



**To Whom It May Concern,**

The purpose of this letter is to state my overwhelming support for speech and debate activities on all school campuses around the nation. I feel that speech and debate has a significant impact on both student academic achievement and social emotional well-being. Involvement in the speech and debate program allows students to be successful in an area they may not be aware they could find success. In secondary schools, students are encouraged to be involved in an art, an activity, or some sort of athletic team. Many schools offer sports, music, clubs, and an array of activities. Speech and debate serves as yet another way for students to find their “niche.”

As a middle school administrator in Fresno, California, I helped start a speech program. The results of the program were amazing! Students who signed up for the class were able to realize what potential they had in the area of public speaking. At the end of the school year, students were able to perform in front of hundreds of people. Their self-esteem rose tremendously, and we saw that every student in the class had passing grades in all of their classes. Besides the personal confidence it built up in each of the students in the program, it also impressed many of the staff members at school as well as parents at home.

The adults on campus and at home were very impressed by the performances of the students in the program. As a school site, there was a sense of pride by students when our school would win at competition, which was quite often. We had t-shirts made that stated, “What other people fear more than death, we do for fun.” It was an amazing thing to watch a team of over 90% minority students perform well and help create a sense of pride at the school. Parents would attend the competitions with their students, many of which last more than 10 hours! Many parents would tell me how impressed they were with what their child could do and never believed their child was capable of performing in front of others. Building this confidence in children is not only beneficial, it is absolutely essential for them to be successful.

In closing, I just want to re-iterate my utmost support for speech and debate activities and programs at all schools. If you are a school administrator or a teacher who is contemplating starting a program, please do so. Please jump in with both feet and know that there will be students willing to take the same risk. The results of this program will be beneficial to all students on campus.

Respectfully submitted,

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