

## **MSDL Annual Meeting Minutes**

April 29, 2023 @ 11:00 AM

Needham High School & Zoom

The meeting was called to order at 11:13 AM by the president, Greg Cunningham

### Board Members in attendance

Joyce Albert, Joe Bowden, Scott Caron, Josh Cohen (via Zoom), Greg Cunningham, Sue Hennessey (via Zoom), Lisa Honeyman, Jim Honeyman, Sheryl Kaczmarek (via Zoom), Tammie Ruda, Chris Sheldon, and PJ Wexler

Greg expressed thanks to Mia Maffeo & Anika Ray of Needham for helping to set up for the meeting.

We started with introductions and Greg welcomed everyone.

### **1. State of the League (Greg)**

We are still recovering from COVID shut-down. Our numbers started creeping up this year and by the end of the season tournament entry numbers were starting to recover.

The Deborah Simon 2022-2023 New School Award was presented to Justin Maloney, coach of Thayer Academy.

---

### **2. Treasurer's Report (Jim)**

Our State Tournament expenses were covered by what we took in for the tournament and we came out slightly ahead.

2023 States Total Expenses: \$5071.38

2023 States Total Income: \$5412.00

For the season from September 1, 2022 until April 29, 2023 (today): We took in \$10,575.00 and our expenses were \$10,036.69, for a net gain of \$538.31.

---

### **3. 2023-2024 schedule (see below) (Greg)**

At the moment we do not have a host site for State Speech on April 6, 2024.

In December, we have three schools looking to host back-to-back-to-back (December 2, 9 and 16). Greg asked if teams would attend three tournaments in a row. In the absence of any good alternatives, we will sanction all three, but advise Arlington and Lincoln-Sudbury that because they are back-to-back - and right before the Holly, entry numbers may be lower than if that were not the case. They will need to sort out which school will host on December 2 and which will host on December 9.

PJ notes that if more schools offer BQ debate in 2023-24, maybe more students would participate next season. Since national tournaments like NSDA require that entries be single students (not pairs), maybe we should do the same.

---

#### **4. Entry fees for local tournaments (Greg)**

The MSDL doesn't dictate what schools charge for fees, but schools within the league have pretty much charged the same amount throughout the season. \$7 per speech entry doesn't seem to be covering expenses, however, so he suggests that we have a conversation about fees for next season now. (Costs for just about everything have gone up and there is now a cost for using Tabroom.com that didn't exist before.)

The MSDL sets the fee for the Novice Tournament and States. (Historically we have charged more for Debate States because the tournament runs more than one day and trophy expenses are higher.)

WHY?

- host schools must pay to use NSDA campus & Tabroom.com (in person as well as online)
- because numbers are down, revenue is down, but trophy costs are going up
- We need to understand that tournaments have variable costs - based upon how many awards they give out, how many judges they have to hire, etc. so fees may differ from tournament to tournament. Each host school needs to make their own decisions regarding fees.

A suggestion was made to post the fees for each tournament at the beginning of the season so teams can choose what to attend based upon their budget for the year.

A few coaches noted that having electronic payment options would be helpful. One tournament offered Venmo for concessions and it went well. It would be great if schools that host could explore options.

If fees go up, it was suggested that the MSDL explore providing a grant program or something of that sort to support programs that have difficulty paying tournament fees.

#### Final Take-Aways

- Each host school needs to make their own decisions about how much to charge, but fees will likely go up next season
  - Host schools should post fees as early in the season as possible so schools can budget accordingly
  - Electronic payment options would be helpful
- 

#### **5. NSDA change to novice LD topic. (Melissa Swauncy)**

The NSDA will be announcing the new novice LD topic at Nationals. It will be one of these three:

- Governments ought not possess nuclear weapons
- Societies ought to assume consent for organ donation
- In the United States, national service ought to be mandatory

Melissa asks that we use the novice LD topic in the MSDL once we know what it is.

We want to set up our students for success.

