



**MEDIA CONTACTS:**

Shelby Young  
National Speech & Debate Association  
shelby.young@speechanddebate.org  
(515) 272-5141

**2026 National Middle School Coach of the Year**  
*Local Houston Middle School Coach Wins National Award*

**West Des Moines, IA (June 3, 2026)** — The National Speech & Debate Association (NSDA) is proud to announce Heather Huffman from The Village Middle School is the 2026 NSDA Middle School Coach of the Year!

The prestigious Middle School Coach of the Year award is presented annually to a middle school coach who reflects outstanding leadership and commitment to speech and debate.

“The impact of speech and debate coaches go far beyond the classroom,” said J. Scott Wunn, Executive Director of the National Speech & Debate Association. “They are fostering lifelong skills like critical thinking, effective communication, and leadership. They are empowering students to become engaged citizens and leaders in their communities.”

Studies show that students who participate in speech and debate experience a number of academic benefits including communication skills, reading test scores, analytic thinking, and higher self-esteem. The skills learned through speech and debate will impact students years after graduation.

“Mrs. Huffman is an exceptional educator and coach whose passion for speech and debate is matched only by her unwavering commitment to her students,” said Bill Delbrugge, Head of The Village School. “She possesses a rare ability to inspire young people to believe in themselves, embrace challenges, and strive for excellence. Through her guidance, students develop not only outstanding communication skills, but also confidence, resilience, and character qualities that serve them far beyond competition.”

The NSDA Middle School Coach of the Year is selected by a committee of NSDA Board of Directors and the Executive Director after reviewing nominations submitted by member schools.

Heather will be recognized at the 2026 National Speech & Debate Tournament in Richmond, Virginia, where more than 7,000 students will compete at the world's largest academic competition June 14-19, 2026. To learn more about the National Tournament, visit [www.speechanddebate.org/nationals](http://www.speechanddebate.org/nationals).

###

### **About the National Speech & Debate Association**

The National Speech & Debate Association is the authority on public speaking and debate in the United States. The Association builds the infrastructure for speech and debate competitions around the world by providing topics, educational resources, and training for students and coaches. For more than 100 years, the National Speech & Debate Association has built a platform for youth voices that culminates in the National Tournament, the largest academic competition in the world. The National Tournament brings together thousands of students from across the United States and world with different backgrounds and viewpoints to engage in civil discourse. For more information, visit [www.speechanddebate.org](http://www.speechanddebate.org).