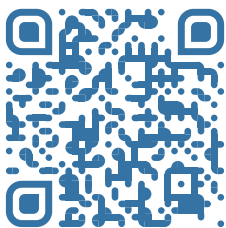




FILL OUT THE FORM TO SECURE SCREENING RIGHTS

- ★ Just go to <https://speakdocumentary.com/request-a-screening/> and fill out the form.
- ★ Someone from the impact team will reach out to you to discuss your goals.
- ★ Please indicate what timeframe you are thinking about in the form.
- ★ Depending on the size and nature of the event, a licensing fee will apply and can be paid either by credit card, ACH, check, Zelle, or Venmo.

You can also reach out to info@speakdocumentary.com.

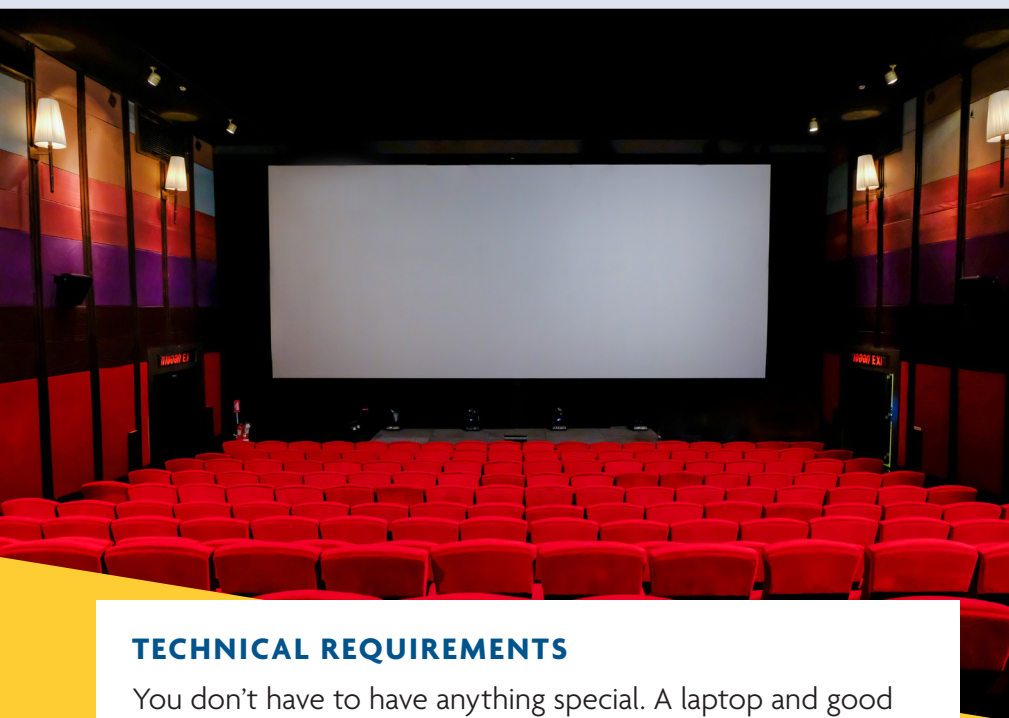


ACCESS THE FORM!



STEP 3:

Choose Your Venue



TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

You don't have to have anything special. A laptop and good wifi will permit you to stream the film or download an .MOV file for a specific window of time that you request. If the screening is at a local theater, the theater will handle the trafficking of a special DCP file directly with the film team.

A**OPTION A:
PARTNER WITH A LOCAL MOVIE THEATER**
(Easiest Logistically)

This model was used effectively by Helena High School in Montana.

How it worked:

- ★ The coach approached a local theater and asked if they would screen the film if the team acquired the rights. The theater agreed to donate the space one evening with a small ticket processing fee that was deducted from the ticket price.
- ★ The theater:
 - Handled ticket sales.
 - Processed payments (credit cards, Apple Pay, etc.).
 - Kept concessions revenue.
 - Created a heightened cinematic experience that made a more dramatic impact on audience members.
- ★ The school avoided money-handling complications entirely.
- ★ The coach invited local business leaders and public officials to the screening to increase awareness about the sport and create more buy-in from the school district.

Real numbers from the event:

- ★ Theater capacity: 100 seats
- ★ Tickets sold: 80
- ★ Ticket price: \$20
- ★ Processing fee: \$1 per ticket
- ★ Net ticket revenue: approximately \$1,500

This model is especially helpful for schools with strict financial systems or limited ability to accept digital payments. The team was able to raise an additional \$500 at the event. After the screening, students stood in the lobby with baskets and audience members made additional cash and check donations on the way out. Refer to Step 7 for more details.

