

March 27, 2019

Dear Selection Committee:

Lawrence Wall, Head of Upper School, at Charlotte Latin is the administrator all coaches dream of working with daily. For his genuine interest in forensics and for his fathomless support of it, he deserves recognition as the NSDA Administrator of the Year.

For starters, he understands speech and debate deeply because of his own career as a state champion orator and Policy debater at Selma HS in Alabama in the early 1980s. Coached by none other than the legendary Billy Tate, his stories about the exploits of those teams are riotously funny. They've given him insight into what it means to spend countless hours on school busses crisscrossing the state on Saturday mornings, prepping in the hotel lobby until all hours, and clinging to that first novice trophy of a nascent career. It's a thrill to have access to my own personal trove of Billy stories. Did you know his teams at Selma had a Vice-President of Desserts? "Bubba" Wall - as he was nicknamed on his team - can tell you that tale.

Beyond these emotional connections, Mr. Wall is a fierce advocate for every kind of support for our program. Six years ago, as Latin recovered from the recession, he didn't so much interview his candidate as he did guide me through the process of making the case for splitting the theater and forensics job here back into two full-time positions. He makes the case for funding our program at a championship level: the budget here has grown 70% over the last six years (and regularly approves me exceeding even that). He assigns me a teaching load consisting exclusively of speech and debate courses and has approved my efforts to overhaul or curriculum to better sort students into coursework by experience level and event. He's been supportive of my work branching out into the middle school here and helped see to it that our new Head for that division, Mr. Todd Ballaban, is a former debate coach himself. Mr. Wall encourages other faculty members to assist with our team, helping to facilitate the many teachers who accompany our competitors on weekends when we're splitting our squad. He helped bring Mrs. Tara McLellan, the former Director of Forensics here, back to Latin as an English teacher and to assist with the program. In 2017 he even traveled to Nationals in his native Alabama with us to support our team, and he judges each year at the Corona Rostrensis, our own tournament which he named (he teaches Latin and Greek too).

More important than all of that is his focus on our students. Frequently I have conversations with Mr. Wall about individual students that he believes would be a good fit for the program. These are not just kids who he thinks would fill the trophy case either, though he has brought in some of those too. He believes in the power of forensics as an intervention for struggling kids and has thus brought me some of my most rewarding students to teach through those referrals.

It's one thing to have a principal who appreciates the transformative value of speech and debate, but quite another to have one who shares it as a passion. Lawrence Wall loves speech and debate so much that he once confided to me that he'd love to be a coach himself for a few years after retiring from administration! For all he has done to promote speech and debate education at Charlotte Latin, I nominate Mr. Lawrence Wall for NSDA Administrator of the Year.

With great enthusiasm,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jonathan Peele". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jonathan" being more prominent than the last name "Peele".

Jonathan Peele
Director of Forensics
Charlotte Latin School