

MSDL Annual Meeting Minutes
Saturday, May 4, 2019 - 11:00 AM
Natick High School Library

The meeting was called to order at 11:09 AM by the president, Amanda Parker.

Board Members Present: Joyce Albert (Natick), Josh Cohen (Newton South), Greg Cunningham (Needham), Sue Hennessey (A-B), Lisa Honeyman (Newton South), Jim Honeyman (Newton South), Sheryl Kaczmarek (Lexington), Adam Nir (Needham), Amanda Parker (Natick), Marc Rischitelli (Shrewsbury), PJ Wexler (Needham)

Note: There are representatives from 11 schools present. So, for all votes on rules changes, the total should be 11.

Amanda opened the meeting by welcoming everyone, letting folks know how the meeting would run etc. Each item on the agenda will be open to 10 minutes of discussion, after which a vote can be taken. If more time is needed, up to 5 more minutes can be allocated.

1. **The 2019-2020 Calendar** was presented. We discussed when to hold the novice tournament. Josh presented concerns about conflicting with the PSATs - which makes it hard to get enough judges. Our only alternative is to run the tournament a weekend earlier. It's Columbus Day weekend - and also earlier, so it will make it harder to get novices up to speed. But, it's not earlier than we've run it several times in the past, so it doesn't present a new challenge. Walpole's preferred hosting date is October 19. After some discussion, Amanda took a straw vote regarding which date to run the tournament on.

Straw vote results: 6 for the 19th. 6 for the 12th. 6 abstained.

We'll stick with the for now 19th for a combined tournament. Amanda will reach out to the Walpole coach to talk about dates and also consider the option of running two separate novice tournament: one for speech & one for debate.

MSDL Calendar 2019-2020

September

- 9/21/19 Boston Latin School Debate Tournament (Debate & maybe Congress)

October

- 10/19/19 Novice Tournament @ Walpole (Speech & Debate, back up date: 10/12)
- 10/25-26/19 Tim Averill Invitational @ Manchester Essex (Debate Only)
- TENTATIVE - 10/26/19 Tournament of Terror @ Dighton Rehoboth (Speech only, back up date: 10/19, pending new coach coming on board)

November

- 11/9/19 Gracia Burkill Memorial @ Natick (Speech only, back up date: 11/16)
- 11/16/19 Little Lex @ Lexington (Debate only)

December

- 12/7/19 Lincoln Sudbury Warrior Showdown (Speech & PFD)
- 12/14/19 The Holly Festival @ Natick (Speech only)

January

- 1/11/20 The Winter Festival @ Newton South (Speech & PFD)
- 1/18-20/20 The Lexington Winter Invitational (Debate only)

February

- 2/29/20 Mardi Gras @ Shrewsbury (Speech, LD & PFD)

March

- 3/7/20 Brandeis HS Debate Tournament (LD & PFD)
- 3/21/20 March Merryness @ Needham: Speech & Debate
- 3/28/20 State Debate Tournament @ Chelmsford

April

- 4/4/20 State Speech Tournament @ Acton Boxborough
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2. Treasurer's Report

Jim reported that our income currently exceeds our financial needs. We are building up money in our account that we are not spending. Our major expenses are trophies at states and custodial fees for league run tournaments. Jim asks if people have ideas about what we should do with our money, they should email him. He'll compile what is suggested and share it with the board. Some ideas that have been floated: no charge for States? Cut/eliminate league dues? Insurance for schools that have to cancel due to weather?

If you want to see a breakdown of expenses for the 2018-2019 season, contact Jim.

3. **Announcement from BDL:** Boston Debate League is hosting its annual Coach Training August 5-9 at Suffolk University. We are glad to host any MSDL coaches that are interested in attending. Typically, our schedule focuses primarily on policy debate teaching all day Monday and Friday, and afternoons on Tuesday through Thursday. We have team building and general coaching strategies that would be applicable to any program on the mornings of Tuesday - Thursday. Last year, two coaches attended some of these morning sessions and then had afternoon sessions focused on Public Forum debate led by Keith West. This could be replicated for this season, and even expanded to other events if more MSDL coaches are willing to run afternoon training sessions. Please contact Roger Nix at rnix@bostondebate.org for more information.
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4. **Open Discussion:** Online Ballots - What is working, what isn't? What can we do better? (Chris Sheldon).

Sarah: Yay Amanda & Chris! You guys have done such an amazing job making online balloting a success this year! The NCFL is using Amanda's template to train judges at NCFL Nationals this year!

