

2010 MFL League Meeting
June 26, 2010
Milton Academy

The meeting was called to order at 1:19 pm by the president, Joyce Albert.

In attendance: Susan Marianelli (Milton Academy), Joyce Albert & Sarah Donnelly (Natick H.S.), Paul (PJ) Wexler (Needham H.S.), Lisa Honeyman (Newton South H.S.), Bill Cooper (Manchester-Essex RHS), Dan Sapir (Sacred Heart HS), Br. Cavet (Catholic Memorial H.S.) and Mark Fellowes (Revere H.S.)

- II. The minutes from the 2009 league meeting were approved without objection.
- III. The treasurer, Rob Croteau, could not be here. Joyce Albert handed out the treasurer's report. Our current balance is \$10,009.46. There were no questions, so we approved the treasurer's report without objection.
- IV. The 2010-2011 calendar was approved unanimously. We have 2 potential dates for the state tournament(s): April 2, 2011 and April 9, 2011. We may run 2 separate tournaments (one on each of those dates) or one large one on one of those dates. It will depend upon the site, which is yet to be determined.

We do not have on the calendar: a fall convention or a Hall of Fame tournament. We may hold the Hall of Fame ceremony at the Gracia. We also need locations for States for both Speech and Debate.

Novice tournament details:

Catholic Memorial is available on October 9th and has offered to host the novice tournament. This was unanimously approved.

Congress will remain as it has been at past novice tournaments – part instructional and part competition.

We will offer 3 rounds of novice competition and an exhibition round.

We will work on some sort of instructional opportunity following the 3 rounds for the novices. Perhaps, a Q & A after a performance? Split speech/debate? With debate – maybe do a 'real' debate rather than a fake one. The board will work on this.

Judge training will also be offered.

Convention

We will not do a convention this year. It has not been well attended in the past few years. We've brought in great people to speak and then there has been a very small audience. Given how much time and effort goes into planning it, it seems like it's not worth it.

We are interested in why the convention has been so poorly attended so we can consider how best to meet peoples' needs. Some schools have not attended at all. A few coaches come to help out and don't bring any students with them. Some students would like to go to sessions but are judging. Is it the timing? (Holiday weekend. SATs etc.)

Should we only do 2 rounds of competition instead of 3 so that some of the kids who are judging can attend sessions, too?

We are looking for feedback from coaches about this.

JUDGE TRAINING: We ask that coaches let the board know when they are offering judge trainings so that we can make that information available to area coaches so that they can send potential judges to be trained.

V. New Business. The following amendments to the Rules & Regulations to the MFL were proposed and discussed.

A. Congress (Wexler)

3.5.16.14 (new)

In Supersession, the first pro speech shall be followed by two minutes of questioning, as outlined below. The first con speaker shall likewise be followed by two minutes of questioning, as outlined below. Each subsequent speech on that legislation is followed by one minute of questioning.

Questioning shall be conducted in 30-second blocks during the one- or two-minute periods. Upon a floor speaker's concluding remarks, the presiding officer shall recognize all four questioners for a two-minute period (or two questioners for a one-minute period), who shall question the speaker in the order called on. During each 30-second period, the floor speaker has control of the exchange, but does not need to yield. When the 30-second period lapses, the presiding officer shall tap the gavel once, and the next questioner shall commence. There is no minimum or maximum number of questions that may be asked during the exchange. Any motion to extend either the length of questioning time or number of blocks shall be ruled out of order. The

precedence and recency priority system shall be used to ensure all legislators have an equal opportunity to ask questions.

PJ presented proposal (A). This proposal is limited to the super-session, where students have the skills and experience to handle this sort of scheme. This is how things were done in finals at TOCs this year and it was impressive to both Wexler & Cooper who watched it. There were a few questions and then the question was called.

Moved: Honeyman

2nd: Marianelli

Item A was passed as written – unanimously.

B. Speech (Cooper)

3.1 (amended)

Tournaments hosted by MFL schools which offer some, but not all, MFL speech events, will receive sanction for those events which substantially conform to MFL rules. Dramatic Performance, Duo Interpretation, Extemporaneous Speaking, Declamation and Original Oratory which follow the rules of either the NFL or NCFL are in substantial conformance. Oral Interpretation, following NCFL rules, is also in substantial conformance, but in a bid a bid in an OI division may apply to either Poetry or Prose, not both.

Tournaments added to the MFL schedule subsequent to the Spring Board meeting may receive sanctioning.

- There are a few tournaments in our season that offer some, but not all MFL events and this would open up more bid opportunities in some events. Manchester-Essex will offer some speech events and would like to be able to have them count towards state bids.

- Kids who travel often don't want to attend MFL tournaments because they want a weekend off from time to time.

- If we do this, tournaments may "cherry-pick" which events they offer. For example, some schools have strong philosophical feelings against certain events and may choose not offer them – partly because they don't want to and partly to influence the league's offering of certain events.

