



INSPIRE. EMPOWER. ACHIEVE.

LaRue County High School

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Dear Selection Committee:

It is my honor to nominate Zachary Bolen at Grant County High School as the KY NSDA New Coach of the Year for 2020. Zachary is not only a dedicated teacher and coach, he is an excellent judge, colleague, and friend. He is so deserving of this award for myriad reasons, not least of which is his taking a completely dormant program and turning it into a program on the rise in just one short year. Zachary has already done wonders for the students at Grant County, and I am certain that he will continue to support and mentor them for years to come.

Anyone who does this activity for a while knows what kind of time and dedication it takes to do it right and well. Often, former speech kids make the best coaches because they "get it." That is just the case with Zachary. He was an exemplary performer in high school, often placing in the top spots in HI, Duo, Improv. He was a joy to judge and watch perform. I was always happy to see him do well because he carried himself with such humility and grace. He understood how subjective the activity can be and never begrudged losing to another skilled competitor. You could tell that it only encouraged him to work that much harder for the next time. I see him instilling that same work ethic and code of behavior in his own students, and it makes my heart proud.

In the short time he has been coaching, he has recruited students to help him start a brand new team after several years of dormancy. You can tell how much he loves speech by the way his students seem to love the activity and are already doing well against competitors who have been doing this for several years. This year he has put students in finals at several invitational tournaments, and I am certain that as he continues to grow his team and as a coach, he will continue and build upon that winning tradition for which his school was so well known when he was a student there.

Finally, I would just like to say that this old heart loves to see these former students who had such a passion and love for this activity come back and start their own programs. These kids KNOW what speech can do in the lives of students. They KNOW how valuable these skills are. They KNOW that giving the least among us a voice will help to raise tolerance, awareness, and acceptance. If for no other reason, Zachary deserves this award because he could have taken a different road in his first years of teaching, but he chose this path. The lives that will be made better by that choice will be immeasurable.

Sincerely,

Katy Cecil, Head Speech Coach
LaRue County High School