Some of the camaraderie has been lost. Maybe board members should take turns being in the judge lounge and halls during the 10 minutes before rounds?

We can address some of the balloting issues in TAB by doing spot checks.

Great that more board members can get out and judge now. (There's time now)
Concerns about making sure all criteria for judging be made available to judges on the ballots.

Comments about students seeing comments about other student performances: It's not necessarily a bad thing for students to see comments about other student performances if a judge wants to make them generally available in the RFD section. But judges should maintain control of what gets sent to everyone.

There are things mentioned in the comments that affect clarity that need to be changed. We need to figure out how to get those changes made.

Feedback will be used to help improve this process. Amanda will submit a ticket to make improvements/changes over the summer in hopes of getting some of those addressed.

Online Ballot Feedback post Speech States 2019

- My biggest complaint is that it doesn't show all your known rounds in advance. I was talking to my daughter and said I didn't know my schedule and she told me that I'm judging this and that rounds. When I asked her how does she know, she said that it's all posted on the board with all the room assignments. So, if this information is known and available in paper form, why isn't it available online in the app?
- I really enjoyed the online ballot experience.
- An easy list of competitors that could be copy pasted into a word doc. Really something at the top of the round that could be c/p into a word document very quickly and then people could just leave comments as they go. Almost like a template format for people. No one template fits all, but just a thought of tabroom possibly having some more thought put into the user interface experience if the MDSL communicates with the tabroom runners at all.
- As a judge, I did feel a little disconnected from the tournament. Unlike a paper ballot situation where there is ready interaction with tab and the tournament, judging with online only felt very much like a holding pattern and then being told to hurry up and go and then back to judges lounge. Not sure if that is just what the new world will look like. Writing this, I am thinking if I had had a team there with me, it would have been nice to know I could spend time with them instead of being holed up in the JL waiting for a ballot.
- I was lucky enough to get a heads up on my likely schedule, so I knew when to expect a ballot, I know others felt more on edge about if they would have a ballot or not. If possible in tabroom, perhaps a morning dance card with the initially scheduled rounds and "on call" would help someone map out their day. Also would feel more "checked in" in the morning than just being at the JL and then getting a tabroom blast.
- A warning of a bit more than 15 minutes would also be helpful for the blast. I understand there are concerns about shooting out too early, but final confirmation only 15 minutes before puts some pressure to gather up things, find a restroom, and get to the round without feeling behind. Perhaps 30 minutes would be good. Also a text 30 minutes ahead saying "please stay on call in case of plugs" or "round off!" would go a long way to feeling more in the loop with the tournament.
- More outlets in the JL is definitely a must though for the experience. ABHS was a fantastic host and I felt very taken care of except outlets were scarce in the JL itself and only located in 1 point. Though it was easy enough to charge during rounds usually. It would still also have been nice to have a few more outlets in the JL.

- I have enjoyed online ballots. The only challenges I have personally encountered are related to WiFi. While I had no problem yesterday, I had issues with WiFi reception at the other locations where I judged. I was unable to depend on the WiFi and had to re-create a ballot after the fact. It was enormously stressful.
- I do think some of the anonymity of the process is taken away, but I think that isn't always guaranteed anyhow. It doesn't necessarily bother me but I can see where it might be a problem for others (drop down menu identifies students by name). Some judges see the names and use them. I do the numbers only but we all know who the students are.
- On more than one occasion, my daughter has received ballots with all the comments for the round listed in the General Comments section. I don't know if that's able to be caught in the process, but it is something that might be of value to emphasize with judges in training as it can be easy to do. Other than that I think the online ballots are easy and effective.
- In general, I've been won over. I was skeptical at first, but, assuming the presence of a strong wifi network and assuming I'm working on my own laptop, I've found I can have my eyes on the performer more of the time and provide more (better?) feedback in the process. Even the one time I had to judge Group online, I used a Word doc and found jumping around in Word at least no more frustrating than jumping between paper ballots. (still frustrating though!)
- I admit to being a parent very reluctant to do judging if electronic ballots were going to be used. It was simpler than I thought, but I missed some of the information that used to be on the paper forms. For example is there a way to bring the boxes back that were in the top of the paper pages where you checked how the students were doing on different criteria. It helped with knowing how better to judge. What to be looking for. It helped to give better feedback esp if you are a newer judge.
- It might not hurt to put a few major reminders right there on the ballot in conspicuous print near the "start round" button, things like:
 - "If this is a semi-final or final round, DO NOT ALLOW ANYONE TO SPEAK until you are sure all three judges are present."
 - "Please verify the code numbers of all students in the room. If their code number is not on your ballot, do not let them speak for you."
- Would be great actually to get rid of the buttons about which Chris says, "We're not sure what these do". It also would be good if we could get rid of that last column on the right (speaker order) that shows up on the 5 "are-you-sure-you-mean-this" review ranks screen. You or Chris always say we're trying to get rid of that confusing column, but there it still awkwardly is.
- The online balloting mostly worked very well. I have one main suggestion: The old paper ballots provided more information about the criteria for the event. It is still possible to find sample ballots with these if you know where to look, but that requires some prior knowledge and extra steps. I suggest adding either a link to the sample ballots with criteria or a very brief summary of the criteria on the electronic ballots. This would be helpful for less experienced judges. In some case, more details on the rules for an event would also be a useful addition to the electronic ballot. I was not there, but my understanding is that the judges in the extemp finals did not know how to run the event and that a group of the speakers let the tab room know this.
- I'm a new judge this season and I love the online balloting, although I still write my feedback on paper first. What would be nice is if the "download sample ballot" for each event still worked, or a variant of that, to see some of the "what to look for" while judging. The event summaries, while explains what to expect, not all of them have a blurb of what a judge should look for, similar to the paper ballot (found in

