



Mentoring New Schools

Mentoring schools new to speech and debate is a key to expanding our activity. As a means to support programs at various stages of development, this chapter will guide mentors of new programs in establishing action steps from any starting point in the process.

CONNECTING PEOPLE

Essential Personnel

One of the first steps in mentoring a new program is to identify the key people connected to the school who will support its development.

- Programs need an **advisor** as a point of contact for students, coaches, the administration, and the National Speech & Debate Association. Although advisors are not required to be employees of the school, it is very helpful for advisors to have substantial connections to the school, and there should be mechanisms in place to hold the advisor accountable for meeting the basic needs of the program.

- Programs also need to have a **principal** who can provide support and help the advisor navigate the school's policies and procedures. The principal not only signs the membership application but also ensures the advisor and the program meet the school's guidelines and rules for participation in interscholastic activities. The principal may put the advisor in contact with the **athletic/activities director** of the school for this support, as well. In addition, the principal serves as a liaison between the speech/debate program and the administration.
- The school's **business manager** is responsible for payment of Association fees, tournament registration costs, initiating purchase orders, and other financial aspects of the program. The business manager may also be responsible for handling transportation arrangements.
- A **coaching staff** needs to be established. Small programs often have one **advisor/coach** who manages all aspects of the program. Many programs have **volunteer coaches** who provide support in specific categories or who coach specific days of the week. Some of those coaches serve as **judges** at tournaments on specified weekends during the course of the school year.



Next Steps

The mentor needs to find the individuals who will champion speech and debate at the new school. This can be challenging as programs are developed in many different ways. Sometimes students express interest and form a grassroots effort to get a program started. At other schools, parents want to support their children in developing skills in speech and debate and

push for a program to begin. Still others form with an interested administrator or school board member who would like to see growth with interscholastic activities. Often teachers with speech and debate background want to get a new program started.

As programs get their starts in so many different ways, mentors should make a list of those who will fully support speech and debate efforts in the school. Encourage those individuals to talk to other teachers, students, administrators, parents, the activities director, and ask for the names of those who want to be involved as a participant, coach, or volunteer. The mentor will need to help organize and support these collective efforts, encourage everyone involved, and provide advice, as needed, to keep efforts moving forward.

In addition to finding champions of the activity in the new school, it is important to connect the new school with others in the region that compete in speech and debate. The mentor can connect these new students and coaches with area schools that would welcome a visit. New coaches can talk to other coaches and learn from their experiences, sit in on practice sessions, and meet other students who are already enthusiastic about speech and debate. The mentor can ask if the principals of the neighboring schools would be willing to call or email their counterparts in the new school to support speech and debate activities.

If local schools are not available, mentors can arrange chats on video services to link new schools with existing programs. Schools can use Skype, Google Hangouts, or other various means of connecting virtually that bridge challenges confronted by program geography.

PROGRAM SUPPORT AND PROMOTION

Curricular or Co-Curricular

Each state in the country, as well as each school district, has varying curricular connections to speech and debate. Some states mandate that schools offer speech or debate classes, others offer it as a unit in other courses (e.g., English classes), while some offer elective credits, and still others don't provide



any formal instruction in speech and debate at all. The mentor and coach/advisor should discuss the options with the principal, curriculum coordinator, and activities director of the school to determine the best options in both the short- and long-term interests of the program.

Student Participation

The mentor can assist the coach, advisor, and administration in determining the best ways to recruit students within the school. It is important to remember every school is unique in terms of how interested students are identified. Many schools take advantage of morning or afternoon all-school announcements to share how students can get involved. Frequently there is an organizational meeting established after school on a specific day or two where interested students can meet and discuss the various types of speech and debate activities available to them with the coach/advisor. Promotional efforts, including posters distributed around the school, information tables set up during lunch periods, and creative bulletin boards can draw students' attention to speech and debate activities.

