



# Communicators *in the Classroom*

*Empowering Students Through Speech and Debate*



“In today’s world, the knowledge explosion makes constant learning an inevitability. But all adults today need to be able to communicate with clarity, to articulate ideas, to reason, to separate key facts from the barrage of ideas we all are exposed to every day. **No single activity can prepare one better than debating - the ability to think on one’s feet, to form conclusions rapidly, to answer questions logically and with clarity, to summarize ideas are all processes which forensics activity develops.**”

*– Helen Wise, former President, National Education Association*

## SCHOOLS THAT PROVIDE SPEECH AND DEBATE PROGRAMS REPORT:



INCREASED ATTENDANCE



HIGHER TEST SCORES



RISE IN COLLEGE ACCEPTANCE



HIGHER CLASSROOM ENGAGEMENT



REDUCED DROP-OUT RATES





## The Power to Transform Lives

**SPEECH AND DEBATE CHANGES LIVES.** From building confidence, improving communication, and increasing critical thinking skills to better preparing students for college—speech and debate provides educational skills vital to a young person’s success in the future.

Speech and debate activities focus on the four core zones of literacy: **reading, writing, speaking, and listening.** Utilizing these skills inside and outside of the classroom teaches students the ability to clearly articulate thoughts and ideas, to answer questions logically with clarity, and to think on one's feet.

For more than 100 years, competitive academic speech and debate has been a uniquely effective training ground for leaders in American society. Including speech and debate education in a school curriculum offers a proven means of engaging students in their own education, fostering motivation, and developing the critical academic skills needed for college and career readiness.

### SCHOOL DISTRICTS THAT PARTNER WITH THE NATIONAL SPEECH & DEBATE ASSOCIATION RECEIVE:



Customized classroom resources including lesson plans, textbooks, coursework, and more that is tailored to the district’s adopted pedagogies and assessment methods.



Customized district-level training program and development of local, expert mentors.



Guidance on competitive program development and support running or hosting tournaments.

# Life and Career Skills for the 21st Century

A combination of classroom learning and competitive opportunities creates the ideal environment for speech and debate programs to thrive and to develop the skills valued by leading educational organizations.



## COMMUNICATION

Every student who competes in speech and debate enhances their verbal, written, and oral communication skills. Through consistent feedback and repetition, students explore the power of rhetoric and make strides in their persuasive capabilities. Speech and debate enables students to channel their fears and convey messages to small and large audiences.



## COLLABORATION

Students who compete on a speech and debate team work both individually and collaboratively with their teammates, coaches, and adult adjudicators. Students learn appropriate strategies for questioning things they do not understand.



## CRITICAL THINKING

In competitive speech and debate, students engage written texts to assemble their evidence-based persuasive arguments. By analyzing texts, anticipating opposition, and persuading different individuals, students find connections among interdisciplinary concepts and present cohesive arguments.



## CREATIVITY

Students are empowered to make artistic choices about how they bring words to life. Speech and debate fosters a student's ability to use imagination to share others' narratives, portray their own or others' lives, and convince audiences of something meaningful to them.



“Self expression is truly an art, and its successful development requires steady practice and determination. To articulate one’s thoughts in a lucid and expressive manner – to capture and maintain the interest of an audience, whether it be in the classroom or in the United Nations General Assembly Hall – is strongly supported by the skill and knowledge one acquires from a forensic education (Hunt, p1).”

– Donald F. McHenry,  
U.S. Representative to the United Nations



As a school-based organization, we value the life and career skills called for by the **American Association of School Administrators (AASA)**.

AASA Belief and Position Statement on Student Learning and Accountability: *“All public schools must provide a quality educational experience for each student, which necessitates a framework of rigorous academic standards infused with life and career skills including **critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, communication, innovation and self-direction.**”*



# Maximizing The Benefits of Speech and Debate



“As a high school principal, I must make budget and fund allocation decisions for the welfare of all programs. I cannot imagine not having speech and debate activities at my school. **Speech and debate advances education, increases academic achievement, and prepares students for college and a career.** This activity has made a life-changing impact on our students, teachers, coaches, and entire community.”

— Dr. Polly Reikowski, Principal



As a member of the **Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21)**, the National Speech & Debate Association helps schools, administrators, and other advocates of speech and debate demonstrate the activity's use of the 4Cs: **communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking.**

**PARTICIPATION IN SPEECH AND DEBATE BUILDS SKILLS** that benefit students academically and socially, developing students who have learned to use their voice effectively in the classroom, in their communities, and in the workforce.

## NATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR LOCAL PARTICIPATION

Speech and debate has a positive impact on school culture, climate, and achievement, and the success of the coach and potential of the students are enhanced through membership in the National Speech & Debate Association.