- Students and programs need to make choices about where their priorities are. Is MFL competition/states more important or is traveling? Or can programs come up with a way to balance the two?

- 2 tournaments out of 9 are not so hard to make it to in order to qualify. Local tournaments are strongly dependent upon participation for financial reasons and competitive reasons. We want to encourage programs to bring kids to the local tournaments.

At this point, Bill Cooper withdrew (B), (C), (E), (F), (J), (K), (M), (N) and (O).

C. Congress (Cooper)

3.5.16 et seq. (amended)

Change the name of "Student Congress" to "Congressional Debate" throughout the rules.

In the event this individual amendment fails, the term "Congressional Debate" in any other amendment text shall be changed automatically to "Student Congress".

D. Congress (Cooper)

3.5.16.1 (amended)

Bills and Resolutions for debate must be submitted in advance of the tournament and be approved by the Student Congress Chair. The Student Congress Chair will review the proposed legislation and will accept or reject it based upon its suitability for debate and compliance to the composition guidelines.

The purpose of this proposal is to clarify the basis by which the Congress Chair may reject proposed legislation.

Amended by adding the text in blue above.

Moved to amend: Cooper

2nd: Honeyman

Amendment approved unanimously.

Question Moved: Honeyman

2nd: Marianelli

The motion, as amended, passes unanimously.

E. Congress (Cooper)

3.5.16.2 (replacement)

Each preliminary chamber of Congressional Debate shall determine its docket from the bills available to it. Tournament directors may, in the invitation, specify alternate means of docket selection, provided such means are covered in the invitation. The means specified in the invitation may be changed by the Tournament Director no later than the release of the bill packet for the tournament.

F. Congress (Cooper)

3.5.16.3 (amended)

The parliamentary authorities for Congressional Debate shall be Robert's Rules of Order, the National Forensic League's Congressional Debate Manual, and the MFL "One Sheet" regarding parliamentary procedure. The Tournament Director shall, in advance as far as practicable, indicate priority in the event of conflict. This rule may be changed by a motion to suspend the rules by a Congressional Debate chamber unless stipulated by the Tournament Director.

G. Congress (Cooper)

3.5.16.5 (amended)

The Presiding Officer (PO) is a member of the chamber who ensures that the rules of order and precedence are followed in accordance with the role outlined for presiding officers in Robert's Rules of Order. The Congressional Debate chamber will elect presiding officers for terms specified by the chamber at the beginning of the Congressional Debate session on a preferential ballot. The Tournament Director may designate an alternative means of choosing the PO. In all cases in which the PO is a member of the chamber, all judges will be reminded orally and on their ballots/ranking sheets, that the PO is eligible for advancement.

Each Presiding Officer will be judged as having given a speech by the scorers after each hour of service as PO.

Each Presiding Officer will be marked for having giving one speech per hour for purposes of precedence after they complete their term as PO. The

speech shall be considered to have been given at the beginning of their time as PO.

The purpose of (G) is to codify current practice and place it in our formal Rules & Regulations document.

Moved: Wexler

2nd: Fellowes

The motion passes unanimously.

H. Congress (Cooper)

3.5.16.7 (amended)

~~Visual aids and props, such as Charts and graphs and other physical objects,~~ are permitted. Handouts to an individual member and/or some and/or all members of a chamber are forbidden. Judges may consider the effectiveness of the use and accuracy of such **charts & graphs** ~~visual aids and props~~ in their evaluation of competitors. This rule may not be changed by a motion to suspend the rules.

- Visual aids are certainly used in the U.S. Congress. They are also allowed in the NFL Congress. Is there any reason why they should not be used in the MFL?

- In college competition, peoples' experiences have been that props tend to replace oral arguments. It can become, "it doesn't matter how great your speeches are, it's about how flashy your props are."

- If we allow props, judges would have to consider the effectiveness of the charts or graphs and visual aids.

- A chart or graph that substantiates argument is one thing. A prop is another. The possibility of becoming a 'free for all' increases.

- Should we try this for one year only?

Cooper proposed amendment as shown in blue above, eliminating the parts crossed out.

The amendment was moved: Albert

2nd: Donnelly

The amendment passed - 7 For; 1 Against.

The question was then moved: Cooper

2nd: Donnelly

The motion, as amended, passes: 7 For; 1 Against.

I. Congress (Cooper)

3.5.16.10 (amended)

By default, MFL Student Congress will have authorship speeches of 3 minutes duration with a 2-minute cross-examination period, and regular speeches will last for 3 minutes with the balance of time reserved for cross-examination. This rule may be changed by a motion to suspend the rules or by Rule included in the tournament invitation. Changes to this rule via tournament invitation may not be changed by a motion to suspend the rules. All changes to this rule must be approved by the Congress chair.

