



To Whom It May Concern,

The purpose of this letter is to state my overwhelming support for implementing speech and debate programs nationwide. As an educator and now administrator, I feel that speech and debate is an important component of a child's educational experience. The skills taught in speech and debate positively impact academic achievement as well as help with a student's social emotional well-being.

Speech and debate is important for many reasons. Most importantly, it helps students come to terms with their identity and teaches empathy. At an age when bullying is so common, speech and debate celebrates kids who often fall through the cracks in more traditional settings. Specifically, girls are encouraged to be smart and argumentative as much as boys, in whom strong emotional awareness and expressiveness are celebrated. As society shifts to redefining traditional gender roles, kids who grew up in forensics are way ahead of the curve because they realize that being an individual is "cool" and that not fitting a mold is a good thing.

Additionally, middle school speech and debate is a constructive way to hone the age appropriate questioning of preteens and teens. Rather than telling students to be quiet and absorb information, forensics encourages them to question and ask why something is true (scientific method), to research the context of an issue (history), to consider statistical data (math), and to formulate articulate arguments with a clear thesis (English). Forensics lets students determine their interests and how they choose to learn about a specific topic. Some students prefer an emotional understanding through interpretation, while others prefer the role of advocate through oration. Still others love the interaction of a debate round. Whatever they choose, forensics encourages students to learn to listen to their peers. These lessons plant the seeds of empathy that create a sense of family at a vulnerable time for middle schoolers and encourages them to find their voice and share it with the world.

In sum, I just want to reiterate my utmost support for the speech and debate program at our school. There is nothing to lose and much to gain by implementing such a program!

** I could not have written this excerpt in support of our speech and debate program without the insight and support provided by our speech and debate coach, Mr. Bill Thompson.*

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Find this and other letters of advocacy on our website:
www.speechanddebate.org