The **National Speech & Debate Association's Honor Society** has been recognizing student and coach achievements in speech and debate since 1925. **Middle and high school students** can earn points of distinction in the honorary through competition, community service, public speaking, and leadership. Recognition in the Honor Society empowers students to expand their knowledge and advance their skill set. **Coaches** earn distinction through team participation, student achievement, public service, and leadership work, and the Association provides a necessary helpline to resources, professional development, and a network of coaches across the country.

## NATIONAL SPEECH & DEBATE ASSOCIATION MEMBER SCHOOLS ALSO BENEFIT FROM:



More than 1,000 event resources and team building tools



Professional development via an online learning community specific to speech and debate



Support motivating and retaining speech and debate coaches and teachers



Opportunity to compete at the National Tournament and earn part of tens of thousands of scholarships awarded annually



## Communicators in the Classroom Program

### ONE DISTRICT'S COMMITMENT TO COMPETITIVE SPEECH AND DEBATE

The *Communicators in the Classroom* program began in 2012 as a pilot in Broward County Public Schools. Broward County, the sixth largest school district in the country, was chosen for the pilot because of a commitment from the Superintendent and School Board. Today, as a result of the *Communicators in the Classroom* program partnership, Broward County can claim a co-curricular speech and debate team in every comprehensive high school, every middle school, and in some elementary schools.

### DISTRICT-LEVEL SUPPORT

Broward County speech and debate teachers are provided mentors, curricular support, and release time to attend speech and debate meetings and events. The district provides each school team with funding. Coordinated transportation, judge training, and tournament hosting are all possible due to the centralized efforts of the district, including two employees with official roles managing speech and debate activities.

### STUDENT IMPACT

Students get access to more competitions, locally, because there's greater local participation. This directly translates to more opportunities to engage in the critical thinking, collaboration, and creative skills that are inherent in speech and debate participation without the burden of leaving their county. Students are forming friendships across the county.

Broward County is a model of what's possible with commitment. The National Speech & Debate Association is excited to help more districts across the country empower their students through speech and debate.



# Broward County: A Model for Success



**We've seen increases in student performance and academic achievement. Attendance is up, student engagement is up, and in general how students perform in their classes has improved. Teachers are more engaged, students are more engaged, and they're transferring that to any academic domain or subject. It's been huge for us."**

– Robert Runcie,  
Superintendent of Broward  
County Public Schools

Since launching the program in 2012, the Broward County School District has seen outstanding results!



**1,200% increase** in Broward County schools offering speech and debate programs.



**143 schools participating** in Communicators in the Classroom in the Broward County School District, including 33 high schools, 37 middle schools, 70 elementary schools, and 3 centers.



**More than 15,000 students** competing in speech and debate in Broward County.



The National Speech & Debate Association has subsidized **more than \$400,000** in free tools and resources.



**More than 1,500 students** participate in their monthly after-school tournaments.





## How to Start a Program at Your School

We facilitate program creation by identifying and supporting mentor coaches and providing the resources districts need to successfully implement and sustain speech and debate programs.



To learn more about *Communicators in the Classroom*, or to start a speech and debate program at your school, please contact **Erik Dominguez**, District Support Manager, at [erik.dominguez@speechanddebate.org](mailto:erik.dominguez@speechanddebate.org) or visit our website at [www.speechanddebate.org/communicators-in-the-classroom/](http://www.speechanddebate.org/communicators-in-the-classroom/)



“**The benefits we’ve seen from the Communicators in the Classroom program are amazing. Whatever our students are going to do in the future, it’s important for them to stand up in front of a room of people, clearly convey their thoughts, and be able to discuss either side of an issue. We’ve seen student grades increase and student achievement increase. It’s a win-win for everyone.**”

– Laurie Rich Levinson,  
Broward County School Board



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#### WHO WE ARE:

The National Speech & Debate Association is the largest interscholastic speech and debate organization serving middle school, high school, and collegiate students in the United States. The Association provides competitive speech and debate activities, high-quality resources, comprehensive training, scholarship opportunities, and advanced recognition to more than 150,000 students and coaches every year. For more than 90 years, the National Speech & Debate Association has empowered more than 1.5 million members.

#### OUR MISSION:

The National Speech & Debate Association connects, supports, and inspires a diverse community committed to empowering students through competitive speech and debate.

#### OUR VISION:

We envision a world in which every student has access to membership in the National Speech & Debate Association, providing the educational resources, competitive opportunities, and expertise necessary to foster their communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creative skills.

Learn more at [www.speechanddebate.org](http://www.speechanddebate.org)



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