- The only change to the existing language is the last sentence (before the part in blue), in order to clarify practice.

Wexler Proposed amendment in blue.

Move to amend: Wexler

2nd: Donnelly

Amendment passes unanimously.

Proposal, as amended, moved: Wexler

2nd: Marianelli

Motion, as amended, passes unanimously.

L. State Championships (Cooper)

6.1 (amended)

The League shall annually appoint a State Championship Tournament Committee. This Committee shall include the League Event Chairs (Congressional Debate Chair, Debate Chair & Speech Chair), and other members as appointed by the Board. The State Championship Tournament Committee shall plan and run the State Championship Tournament. The State Championship Tournament shall be held on one weekend and feature all Debate, Speech, and Congressional Debate events, unless school holidays and/or NFL District qualifying tournaments and/or Drama Festival schedules interfere with either the combination of events or holding the tournament on one weekend. The Chairs of each event group will serve as the tournament directors for their respective divisions of the State Championship tournaments. The invitation will be coordinated by the President, with input from each of the Chairs. The Chairs set policy and decisions left to their discretion by the Rules and Procedures.

If at all possible, the State Championship tournament shall begin on Friday evening and end on Saturday, and shall feature four speech preliminary rounds and five debate preliminary rounds. State Tournament Committee may amend the timing and number of rounds, but such amendment shall not be declared before the Martin Luther King, Jr. nor after the Presidents' Day federal holidays. The MFL shall attempt to hire, within its budgetary constraints and those of its members, neutral judges for all events at a competitive rate.

- a. Debate events shall clear to quarter final single elimination rounds except for events with 12 or fewer events. Events with 9-12 entries shall clear to a partial quarter-final round, with the 1st and 2nd seeds receiving byes to semi-finals. Events with 5-8 entries will clear to semi-final rounds. In the event that a debate event has more than 25 entries, additional elimination rounds may be added.
- b. Speech events shall clear to semi-final rounds, except for events with 16 or fewer events. Events with 7-16 entries shall have a fifth preliminary round. The cumulative score of all preliminary rounds, plus any semi-final and final round ballots, shall determine final placement.

- It is better to put everything on one weekend. It makes it a much bigger deal. Both State tournaments felt like ordinary tournaments this year. Having it all on one day would help solve this issue.

- There are few schools that can hold both. Maybe a university?

- Philosophically, many agree with both the concept of one tournament and increasing number of rounds.

However, the logistics may outweigh the benefits in this situation. Who are we going to get to judge on Friday? How are schools going to pay for buses on two days? If we could do it one day, that would be a lot better.

- By doing everything on one day, kids can't do both debate & IEs at States, which they can do now. It limits opportunity.

- Do we want to make this a change to our rules document? Does that tie our hands too much?

Motion moved: Donnelly

2nd: Fellowes

The motion fails: Yes: 1; No: 7.

M. Speech (Cooper)

6.3.3 (new)

Advancing to an elimination round at one of the tournaments listed in 6.3.3(a) in the events listed in 6.3.3(b) count as a single bid for MFL States. No more than one bid from these tournaments may count towards the State Championship Tournament.

- (a) Tournaments qualifying for bids under this rule are: Yale, Glenbrooks, Princeton, George Mason University, Columbia, Harvard, University of Pennsylvania, and any other tournament with at least five MFL schools in attendance, regardless of events entered or prior approval.
- (b) Events eligible for these bids, provided the tournament rules are substantially the same, are: Dramatic Performance, Duo Interpretation, Original Oratory, Extemporaneous Speech (regardless of US/International split or use of Cross-Examination), Declamation, Oral Interpretation (but the bid applies either to Poetry or to Prose at the coach's discretion, not to both events).
- (c) For purposes of (b), a tournament's rules are "substantially the same" if they declare that the tournament is following either the rules of the National Forensic League or the National Catholic Forensic League for the event.

N. Congress (Cooper)

6.5.2 (new)

Advancing to an elimination round at a tournament listed in 6.5.2(a), (b), or (c) in Congressional Debate counts as a single bid for MFL States. No more than one bid from these tournament s may count towards the State Championship Tournament.

- (a) Tournaments qualifying for bids under this rule are: Yale, Glenbrooks, Princeton, Columbia, Harvard, University of Pennsylvania, any tournament with a Congressional Debate bid to the National Tournament of Champions, and any other tournament with at least five MFL schools in attendance, regardless of events entered or prior approval.
- (b) All CFL qualifiers from the Boston and Worcester Diocesan CFL Congressional Debate qualifiers.

(c) All NFL qualifiers from the New England District of the NFL, plus the first alternates in the Senate and all House chambers.

O. As an alternative for Items M and N above, amend the incipit of each item to read as follows, the ellipses indicate the particular section/subsection references in items M and N:

Advancing to an elimination round at one of the tournaments listed in ... count as a half bid for MFL States. No more than two half-bids from these tournaments may count towards the State Championship Tournament.