my son's pile of stuff). Also attached is the error i get after clicking on the download link (it didn't for any of my assigned events).

Scoring / Comments

- Some judges get confused between 1 or 6 being the best. If it is possible to put on the screen that 1 is the best and 6 (if there are 6 students) is the worst, that would eliminate that confusion.
- Piece Titles if possible with the codes to help keep the kids/codes together more. I did miss the “double check” feeling of paper ballots where I would have to reconcile my critique sheets with my ballot. Online has the “Are you sure” but there was something mentally missing it felt like to really help me double check.
- This might be my personal thing, but I'm a rather slower typist, and what's more important, when I work on a computer I tend to immerse pretty deeply and almost to the point of blocking everything around me. Therefore, typing comments on a computer while listening to the presentations wasn't an option for me. I resorted to taking notes on paper and had to type them in after the round was over. With very short breaks in between rounds it was a bit challenging.
- In the final round, there were three judges in the room and while the two of us were doing paper notes, the third judge was typing on the computer right away. I found the loud typing pretty distracting and thought that the students would be distracted too. However, when I asked my daughter about this, she said she wasn't bothered.
- I did feel the save/submit interface felt very counterintuitive and I felt nervous each time I put in my comments about if they had saved or not. The instructions given by the tall gentleman at the tournament were excellent, including suggestions like using a word doc during the round.
- As everyone seems to say, the ability to address the entire round with a single comment in “general comments” is a good thing, even if I personally don't use it that much.
- The comment window for each student is kind of small. If I weren't able to cut and paste from my Word doc into the comment window, I would not be a fan. That seems pretty easy to do, at least for now, so no problem.
- I really liked the online balloting. I did find editing comments after rounds to be challenging because of the quirks of the software.
- If the useless buttons to SAVE ARE REMOVED, I got nothing else to tell you.

Stopwatch / Timing / Time Signals

- It would also perhaps be better if the timer on the right side of the screen went up, not down (as it's easier to give the students hand signals that way).
- Judges who forgot to give hand signals and then were confused as to if they should mark the students over time. Perhaps a check box if the judge forgot to give hand signals, so the tab room knows if the student goes over time it's not their fault? (or a statement on the screen not to mark them over time if hand signals were requested and not given?)
- I was confused about time keeping. The app gives you a stopwatch, but it doesn't record the time automatically. Moreover, there isn't a separate field to record the time on the ballot - I was told to use comments section for that, but would prefer an explicit place to save the time.

- If a timer is to be provided in the software, I'd like to see it function like an actual stopwatch. I'm more comfortable using my phone's stopwatch function.
 - While I like the built in timer, I think there should be an option to reverse the time at the start of a round (ascending or descending, depending on the preference of the judge). It would also be great if the timer had some indication (a flash, a small alarm) when time violations occur after the grace period.
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5. **Open Discussion: Judging at Speech Tournaments** - How do we improve the quality of speech judging & promote more speech coaches judging at tournaments? (Matthew Brandstetter & Patrice Jean Baptiste)

How do we promote the best possible arbiter in the back of the room judging our students?

