



Dear School Administrator,

One of the statistics I like to share about our school that surprises many people is that our speech and debate team is the largest team at Hawken—bigger than our football team. One out of every four students at our school participates in speech and debate, and this has made a huge difference in the lives of those students and to the ethos and culture of our school. I was fortunate, also, to have a son who participated in Public Forum Debate, and it changed him in extraordinary ways. So, in short, I am writing to encourage you to support, enhance, and grow your school's commitment to this vital activity.

It is clear that students who participate in speech and debate learn a host of life skills that will serve them well in college and beyond. They learn not only great speaking skills, but also logic, critical thinking, teamwork, listening, planning, outlining, and many more.

Speech and debate also creates a unique sense of team and community that allows students to “bridge the gap” with those who may come from different backgrounds, have different experiences, etc. I see speech and debate as being a “great equalizer” in many respects, as it provides students of all backgrounds with the opportunity to use their voice. Students from very different backgrounds and worldviews work together and compete in ways that help each understand the varied perspectives of others. In addition, speech and debate encourages students to be engaged citizens in a time when we certainly need more engagement, not less, to bridge the gap and solve the challenges facing our society.

Having witnessed the impact of speech and debate as a Head of School, let me also mention the impact I saw as a father. My son entered high school as a shy student who lacked confidence on many levels. In his first week of school, an older student encouraged him to attend the opening speech and debate team meeting, and his journey began. For four years, my son got up early on Saturday mornings to go all over the country to various tournaments, only to come home with a sense of pride and fulfilled exhaustion. He left high school as a confident, engaged person with extraordinary public speaking skills—skills which helped him become president of his fraternity and land his first job.

So, my appeal to you is both professional and deeply personal. If you have the ability to add, grow, or enhance your school's speech and debate program, I urge you to do so. There are so many benefits to students and to the impact they will later have on our world.



Sincerely,

D. Scott Looney

D. Scott Looney
Head of School, Hawken School
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Find this and other letters of advocacy on our website:
www.speechanddebate.org/resources