



EXPERIENCE THE SPEECH AND DEBATE EFFECT



Dear Colleagues,

As educators, we spend time discussing what we want for our students when they graduate from our schools. We want leaders, thinkers, creators, and problem solvers. We want students to be resilient, inclusive, ethical, and hard working. The skills that NSDA student competitors gain from being a part of speech and debate are exactly what graduates should have as they enter our communities ready for college and the workforce.

Speech and debate provides the perfect forum for students to flex their strengths and to show what they know as opposed to demonstrating comprehension on a standardized test. Educators talk about reforming education and getting away from standardized testing. Speech and debate provides this path.

Students research topics of interest, prepare informed talking points, and speak clearly and precisely about what they know. We see students learning the value of research and using factual sources and information. The critical reading and thinking that is required to prepare a high quality speech is a workplace skill that every employer is looking for in employees. Debaters learn to prepare well-balanced arguments and to listen to their competition to strengthen the points they want to make. Using factual information to create a well-articulated argument is a talent that will ensure success in any field of employment.

Most importantly, the students learn the value of working on a team. They see the impact of their individual contributions on the success of their team. Speech and debate truly prepares students for life after high school graduation. I'm convinced our world would be a better place if every student learned these skills and had to demonstrate them as a requirement for graduation. The talents demonstrated by our competitors are worth more than anything that can be measured on a standardized test.

Coaches bring out the best in their students. The countless hours after school and on weekends that coaches dedicate to their students is changing the lives of these young people. Speech and debate is about developing relationships, whether among students or coaches and students. The relational competencies gained through speech and debate will make students successful wherever they go.

Speech and debate crosses all content areas and prepares students for all aspects of school and work. Students graduate with the skills to be successful at anything they choose. This is the power of speech and debate.

Holly Williams

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www.speechanddebate.org