Maybe the MSDL could do a judge training certification program? Every judge has to go through an online training and get certified? (Some other states do this).

Getting more board judges in rounds is a help - and we had general agreement that we can do that.

Post online some sample ballots: Helpful/Unhelpful.

There are resources out there: NFSHlearn.com has resources. The NSDA has some, too. An MSDL committee could look at those resources and see what's good that we can use with our judges. Then we can use our website to make links/resources available. (There are some resources on the MSDL website already, including copies of all ballots, the "quick guide" and some judge training materials.)

How can we shift the emphasis from "the rules" to what's really important when giving feedback to students? Judges are getting too hung up on what's a "rule" and not focusing enough on the quality of performance.

An enormous amount of the issues raised could be solved if we give judges "dance cards" at the start of the day so they know what events are coming up and when they have rounds.

6. **Open Discussion: Double Stacking of Debate Rounds** - Do we lose integrity of round experience by holding two debate rounds simultaneously in the same room? Perhaps we should limit the number of entries per school to solve this problem. (Matthew Brandstetter & Patrice Jean Baptiste)

Is this practice a net plus or a net minus? Are we sacrificing the integrity of the rounds and the ability of the students to be articulate and for the judges to concentrate in an effort to get more kids in rounds?

We are seeing more of this in national competition, as well. At NSDAs last year we were in a giant convention center with tarps between "rooms."

Limiting numbers really harms kids.

At the same time, we recognize that judges have a hard time focusing.

What kind of public relations issue do we have when we put parents as judges in “undesirable” spaces. Do we face as big an issue if we deny students the opportunity to debate by limiting schools more than we already do?

We don't hear anything “complementary” because it's not a *good* option. But, we don't get to hear from the kids who don't get to compete because numbers are capped. They aren't there.

Should speech events be limited to make more space for debaters at tournaments that offer both types of events? Maybe cut back on double-entry?

We have two separate issues: (1) Undesirable spaces and (2) Two rounds in the same space.

We need to look for more tournament host sites. More than one tournament at the same time in this state is a possible solution. But, more schools have to step up and offer to host tournaments. If we had more sites, we could separate speech & debate tournaments more often.

We took a break for lunch. :-)

7. Rules/Events Proposals

- a. **Proposal to stop all non-NSDA events after a student's sophomore year, or first year of competition if starting as a junior. This would not apply to tournament specific special events, those unique to a specific tournament, such as during the Holly, Pentathlon, Extemp Kiddie Lit. This proposal would still allow students to explore entry level events earlier in their competitive career, but then reduce the offerings and complexity of hosting tournaments with an increasing number of events. Reducing the events offered to strictly NSDA competition events would help veteran students focus on developing the skills to be competitive on the national level, while students can still explore some fun special events at each tournament. (Peter Zopes)**

We had a brief discussion about the rationale. The league cannot control what individual tournaments offer. So, we are only talking about the State tournament?

People questioned which NSDA events are we talking about? Only main events? All supplemental and consolation events? No one seemed excited by this idea.

Motion to end conversation: Rischitelli

2nd: Sheldon

In favor: 11

Opposed: 0

Move the question: Rischitelli

2nd: Sheldon

In favor: 0

Opposed: 11

The MSDL will continue to offer events as it has in the past.

- b. Proposal for Group Discussion topics. While having a broad Group Discussion topic for each tournament is great, provide three or four areas of focus upon which the students can begin to explore -also noted in the tournament invitation - would help focus the discussion. The event is fine, but lacks substance. In comparison to Congress or Debate, those events work because specific topics of discussion and debate are known in advance, while Group Discussion the vagueness of the broad topics leads to some confusion at the start of each round as to how the round is to proceed. (Peter Zopes)**

Motion Table conversation until Peter is present to explain his rationale: West

2nd: Wexler

In favor: 11

Opposed: 0

No action will be taken on this proposal at this time.

- c. Proposal to eliminate NOI at the State Tournament since we do not have novice events in other events at States OR add a Novice Extemporaneous Speaking final for non-advancing novices registered in Varsity Extemporaneous Speaking at States. (Joyce Albert)**

Joyce: Our current rules about NOI extend to States, which seems to be contrary to our previous choice to eliminate all novice events from States. Asks if this was a mistake?

Greg likes the additional opportunity to recognize more novices at the State tournament.

Marc thinks that having NOI at States wasn't part of the original proposal. It may have been inadvertently included? (We looked back at the minutes from last year and it looks like it was not discussed.)