B **OPTION B: USE A SCHOOL OR COMMUNITY VENUE**

If a movie theater is not available, consider:

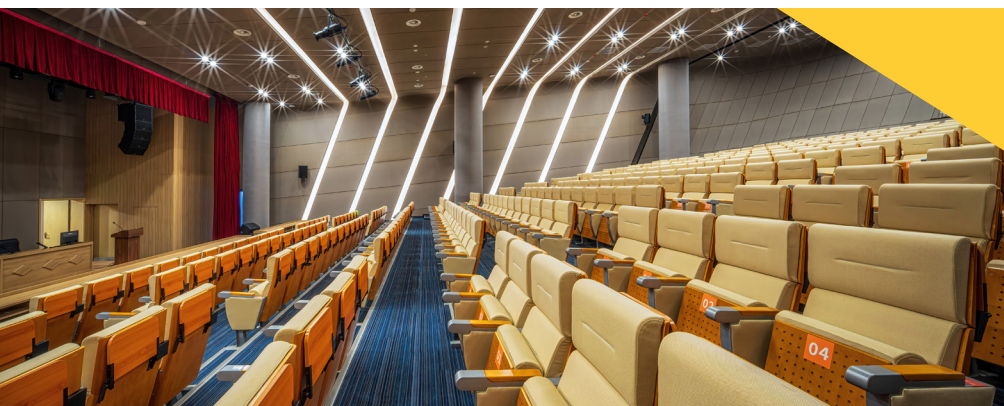
- ★ A high school auditorium or performing arts center with a screen
- ★ A university or college theater
- ★ A public park with an inflatable screen and projector
- ★ A school stage with an inflatable screen

Important considerations:

- ★ How will you sell tickets?
- ★ How will you accept payments?
- ★ How will funds be deposited into a school or booster account?

The film team will have a ticketing platform available with a small surcharge that will deposit 100% of ticket sales to a school or team account. Please ask about this feature, if interested.

This option will also work with a booster club or foundation that can handle payments flexibly.



C **OPTION C: EVENTIZED VIRTUAL SCREENING**

Some platforms allow a set date and time where families can watch at home at the same time.

Pros:

- ★ Built-in ticketing
- ★ No venue needed
- ★ Accessible to distant supporters

Cons:

- ★ Less communal energy
- ★ Less opportunity for spontaneous donations

This can still be effective, especially for alumni-heavy communities.



STEP 4:

Set Ticket Pricing and Donation Strategy



SET TICKET PRICING AND DONATION STRATEGY

- ★ Ticket price used successfully: \$20
- ★ Keep pricing simple and clear.
- ★ Make the value proposition explicit: supporting local speech and debate students.

Additional donation strategies:

- ★ Include a “Can’t attend? Donate anyway” link in all promotional emails.
- ★ After the screening, station students with donation baskets at exits. This alone raised an additional \$500 at the example event.

STEP 5:

Promote Without Spending Money

PROMOTE WITHOUT SPENDING MONEY

This fundraiser succeeded with \$0 spent on advertising, driven almost entirely by students and community connections.



1 STUDENT-LED PROMOTION

- ★ Have students design a flyer.
- ★ Ask students to create Instagram graphics and posts.
- ★ QR codes link directly to the ticketing page.

2 DIGITAL OUTREACH

- ★ Create a Facebook Event for parents and community members.
- ★ Email past judges and supporters using your judge list.
- ★ Ask administrators to include the event in weekly newsletters.
- ★ Share the event on the school website.

3 MEDIA AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

- ★ Work with the school media or communications staff. Provide them with:
 - A short press release
 - Event details
 - Why *SPEAK.* matters to the local community
- ★ Local press and radio coverage can significantly expand reach.

4 PERSONAL INVITATIONS

- ★ Encourage students and coaches to personally invite:
 - Local business owners
 - School board members
 - Community leaders
 - Alumni
- ★ Encourage every student to invite 10 people.
- ★ Frame it as a celebration of student voices.

STEP 6: **Timeline for Planning**

TIMELINE FOR PLANNING

With a movie theater partner, this entire process took about one month from idea to screening for the school from Montana.

Suggested timeline:

- ★ **Week 1:** Secure rights and venue
- ★ **Week 2:** Finalize ticketing and promotion
- ★ **Weeks 3-4:** Active promotion and community outreach
- ★ **Screening night:** Execute and collect donations

STEP 7:

Night-of Execution and On-Site Fundraising Opportunities

NIGHT-OF EXECUTION AND ON-SITE FUNDRAISING OPPORTUNITIES

The screening itself is the anchor, but the event becomes a true fundraiser when you give attendees multiple, low-pressure ways to give. The most successful events make donating feel natural, visible, and mission-connected.



