

MSDL General Membership Meeting
9 May 2015
Milton Academy

Attendance

Joyce Albert (Natick), Josh Cohen (Newton South), Joe Curran (Revere), Sue Hennessey (Acton-Boxborough), Lisa Honeyman (Newton South), Jim Honeyman (Newton South), Bob Hutchings (Pike), Susan Marianelli (Milton Academy), Chris Sheldon (Bancroft), Debbie Simon (Milton Academy), PJ Wexler (Needham) and Peter Zopes (Chelmsford)

Also present: Sarah Donnelly (Natick), Patrice Jean-Baptiste (Milton Academy), Sheryl Kaczmarek (Lexington), Marc Rischitelli (Shrewsbury)

The meeting was called to order at 11:12 am by the president, Susan Marianelli.

Treasurer's report by Jim Honeyman. We have \$16,905.97 in the bank. We have a number of outstanding bills so our closing out balance for the year will be closer to about \$14,000. Once everything is paid, Jim will send out the final balance to the board. Taxes have been filed for 2014.

We discussed buying a couple of "hot spots" so that we have internet access wherever we are trying to run tournaments. Sometimes the internet goes down during the day when we are trying to TAB. At Speech States for the past 2 years the network has been poor and we have needed another way to access the internet. We need access to the internet in order to run tournaments, so we need to be sure we have a back up plan for when school systems go down.

Tournament Issues

I. General

1) Change to speech judge meeting process at the beginning of the tournament day – one for new judges and one for experienced?

Sheldon: For Speech judges - perhaps we have one judge meeting in the morning and ask newer judges to come at 8:30 for a more thorough "training" and experienced judges at 9:00 when we could do explanations of things everyone needs to hear such as rules for special events, building layout and ballot pick-up.

Tournament directors can facilitate this by putting a note in their invitations about times and locations of judge meetings for both speech & debate. We also need to be sure Congress judges know where to go and when.

General agreement that having Chris at the ballot table to answer questions and help newer judges has been extremely helpful.

We need to be sure tournament invitations include a note that explicitly reminds coaches to tell their judges their judge numbers. This could go out Friday morning in a quick email reminder the night before.

- 2) **Have a judge call time & location prior to finals. If a judge is not present when their name is called, there needs to be a follow-up with the school. Fine? Note to coach? Warning? Some judges seem to be hiding or purposefully avoiding picking up ballots so that they don't have to judge finals and they can leave early. We sometimes don't get the last ballot off until 20-30 minutes after the majority of rounds have gotten started.**

Having a judge call would be great, but how do we set a time? We never really know when it will be far in advance. As people hand in ballots, let's give them a time when they should be somewhere for a meeting.

- Perhaps a poster at the TAB table? If we guess wrong about the time, we can always ask people to come back in 15 minutes.
- There is a feature in Tabroom that we can use to text/email judges that ballots are coming out. In order to use this feature, we need to have our judges register for Tabroom accounts.

We also need to be sure there is someone who will do updates. As long as we communicate clearly, things should improve.

In order to help coaches monitor their judges, we should put a note in the packets if one of their judges doesn't show up or can't be found. We'll try to figure out a way to track this.

3) **Judging qualifications and training**

This is a perennial issue. There were 2 judges at states that had never judged before, despite the requirement in the invitation. Is there a way to use Tabroom to prevent coaches from registering judges who have never judged in the MSDL before? We did not resolve this issue.

4) **Mandatory 16 rule for hosting a tournament.**

Rischitelli: Do we reach a time in the year where we no longer offer novice events? Can tournaments choose which events to offer? Can the sanctioning process monitor that each event is offered so that all events are offered an approximately equal number of times through the year? Some tournaments are getting too big. How can we help? Would allowing tournaments to make decisions, help them manage their space better?

In debate, if you are offering LD, you have the option of offering whichever divisions you offer (Novice, Varsity). Is Extemp analogous? Reading events?

We recognized that there was an issue, but did not resolve this.

5) **Clarity of 8th grade participation**

Our rules are a bit vague. We need to clarify.

L. Honeyman proposes: Eighth grade students may not participate in MSDL tournaments without the explicit invitation of a tournament director.

2nd: Curran

For: 10

Opposed: 1

Abstain: 0

This would require a change to our rules document as follows:

The MSDL consists of high schools. High school is defined as grades 9, 10, 11, and 12. Students in grades 6, 7 and 8 may attend MSDL tournaments only at the explicit invitation of tournament directors, and must do so as part of a separate team from a high school, even if the high school is the same school or school system as the middle school. ~~Eighth-grade students may compete in the MSDL if they are affiliated with an MSDL member chapter.~~

For: 11

Opposed: 0

Abstain: 0

6) Discussion about how league decisions are made. (voting)

According to our Rules & Regulations document, members who have paid dues may be voting members of the MSDL, with each member school allowed one vote. In a conversation with our lawyers, now that we are a 501(c)3 entity, the board now is the only group that votes on league issues. So, our rules & regulations do not match the reality of our new status as a 501(c)3. We need to resolve this conflict in language and practice.

As our organization is structured, member schools vote for the six people who will make the decisions (the Board of Directors). Those six then select the six at-large board members who join the board. The twelve then make the decisions.

This is not the only place in our documents where there are contradictions.

Joe Curran has been appointed to chair a committee to go through the entire rules & regulations document to find contradictions between that document and our Bylaws. He will create a committee to help. (Patrice & Jim have offered to help.)

7) Deadlines for dues payment. 35 schools paid their annual MSDL dues by the December 6th deadline. 17 schools missed that deadline, seven of which paid after March 1st, and one actually paid AT States. What is a reasonable deadline and what should the consequences of missing it be? I'm suggesting schools be required to pay dues/join the MSDL prior to attending their second MSDL sanctioned tournament of the year, whichever tournament that might be.