A fun way to draw student interest is to ask other speech and debate programs to lend some of their trophies and awards to make a nice display for the school.

Mentors should recommend that the championing teachers in the school, as well as teachers in particular fields of study such as English, social studies, and history, make announcements to





their classes that speech and debate activities are available. In addition, schools with vibrant art, theatre, and music programs may find students who are drawn to those activities will also find an interest in speech and debate. It's always important to remember that students draw other students into the activity; thus, by identifying and encouraging the students who are most passionate about speech and debate, adults can encourage these students to recruit among their own friends and classmates and get them excited about speech and debate.

These are just some of the many ways students can be identified for new speech and debate programs. Programs can start small and grow over time.

Fundraising

One of the roles of the mentor is to help come up with ideas for fundraising. The mentor should work with the Support Director to help schools develop appropriate strategies. Just as with recruitment, every school is different in terms of

how funding works, and all fundraising efforts need to be individualized to meet the needs of the specific program. Some programs are completely dependent upon fundraising, from the costs of buses to lodging to registration fees, while others are at schools that are fully funded through a school budget line. The student participant's financial obligation also varies dramatically from school to school; at some schools students raise their own funds entirely, while other programs ask students to contribute in a minimal way. Some schools coordinate sales of candy, magazines, or other products, while others focus on letter-writing campaigns and donations from area businesses.

Mentors should work with the advisor/coach and the Support Director by asking questions about the school's goals and objectives with regard to tournament experiences and funding needs. Several terrific webinars, located on the National Speech & Debate Association website, are available to promote various fundraising ideas. In addition, mentors can direct coaches to the Give Youth A Voice platform available through the Association to assist them in the fundraising process.

Logistical Support

The mentor can assist new schools by walking new coaches and administrators through the process of attending tournaments. Reserving and paying for school transportation varies dramatically from district to district. Registration fees can be very complex when factoring in hired judge expenses, differing fees for speech entries compared to debate teams, and drop fees. Mentors can assist by explaining fee structures and relevant tournament norms to appropriate stakeholders within the school.





EVALUATION

Measuring Success

A successful mentor helps establish a program, ideally one that becomes a member school of the National Speech & Debate Association, enrolls students in the Honor Society, and attends tournaments. Beyond these three goals, different programs will have many ways of defining what success entails. One school might enroll five students and go to one tournament per term, while another school might enroll 15 students and attend a tournament at least once per month. The mentor should work with the coach/advisor to design a program that meets educational and competitive goals that enhance the skills of the school's students.

Non-Competitive Activities

While the Association's vision is to create opportunities for all students to participate in competitive speech and debate, it is also important for our schools to support activities that serve their students and the broader community in a variety of ways. Schools can host workshops and training sessions for students who are interested in improving their public speaking abilities in general. Students who are on the team can take their events and debates into community centers, assisted-living facilities, and in front of civic groups to provide entertainment and education. Students can also host public debates on a variety of issues. Service activities benefit the area and promote goodwill between students and the community members they serve. Students are rewarded with Association points for non-competitive speaking and service activities.



▶ TOP EVENT RESOURCES

The National Speech & Debate Association provides an extensive wealth of resources, opportunities, professional support, and development to our members.

Share these TOP EVENT SPECIFIC RESOURCES with new coaches:

- ▶ INTRODUCTORY LESSON PLANS
- ▶ COMPETITION EVENTS GUIDE
- ▶ JUDGE TRAINING VIDEOS
- ▶ SAMPLE BALLOTS WITH COMMENTS
- ▶ WEBINARS
- ▶ POLICY STARTER FILES
- ▶ DEBATE TOPIC ANALYSIS
- ▶ CONGRESS DOCKET
- ▶ PRACTICE EXTEMP QUESTIONS

Access countless benefits including webinars, instructional videos, textbooks, lesson plans, training, resources, scholarship opportunities, exclusive partnerships and more by logging in and visiting www.speechanddebate.org/resources