A EXIT-DOOR DONATIONS *(Proven and Powerful)*

After the screening concludes:

- ★ Station students at each exit with clearly labeled baskets or envelopes.
- ★ Students should thank attendees for coming and briefly explain how donations support the team.
- ★ This moment works because the audience is emotionally engaged and inspired.

In one example event, this approach raised an additional \$500 in a matter of minutes.

Tip: Have a printed sign or small placard on each basket with a QR code for digital donations.

B CONCESSIONS *(If You Are Not Using a Movie Theater)*

What to offer:

- ★ Bottled water, soda, popcorn, candy
- ★ Simple, prepackaged items to reduce prep and cleanup

How to run it:

- ★ Sell items for round-number prices (\$2, \$3, \$5).
- ★ Staff the table with students or parents.
- ★ Clearly label the concession stand as a fundraiser for the speech and debate team.

This works especially well before the screening and during any intermission or post-film discussion.

Important: Always confirm food sales policies with your school or venue in advance.

C TEAM MERCHANDISE TABLE

Merchandise can bring in some additional money, but it also helps build a sense of community.

Popular items

- ★ Team T-shirts or hoodies – make these generic enough that leftovers can be sold after the event. “Speech and Debate Superfan” shirts are a great item for parents and community members.
- ★ Stickers, buttons, or pins
- ★ “Support Speech and Debate” or school-branded items

Best practices

- ★ Keep the selection small and visually clean.
- ★ Display items on a table near the entrance or exits.
- ★ Use signage explaining that merchandise sales directly support students.

If you already sell merchandise during the season, this event becomes a natural sales opportunity with a receptive audience.





D SPONSOR-A-STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES

(This is one of the most meaningful and underused options.)

Create a visible, optional way for donors to support individual students' travel journeys, especially to major tournaments.

How to structure it

- ★ Create a display board or poster with:
 - “Sponsor a Speaker” or “Send a Student to Nationals”
 - General cost ranges (example: airfare, hotel night, tournament entry)
- ★ Avoid naming specific students unless your school permits it.
- ★ Emphasize that donations support student participation, not competitive outcomes.

Examples

- ★ “Help send a student to NSDA Nationals”
- ★ “Support travel to Harvard, Yale, or another major invitational”
- ★ “Sponsor one night of lodging for our team”

This allows donors to give with purpose and imagination.

E PROGRAM OR EVENT SPONSORSHIPS

If you have a printed program, signage, or opening remarks:

- ★ Offer small sponsorship opportunities:
 - “Event Sponsor”
 - “Student Travel Sponsor”
 - “Community Supporter”
- ★ Recognize sponsors verbally before the screening or on a thank-you slide.

Local businesses and community leaders often appreciate this visibility without making sponsorship too complicated.

F DIGITAL GIVING STATIONS

Even at an in-person event, digital giving matters.

- ★ Display QR codes on:
 - Tables
 - Posters
 - The screen before and after the film
- ★ Link directly to:
 - A school donation page
 - A booster club payment portal
 - A Venmo donation account
- ★ Clearly state what payment types are accepted.

This supports attendees who do not carry cash and reinforces impulse generosity.

G KEEP THE TONE LIGHT AND NOT TRANSACTIONAL

The goal is to offer opportunities, not pressure.

- ★ Use students’ presence and gratitude as the primary motivator.
- ★ Let signage and structure do the asking.
- ★ Keep announcements brief and purpose-driven.

When donors feel invited rather than solicited, generosity follows naturally.

FINAL THOUGHT ON NIGHT-OF FUNDRAISING

The most effective *SPEAK.* fundraisers succeed because they align emotion, access, and mission in one room. The film opens hearts, and your team works to turn that into supportive success.

Every basket, table, or QR code is simply another microphone, and this night gives your program permission to use it.



STEP 8: **Follow-Up**

FOLLOW-UP

Within a week:

- ★ Send thank-you emails to attendees and donors.
- ★ Share how much was raised.
- ★ Highlight upcoming tournaments or goals the funds will support.
- ★ Thank the venue, media partners, and school staff publicly.

This turns a fundraiser into a relationship-builder.

FINAL TAKEAWAY

A *SPEAK.* viewing fundraiser works because it amplifies student voices while inviting the community to listen. With smart partnerships, student leadership, and intentional outreach, this event can be both financially successful and deeply affirming.

SPEECH & DEBATE

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