Why do we offer a novice final round in some events and not others? What is our philosophical feeling about offering novices more recognition and how do we go about it?

Do we offer this in reading events because reading events are the most popular events for novices, as some suggest? Our largest event today is Group Discussion, but novices don't get a novice final in that event.

Is being consistent possible? Could we run lots of additional final rounds for novices at States? Do we have the judges and/or space? If we can't be consistent and offer an additional opportunity for ALL novices at States, should we offer that additional opportunity at all at States?

Motion to vote on proposal to eliminate NOI at the State tournament: West

2nd: Rischitelli

In favor: 8

Opposed: 3

The motion passes. NOI will no longer be an MSDL State event.

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- d. **Proposal to add the following statement to our reading event rules (PR, PO, KL, and PL) : “ Reading events are inherently different from memorized interpretation events. Students in reading events are required to hold a manuscript, which they should reference (as if they are reading) from time to time during the presentation. While students create characters by differentiating how they use their voices, stances and gestures in both genres, in reading events students should not move more than a step or two from the center of the performance space. In memorized interpretation events, students may move freely around the space.”** Rationale: We need to clarify MSDL rules about movement in reading events because students are receiving conflicting information about what is and is not appropriate. Some coaches and judges expect students to stand in one place (more or less) when performing PR, PO, KL, PL while others are telling students they should move around the room, much as one would expect students to do in DP or DUO. How much movement is appropriate? Is performing a reading event inherently different from performing memorized interp? If it is, how does it differ? I would argue that reading events are inherently different from performing memorized interp. One of the differences is that you don’t move around the room to create an environment in a reading event in the same way that you do in a memorized interp event like DP or DUO. Another difference is that students hold a binder in a reading event, while they don’t hold one in memorized interp events. Why do they hold that binder? Shouldn’t they be required to look at it - and at least pretend to read from it from time to time? Our rules are currently silent on these issues. (Lisa Honeyman)

Marc wonders whether or not judges really mean that students should walk around and/or memorize or if those are poorly phrased comments.

Chris suggests that even though these things are mentioned in the judge meeting, judges persist in making comments that make it appear that they are encouraging students in reading events to perform as if they are in memorized interp events.

Motion to call the question: West
2nd: Sheldon
Pro: 10
Oppose: 0
Abstain: 1

Motion for the proposal: Honeyman
2nd: Rischitelli
Pro: 10
Oppose: 0
Abstain: 1

The motion passes. The line will be added to the rules.

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- e. **Proposal to remove the restriction stating that students may not use their binder as a prop from our POI rules. (Lisa Honeyman)**

Greg: We did this very deliberately last year and many of us feel that this is in the best interests of the local league, not necessarily what’s best for other leagues.

Lisa: I love what our league does with POI and I think not allowing the use of a binder as a prop makes students focus on their oral delivery and not "binder tech." That said, as a coach of a student who will be competing at NSDAs in POI next month, I recognize that she has been handicapped by the fact that her material doesn't lend itself to the kind of flashy binder use other students at nationals will be using. I think we need to let students in the MSDL use their binders in the way that they are allowed to use them at other tournaments so that they are not put at a disadvantage.

Motion to end conversation: Rischitelli

2nd: Kaczmarek

Pro: 11

Oppose: 0

Proposal to remove the restrictions: Honeyman

2nd: Kacz

Pro: 9

Oppose: 1

Abstain: 1

The motion passes. The restriction against using the binder as a prop in POI will be removed from the MSDL rules.

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- f. **Amendment Proposal in Congressional Debate : "Section 3.3 shall be amended to add the phrase 'No visual aids shall be used.' at the end of that section. Section 3.3.7 shall be stricken** and all subsequent subsections of 3.3 be appropriately renumbered." (Joe Curran & Sarah Donnelly)

Sarah says visuals are not used very often, but she is in full support of the proposal. She read Joe's rationale since he could not be at the meeting.

1. Other events (extemp, debate etc.) do not allow visuals, why should Congress?
2. The U.S. Senate doesn't allow use of visuals, so why do we allow it in Student Congress?
Greg corrects this claim. The U.S. senate does allow use of visuals, just not demonstrations.
3. It leads to bad debate.
4. It rewards things other than good debate, such as artistic ability, ability to afford printing large posters of good quality, etc.
5. Judges can't see 8.5 x 11" paper held up in front of the room.

Both the NCFL and NSDA allow use of visuals.

