



Dear Colleagues,

In these extraordinary times, the competency of communication is perhaps the most important skill young leaders can hone. When combined with authentic empathy and an appreciation for another's perspective, effective communication has the power to bring about positive change in the world. Thank you to the National Speech & Debate Association for amplifying the voices of today's generation in a most transformational way.

I have witnessed the uplifting power of a middle school speech and debate program firsthand, and I encourage all school leaders to make speech and debate a priority in our schools. At Princeton Academy of the Sacred Heart, we seek to develop young men to be creative, compassionate, and courageous leaders of a just society. Elocution, public speaking, and effective communication have always been at the heart of our school's program. In 2016, through the leadership of Speech & Debate Coach Raymond Shay, Princeton Academy inaugurated its speech and debate program. Over the last five years, speech and debate has grown as one of our most popular programs with over one-third of our middle school student body participating at the national level. I am in awe of our students and all students from across the nation who commit themselves to excellence in speech and debate.

Amidst the complexities of pandemic and social unrest, providing a safe space for students to think critically, articulate their viewpoints, and be celebrated for their unique identities is one of the greatest gifts we can give our students and, henceforth, our world. If our schools are truly committed to educating the whole child with purpose and intentionality, along with advancing the imperatives of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion in our world, then committing to speech and debate must be a priority.

Congratulations to our student leaders, coaches, and supporters on an amazing year of speech and debate. You have inspired our world. Let us be forever devoted to using our voices to help others.

With hope,

AFDIII

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