Kaz recommends that we make sure that the topic we adopt is consistent with what is being adopted by other tournaments in the Northeast (NY & NJ, especially). We wonder if there is any indication that the rest of the Northeast would not adopt the NSDA topic. (Historically, the northeast has not always done what the rest of the country has done.)

We discussed whether it would be a good idea to have the novices use the Varsity topic. Arguments against it included that teaching novices in the beginning of the season isn't always best done using the Varsity topic.

This decision will need to be made by the next board, but it seems clear that moving away from the Civil Disobedience topic at this point makes sense.

---

## 6. Proposed changes to Congress. (Joe Bowden)

[W Congressional Debate - New Rules Proposal \(1\).docx](#)

Rationale: We have been using a lot of “unspoken” rules in Congress that are not necessarily documented in any organized way, for years. It's time to document and organize the rules and update some of the verbiage.

In the proposed document, significant changes include:

1. Reference to Congressional Debate as a “required event” rather than a “required speech event” (3.2)
2. Statement of philosophy (3.2.1)
3. Authorizing legislation deadlines (3.2.2.1.1)
4. Clarification of Super Session, when it should and should not be offered (3.2.2.3.3)
5. Authorizing time limits on debate or in-session recesses (3.2.3.1.4)
6. Explanation of how questioning should be conducted, including the concept that the questioner controls the exchange subject to the time limits, as well as the discouragement of prefacing. Also includes how judges should evaluate questioning (3.2.3.3.4)
7. Updated verbiage on evidence usage, including reference to proper source citation (3.2.3.3.7)
8. Updated bid rules to widen bid eligibility (top six minimum, plus top half and qualifying for Super Session) (6.3.2)

Comments:

- Support for doing whatever we can to eliminate pre-caucusing. (This is the national trend, too.)
- Congress doesn't really fit neatly into “speech” or “debate,” but it is a required event at speech tournaments in the MSDL.
- Clarifying when or when not to have a super-session made sense.

- Is there a way to clarify how congress and debate enters into Sweepstakes?  
The MSDL only runs States, but it would be good to formalize this across sanctioned tournaments that offer sweepstakes awards.

Thank you to Joe Bowden for going through our congress rules and updating and clarifying what we have in writing!

Motion to approve suggested changes: Sheldon  
2nd: Albert

**The motion passes without objection.**

---

## **7. Proposal to add POI to Novice Oral Interpretation (Br. Cavet)**

Was the omission of POI from NOI an oversight? (Answer: no, it was intentional).

POI is an “advanced” event, but it has (so far in the MSDL) had limited entry numbers. Because of the low entry numbers, if we include POI in the NOI category list, we may advance entries from POI to NOI over entries in larger events like PO or PR, even though the PO and PR competitors. Also, as an “advanced” event, we don’t usually have many novices competing there.

We did not pursue this proposal.

---

## **8. Discussion of Statement about Community Standards (See below) (Scott Caron et al.)**

We had a conversation about the proposed statement.

There is a desire to affirm to students that we want them to feel the freedom to openly debate ideas, but we also want them to understand that *words matter*. The way we move on in society is to tackle hard issues. We need to teach students to do that respectfully and with an open mindset.

The MSDL engages with an equity officer who can facilitate conversations about respect when they arise.

The proposed statement does not spell out any consequences. It is intended to be the foundation of conversations about how words and actions impact others, not to delineate consequences for students.

Together with the MSDL mission statement, this statement is intended to express our goals and values.

### **Proposed Statement about Community Standards**

A subcommittee of the MSDL Board has suggested the following statement be adopted by the league:

The Massachusetts Speech and Debate League affirms and upholds the following values and standards and expects those who take part in our tournaments to do the same:

### Inclusivity and Equity

We, the MSDL community, welcome people associating with any intersection(s) of identity and uphold that all members of our community deserve respect. We are made stronger by embracing the differences of our members.

### Dignity and Safety

We believe that the welfare and dignity of our community members must be protected and preserved. In practice, this means that all community members (coaches, students, judges, and observers) will be mindful of the impact and consequences of their words and actions. We share responsibility to act with the intention to protect the well-being of others, even when engaging with conflicting ideas and opinions.

