**National Speech and Debate Education Day is Friday, March 2**

*Need for speech and debate skills more important than ever before*

**DES MOINES, IA – (February 28, 2018)** –[National Speech and Debate Education Day](http://www.speechanddebateday.org/) is Friday, March 2 (as designated by [U.S. Senate Resolution 415](https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-resolution/415/)). Students and coaches across the country will be promoting and celebrating speech and debate. With recent events in the United States, there has never been a better time to recognize the importance of speech and debate in the classroom. From building confident advocates, improving communication, and increasing critical thinking skills to better preparing students for college and beyond, speech and debate activities provide life skills vital to a young person’s success.

“Speech and debate activities focus on the four core zones of literacy: reading, writing, speaking, and listening,” said National Speech & Debate Association Executive Director Scott Wunn. “Utilizing these skills inside and outside of the classroom teaches students the value of critical thinking and the ability to clearly articulate thoughts and ideas. We’ve seen the impact of speech and debate recently with student advocates from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.”

Following the shooting at their high school two weeks ago, students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas in Florida have been credited for starting a movement to end gun violence. They’ve made their voices heard in national and local media reports, rallies and events, town hall meetings, and with lawmakers on Capitol Hill. The Superintendent of Broward County Schools, Robert Runcie, who is also a National Speech & Debate Association Board Member, credits his student’s ability to intelligently discuss these issues to debate in the classroom. In a CNN Town Hall Meeting last week, he said:

“These are the young people that are going to change the world for the better. And let me tell you: our students are ready for this moment. They’ve been preparing for this moment. Broward County has a great debate program, and many of these students have participated in it. It’s the largest debate program in the country. It’s the strongest debate program, and it’s in every high school, every middle school, and this year we introduced it in elementary schools. It is a transformative experience for kids, and I really believe that it should be in every school in America because we need to change how we debate and have dialogue in this country.”

The National Speech & Debate Association’s November 2017 Public Forum Debate topic was, “Resolved: The United States should require universal background checks for all gun sales and transfers of ownership.” Students at Broward County Schools, along with those at more than 3,500-member schools across the country, debated this topic in classrooms across the country last fall. Like all debate topics, students are required to research and debate both sides of a timely issue.

“We’ve always known the [next generation of leaders](https://www.speechanddebate.org/alumni/) participate in speech and debate,” said Wunn. “We see them in classrooms or competing at speech and debate tournaments every weekend. I’ve never been more proud of our members. We are thrilled to have a day to celebrate the life-changing impacts of this activity.”

National Speech and Debate Education Day was created to recognize students, educators, and administrators who participate and support speech and debate inside and outside of the classroom. The National Speech & Debate Association is proud that more than 40 states will participate in National Speech and Debate Day activities through classroom activities, school events, or assemblies, and making their voices heard on social media.

Schools that offer speech and debate programs report increased attendance, reduced dropout rates, higher test scores, a rise in college acceptance, and unique benefits for at-risk students. To learn more about the benefits of speech and debate, along with details regarding National Speech and Debate Education Day, visit [www.speechanddebate.org](http://www.speechanddebate.org).

***About the National Speech & Debate Association***

The National Speech & Debate Association is the largest interscholastic speech and debate organization serving middle school, high school, and collegiate students in the United States. The Association provides competitive speech and debate activities, high-quality resources, comprehensive training, scholarship opportunities, and advanced recognition to more than 150,000 students and coaches every year. For 90 years, the National Speech & Debate Association has empowered more than 1.5 million members to become engaged citizens, skilled professionals, and honorable leaders in our society. For more information, visit [www.speechanddebate.org](http://www.speechanddebate.org).

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