



Recruiting New Schools

One of the most impactful things you can do for your district is recruit new member schools. This can be a challenging process. By following these steps, we hope to assist you in more efficiently making connections and starting the process of getting recruitment going. This document provides some general suggestions. However, it may be necessary for you to modify based upon various local factors. We are here to help you if you feel there need to be modifications. Do not hesitate to ask your National Speech & Debate Association staff liaison for any assistance you may need.

PREPARATION

To recruit high schools it is important to identify some of the potential schools in your area. To do so, think about where schools may fall into the following categories:

1. *Identify schools that are doing the same competitive speech and debate events your district does, but are not members of the National Speech & Debate Association.*

There are schools that may be doing the same events that your school or other schools in your district do on a regular basis. You may compete against those schools at local competitions. Create a list of schools that do competitive speech and debate but are not members of your district and the Association. When making this list, provide notes on any of the reasons they may not be members (e.g., financial reasons, past negative experience, misperceptions of the Association, etc.).

2. *Identify schools that used to have speech and debate teams but no longer do.*

What schools used to have speech and debate teams in your district? Why did they go away? Make a list of these schools and note the reasoning (if you know).

3. *Identify schools that participate in state activity association festivals or other speech competitions, but not your district tournament.*

Is there a state activities association? Do they offer festivals for their members? If so, it would be great to get a list of schools that participate and then identify those that do the state association speaking activities but are not participating within

your district. Make notes as to what events they do at the state level, if the information is available.

To prepare, it's important to have an idea of what schools may be out there for you to recruit. Additionally, having notes about the various schools would assist you in being able to consider how to support their speech and debate activities through the National Speech & Debate Association.

IMPLEMENTATION

It is good to have lists of schools to recruit. But how do you recruit them? We will provide some general strategies for you to consider when recruiting high schools. However, it is important to note that there is no science behind recruitment. As a local leader, you know better than anyone what is likely to be persuasive to teachers or administrators.

Face-to-face communication is always a plus when it's an option available to you. However, you may have to communicate via phone calls or emails. It is crucial that you identify the optimal way to communicate so that you can get a positive impact without exhausting too much of your own time.

Here are some general tips for recruiting schools:

Find Connections. You should not be recruiting on your own. You should be coordinating the effort, but it's important for you to have the support you need to make the biggest impact! There are a number of people who may be able to help. A retired coach may have insights on what is persuasive to a particular administrator. Your administrator may have a personal relationship with a school you are trying to recruit. You may know a parent on the PTA who could assist. If you can, find a

connection to a school who can help either start a conversation between you and the school or have a proxy who begins the discussion on your district's behalf.

Do Research. If a school had a team before, find out if they qualified students to Nationals. See if they had national champions or finalists. You can get a complete history of a school from the national office. If a school did speech and debate in the past through our organization, their past success could be a motivator for participating now. The current administration of a school may have no idea about the history of speech and debate at their venue.

Promote the Honor Society. The National Speech & Debate Association provides the only Honor Society specific to speech and debate. Teams that do competitive speech and debate but function outside of our organization are missing out on this benefit for their students. Schools without any teams may be compelled to provide that opportunity for their students.

Inform Schools About Resources. The Association has myriad resources to assist schools with not only competitive speech and debate, but also curriculum. Let schools know about the benefits of speech and debate when it comes to your local, state, or national standards (e.g., Common Core). Show the schools the various textbooks, webinars, lesson plans, and more that would be available to them if they were members.

Coach Recognition. If speaking to a prospective coach, inform them of the many types of communication the National Speech & Debate Association uses to promote coach accomplishments. We have a variety of press releases and recognition letters that are sent to administrators. Coaches can be honored in various forms through membership within the Association. This will assist them in getting support among their individual school community.

School Recognition. It can be persuasive to communicate to a school how the organization can help recognize their students, but also, their school for outstanding achievements. Schools can earn various statuses throughout our organization. Press releases can be sent from our organization to local media outlets to help bring positive recognition to the school. Letters about where the school ranks within our national organization helps put the school's program into context for leaders at the school and district level.

Offer Mentorship. Maybe a school wants to do speech and debate but is unaware of how to get started. Be a support system for that school. Let them know you are there to answer any questions they may have. Check in with them regularly to be sure they are progressing appropriately and getting answers to questions they may not think of asking.

Highlight Area Schools. What are schools in the district, nearby district, or rival schools accomplishing? A school could be motivated by awareness of other students who are receiving recognition that their kids are not fortunate enough to have. Schools are competitive and want to be the best. Let them

know how they can begin to provide opportunities to students that others nearby already do.

College Connection. Provide information to the schools about how beneficial speech and debate can be to the college application process. While the Honor Society is one component of this, there are other aspects. Students need to develop long-term commitments to help stand out on the college application. Speech and debate can provide unique leadership experiences for students.

Academic Rigor. Help schools realize that speech and debate is an academically rigorous experience for students, which really enhances their ability to function in the proverbial real world. Inform the school about how speech and debate assists with information processing, writing, public speaking, critical thinking, and creativity.



EVALUATION

You should keep track of who you communicate with at each school, the strategies you use to try and recruit them, and the result of your efforts. If you are turned down, don't take it personally. However, try and identify why you were turned down and keep note of that. If you were successful, do not get too excited (be excited, but temper it!), as there is a lot of work ahead for a school to get started and be retained. Share what worked and did not work with district leaders across the entire National Speech & Debate Association community.

While recruiting, please understand that our organization's vision is to provide access to speech and debate to every student in the United States. We work tirelessly toward that objective, and we would not be able to realize its potential without the amazing work of local leaders like you. Your efforts, even if they do not pan out immediately, will increase awareness of who we are and the amazing work that our coaches do on a daily basis. You will make a positive impact. You will help us meet our vision. It's a long process at times, but it's ultimately very fulfilling.