

# Middle School *is Hard,* Speech and Debate *makes it Easier*



“In middle school,  
*words aren't just words.*  
They can be weapons  
or they can be gifts.”

— JOHN DAVID ANDERSON  
children's author

\*Speech and debate is competitive speaking,  
acting, and debating.

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 10 different public speaking and acting events and five debate events across the country.

In middle school, students are finding their voice and interests, figuring out a sense of self, and learning to manage new schedules. Speech and debate is:



a safe space for  
students to explore  
who they are



an opportunity to  
learn how to use their  
voices



a positive and  
purposeful connection  
with peers



“Adolescents often feel as though they will be young forever. Through this activity, however, they confront real-life issues, learn to value dissent, and see how a single idea can branch into countless directions. Unlike a typical student who simply learns to write a thesis, a debater learns to wrestle with the complexity of ideas, the conclusions of others, and the responsibility of forming their own.”

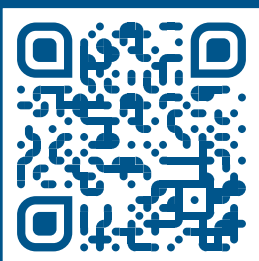
— PAUL PARADIS, COACH  
Ramblewood Middle School, FL

Skills students gain with speech and debate:

- ✧ Confidence
- ✧ Resilience
- ✧ A voice that will carry them forward
- ✧ Self-awareness
- ✧ Social awareness
- ✧ Responsible decision-making
- ✧ Self-management
- ✧ Relationship skills



> CASEL framework, from the Collaborative of Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning: [casel.org](http://casel.org)



Bring **Speech & Debate** to  
your school: [www.speechanddebate.org](http://www.speechanddebate.org)

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