### Integrity and Honesty

All members of our MSDL community must conduct themselves honorably, and must scrupulously compete within the rules of our events while promoting our community standards.

### Collegiality and Fun

We aim to support each other and create camaraderie even while being serious about competition.

Move to accept as amended and post on the league website, along with the Mission Statement: J.

Honeyman

2nd: Wexler

With 3 abstentions, this motion passes as amended.

---

### Announcements

- Amanda has put out a call for nominations for At-large members. They are due tomorrow.
- Big Thank-You to Greg for serving as President for the past two terms, even though the pandemic!

Motion to adjourn: Parker

2nd: Cohen

**The motion passes unanimously.**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:18 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Honeyman

Clerk/Secretary

---

Tournament requests:

Your School Affiliation:	Tournament Name:	Preferred Tournament Date:	Alt. Tournament Date	Events Offered (check all that apply)	Please list any Special Events:
Thayer Academy	Novice Fest	10/21/2023	10/28/2023	All MSDL Speech Events, Lincoln Douglas Debate, Public Forum Debate, Special Events	Big Questions, if advisable
Revere High School	Revere Fall Fest	10/28/2023	10/21/2023	All MSDL Speech Events, Lincoln Douglas Debate, Policy Debate, Public Forum Debate	Song Soliloquy
Waring School, Concord Carlisle HS, Manchester Essex RHS	The Averill Invitational	10/27/0023	10/28/0023	Lincoln Douglas Debate, Policy Debate, Public Forum Debate	It will have the usual Averill Invitational Halloween themes
Natick High School	Gracia Burkill Memorial	11/11/2023	11/4/2023	All MSDL Speech Events, Public Forum Debate, LD Debate	
Lexington HS	Little Lex	11/18/2023	11/18/2023	Lincoln Douglas Debate, Policy Debate, Public Forum Debate	We could offer BQ or World Schools if there is interest.
Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School	Lincoln-Sudbury Warrior Showdown	12/9/2022	12/2/2022	All MSDL Speech Events, Lincoln Douglas Debate, Policy Debate, Public Forum Debate	
Arlington High School	St. Nick Showdown	12/9/2023	12/2/2023	All MSDL Speech Events, Lincoln Douglas Debate, Policy Debate, Public Forum Debate, Special Events	Big Questions, Improv Duo
Natick High School	The Holly Festival	12/16/2023	12/16/2023	All MSDL Speech Events, Public Forum Debate, Special Events (please list below)	Broadcast Editorial, Original Literature, Extemporaneous Literature, Pentathlon

Newton South	Winter Festival	1/6/2024	1/6/2024	All MSDL Speech Events, Public Forum Debate	
Lexington HS	Lexington Winter Invitational (Big Lex)	1/13/2024	1/15/2024	Lincoln Douglas Debate, Policy Debate, Public Forum Debate	Depending on space we could offer BQ or World Schools
Boston Latin School	Keith West Memorial Tournament	1/20/2024	1/27/2024	All MSDL Speech Events, Lincoln Douglas Debate, Policy Debate, Public Forum Debate, Special Events	IPDA Debate, Improv Duo, Forensic Critique
Shrewsbury	The 29th Annual Mardi Gras Speech Carnivale	3/2/2024	3/9/2024	All MSDL Speech Events, Lincoln Douglas Debate, Public Forum Debate, Special Events	Team Improv (pairs)
Needham HS	March Merryness	3/16/2024	3/23/2024	All MSDL Speech Events, Lincoln Douglas Debate, Public Forum Debate, Special Events	Tabloid extemp, Freeze Improv, Impromptu Sales, Impromptu Storytelling, Mixed Duo, BQ
Chelmsford HS	TBD - State Debate or Speech Finals	3/30/2024	4/6/2024	All MSDL Speech Events, Lincoln Douglas Debate, Public Forum Debate	