P. Speech (Sapir)

Reconsideration of Dramatic Performance decision made at previous League Meeting.

- Motion (P) asks us to revert back to the DI/HI rules as they were before.

Some coaches & students have never been in favor of this rules change.

Jim Honeyman could not be in attendance and sent a letter in support of keeping DP to be read at the meeting. Sapir then commented about the things with which he did not agree.

- Comedy and Drama are not the same animal. There are elements of both in each piece. But, they are two separate genres.

- NFL vs NCFL positions are historical. One not better or worse than the other.

- It's not about numbers of trophies.

- Can we trust audiences/judges to make the distinctions that are being asked of them. Keeping DP requires a more nuanced understanding of performance.

- Some national tournaments use DI/HI and others use DP. It's not a clear split.

- Piece selection – when we offer DI/HI, pieces in between the two extremes get bounced back and forth because judges make suggestions that the piece doesn't really belong in the event in which it is being performed. It's frustrating for kids to have to

keep changing the event and get marked down because a piece doesn't fit neatly into either DI or HI.

- Less experienced judges have difficulty comparing dramatic and humorous pieces. It can disadvantage one genre. (Although there was no agreement upon which genre was disadvantaged.)

- From a competitive point of view, kids should have the opportunity to do HI/DI before NFLs. On the other hand, we need DP opportunities before NCFLs. It's a tough call.

- Perhaps we should keep DP for one more year and reconsider.

- Initial reaction last year at one school was that they hated the idea of changing from DI/HI to DP. But, by the end, they felt it was good. They were sorry more kids couldn't go to States because there was only one interp event instead of two, but liked it otherwise.

- Many schools agree with the educational components and now that we've lived with it for a year, they have been swayed.

- We should not be making any rules changes based upon what other leagues do. Not all MFL schools are NFL or NCFL members. We need to do what we believe is right.

- If the issue is that judges can't compare serious and humorous pieces in the same round, why are we not considering splitting all the other events? Why not split DUO? Prose? etc. into "Dramatic" and "Humorous" divisions?

- Some people say DP provides a 'disadvantage' to the dramatic pieces. Others say the exact thing about the humorous pieces. We have no data to support either of these stands. Perhaps we should keep DP for next year and make a conscious effort to collect more data.

- Piece selection: On the college circuit they have only one event and it's equivalent to DP. Most pieces have about 4 minutes of humor and then a slam moment that pulls you into realism, into a dramatic moment. There are SO many pieces that don't fit neatly into DI or HI. DP is the only event that encompasses everything.

- Lack of opportunities? What are they? People keep mentioning that, but where are they? Loss of advancement is not the same as loss of opportunity.

- What do DI and HI prepare people for in real life? DP prepares them for reality. DI and HI teach kids to look for one emotion rather than the range of emotions.

- Humor is very difficult. Knowing when to pause, knowing when to wait out laughter, comic timing is very hard. It's a difficult skill to learn. It's not the same thing as drama.

- We (the MFL) are not here as a stepping stone to Yale or the Glenbrooks or other tournaments that offer DI/HI. We need to make our own philosophical decisions independently.

Question moved: Donnelly

2nd: Cooper

The motion fails.

Yes (go back to HI/DI): 1

No: 6 (keep DP)

Abstain: 1

Sarah Donnelly volunteered to facilitate a round-table discussion about this issue with students in the fall if there is interest.

New business. Lack of attendance at the League Meetings.

- We hope that by putting the date for the Annual League Meeting on the calendar now, more people/coaches will attend next year. So, we set the following dates:

League meeting: May 14, 2011

If, for some reason that will not work, the alternate date will be June 25, 2011

Other Notes:

Br. Cavet – offered to be a liaison to new/small programs in everything except Policy Debate. He would like to encourage more programs to become more involved in a more meaningful way.

Cooper – there will be more scrimmages offered at M-E next year for debate and, if there is interest, speech events. These will be offered on weekday afternoons.

Sapir – What do we do to try to increase participation in the MFL? Do we send out letters? Recruitment? Maybe send a letter to schools? Is someone willing to take this on? Put the mailing together and then support the schools that respond?

Can we get the governor involved?

Wexler – The Boston Urban Debate League would like to have a couple of tournaments a year where they use UDL rules for Policy Debate and include some of the suburban schools. Needham has volunteered to do this at their tournament as an additional event. He put this out to other schools to see if they would also like to offer this event at their tournaments. If anyone is interested, e-mail P.J.

Sapir (I think) – can we put some more of the college tournaments on the MFL website so people are aware of them and can plan?

Motion to adjourn: Sapir

2nd: Wexler

Approved unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:04, by the president, Joyce Albert.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Honeyman

VP/Secretary