- Our current rules say that schools can't register for States until they paid their dues.
- Deadlines are good for school administrations and business offices, but they don't always move quickly to pay bills.
- Perhaps we could insist on dues paid *or* proof that payment is in process?

Schools get a lot more from this league than just the ability to attend the novice tournament and States. The MSDL pays for equipment (printers, toner, labels) and prepares tournament material such as extemp questions, group discussion questions and impromptu prompts. It is also the board that runs most tournaments etc. The MSDL creates the ballots we use, monitors event rules etc.

Rather than fining, we discussed several options and decided that, starting on December 1, we will only post bids for schools who have paid their dues. This should help put the dues paying issue on all coach's radar earlier. We'll see if this helps get dues paid in a more timely manner.

**Proposed by Sheldon: In rules & regulations document Change "will fine" to "may fine."
2nd: Sue Hennessey**

For: 11

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

8) Feedback on new ballots.

Sheldon: Reports that there have been generally positive responses overall. He has also received specific suggestions for changes. The committee will meet to make modifications. A few specific notes:

- Need to move where the time violation is positioned to make data entry easier.
- Coaches note that we are getting less written feedback for kids. We are getting check marks, though – so that is something positive.
- Remove the "box" for comments. Taking the boundaries off may make a difference.
- Can we actively advocate that judges write comments on the back? Noted that newer judges may not be comfortable doing that.
- We should look at our judge manual and make sure there are descriptors there for help.

Joyce asks if there is interest in another committee to do a redesign? (Yes). Redesign over the summer and bring it back in the fall. (Joyce, Debbie, Chris, Lisa & Peter). The committee will also look at the judge handbook and all associated manuscripts and update everything.

Chris is also going to try to film his judge training video and will share it if it comes out well.

II. States

1) Should we allow schools to leave with ballots prior to the end of STATE finals? There is a lot going on after finals including the SAB elections & senior send-off.

After some discussion we came to the conclusion that while we do not want to alienate schools that felt they must leave before the end of the day, students have a lot to gain from staying through finals. Even if they are not competing in finals, students should watch the final rounds and learn from watching "the best of the best". The league also needs all judges to be present for finals. So, we concluded that we will give out ballots to schools that need to leave early as long as it is after

finals ballots have been collected. **This needs to go in the invitation.**

2) **Explore new name of Double Entry award.**

Debbie Simon did quite a bit of gathering of information about the early league. One name that comes out is “Elizabeth (Betty) Rowe.” Jim asks if there is anyone who was a particular proponent of double-entry? We discussed options for a while and decided we don’t need to decide right now. We need a deadline, though. That deadline will be the September board meeting. At that time, we will vote for a name for this award. In the meantime, Debbie will continue her investigation of early league leaders.

Event Issues

1) **Challenges for material. Should we DQ kids who use material in the wrong event if the only ones to notice are the folks at the TAB table or in TAB?**

The question is where does the challenge come from? Can it come from within the TAB room or must it come from someone who is in the room, watching the round? General opinion is that if there is a rules violation and anyone catches it, then we should follow through. We want to be sure we handle the situation with sensitivity when it arises.

2) **Are group discussion topic areas too broad?**

Greg reports that some coaches have indicated that the topic areas are too broad. Should we give out the topic sub-categories in advance, too? These sub-topics should not be extremely specific so that pre-written speeches can be brought into the rounds, but specific enough so students can focus their research to inform the discussion. This will be a recommendation to tournament directors. (Greg & Mark Fellowes will keep this in mind as the “Group” gurus.)

3) **Is DEC evolving into character driven “presentations” that are more like DPs? Is that a problem? Can/Should we do anything about that?**

TED Talks have redefined what public address looks like. Do we really want to try to define declamation as one thing or another? This is an evolving form of communication. We do need to be clear that Declamation is not an “impersonation.” It’s an “interpretation.” A note was made that Original Oratory is trending towards more drama as well.

4) **New Congress Ballots**

PJ presented revised ballots and people gave him feedback about potential tweaks that could be made to improve them. He will make revisions and run them by all of us at the fall meeting.

League Issues

1) **History of the MSL. Where do we go from here?**

Debbie & Sarah will synthesize the historical information that Debbie has been collecting from

some of the historical leaders of our league so we can post it on the website. They will work on this over the summer.

Also suggested: We list State Champion teams and kids for the past few years on the website, too?

2) MFL vs MSDL?

When we originally voted to go to the MSDL, we agreed we would re-visit the issue in two years. It has been two years, so we are revisiting the issue now. Greg suggests that we have a history as the MFL and we should honor our own history by keeping our original name. Others pointed out that even if we have changed our name, our history is still with us.

Some ask if the word “forensics” lost its connection with public speaking? “Forensics” is more equated with CSI. The MSDL is a clearer name in that it reflects what we do more obviously.

The cost for changing our name or keeping the current name is not significant enough to be a deciding factor. (We have a URL to change, bank account/checks etc.)

**Motion by Curran: We change the name of the organization from MSDL to MFL.
2nd by PJ Wexler.**

Affirm: 3

Oppose: 6

Abstain: 2

The name of the organization will remain: “Massachusetts Speech & Debate League.”

4) Struggling new schools – how do we help them?

5) Increasing membership with new schools?

It was proposed that one of the new at-large positions take on this responsibility.

New Business

Josh asks that we purchase a scanner for the league for use at debate tournaments.

Curran: Josh is granted up to \$300 to buy a new scanner for league use.

Sheldon: 2nd

Passes unanimously.

Calendar – (See attached)

Motion to adjourn: Greg Cunningham at 3:18 pm

2nd by PJ Wexler

The meeting was adjourned at 3:18 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Honeyman Secretary/VP