INFO allows use of visuals - so there are other events that allow use of visuals. (Contradicting Rationale #1 - above).

Do we need to legislate this at this moment? It's such a rare thing. If a competitor uses a visual that the judges/parliamentarians cannot see, wouldn't judges use that as judging criteria?

PJ read a student statement advocating for visuals. The student said visuals are useful for things like graphs and maps that are more easily communicated by a visual.

Some ask: Isn't this a speech league? Shouldn't students be able to convey their ideas with words? (One coach said that the student's statement actually convinced him that visuals should not be allowed.)

Maybe being able to show a map with an obscure country on it is a good thing in an event that only allows 3 minute speeches?

What constitutes a visual aid? Power-point? Map? The suit a student is wearing?

Vote

Pro: 3

Oppose: 6

Abstain: 2

The motion fails. The rules for Congress remain unchanged.

g. Proposal to add Big Questions Debate as an MSDL event. (PJ Wexler) See attached at end of minutes for full rules description.

PJ suggests that it is a valuable addition to our debate offerings. It does not add a burden to tournaments, since all debate events do not need to be offered at local tournaments. It does mean it would have to be added at States.

Kacz asks if "all debate events" need be offered at debate-only tournaments. She is concerned about whether or not it would affect the Lexington tournaments if they didn't have space to offer Big Questions in addition to the events they already offer.

Adam asks why the rules for qualifying for states makes it possible for pretty much anyone to attend in Big Question Debate. PJ responds that they don't have to meet any qualification requirements at all for Policy Debate, so his proposal makes people have to jump through at least a minimal hoop.

Josh expresses concerns about space for adding another debate event. He asks for higher qualification standards if this event were to be adopted.

Keith suggests that we use similar qualification standards for PFD and maybe offer 2 wild cards for the first 2 years.

Josh also asks, "What's so different about "Big Questions" that makes PFD, LD and Policy not enough?" Do we need another debate event?

PJ says the focus is different from other events.

Keith points out that this event is still in its infancy. Maybe tournaments want to try it out for a little while before we adopt it as an official state event?

This event exists at NSDA nationals already and The Templeton Foundation will be offering money to teams that offer Big Questions for the next three years. Thus, this event will exist on the national level for the next 3 years at least.

Right now, everyone seems to want to do PF. Does this help spread out the students into another event?

Will this make our state tournament too big to handle? Will we need a new school to host Debate States?

Marc asks if PJ can make a friendly amendment to make qualification more stringent.

PJ proposes the amendment: Any debater who has achieved a winning record in Big Question Debate at an MSDL tournament during this academic year is eligible to attend the State tournament in Big Question in that year. Partners must both qualify in order to compete at States.

For: 5
Against: 2
Abstain: 4

The motion passes. Big Question Debate will be part of the MSDL State Debate tournament using the rules (with the amendment) as listed below.

- h. **Proposal to change the rules for State Debate to require judges to disclose decisions in elims (but not finals). Rationale -- Judges in split decision situations who make errors in filling out their ballot ought to discover their errors before it is too late. Also, nearly all tournaments announce decisions in elims prior to the final round as not doing so at State causes unnecessary anxiety for debaters.** (Sheryl Kaczmarek)

This will eliminate the possibility of mistake as to who advances to finals. It will also reduce student anxiety.

Motion to call the question: Nir
2nd: Rischitelli
Pro: 11
Oppose: 0

Pro: 9
Oppose: 0
Abstain: 2

The motion passes.

- i. **Proposal to change the rules for State Debate to allows tenths of points in Policy and LD. I would also recommend allowing tenths for PF, but tenths are less common in PF than the other events, so I will not defend that part of this proposal so forcefully. Rationale -- Experienced Policy and LD judges are used to tenths, and inexperienced judges are not**

used to anything, so tenths will not upset them. Also, given how small a difference there is between clearing and not clearing on speaker points, it would be better if 2 judges who did not want to tie points were not giving a 27, a 27.5, a 28 and a 28.5 because that would disproportionately damage competitors who have such judges. (Sheryl Kaczmarek)

Is this a disincentive to inexperienced judges? "False accuracy?"

This would be a help at States so that experienced judges don't have to end up rounding to nearest ½ point. Having fewer ties is a good thing. The difference of ½ of a point in debate is huge. It definitely impacts who goes on to out-rounds.

Motion to call the question: West
2nd: Nir
Passes unanimously by voice vote

Pro: 8
Oppose: 0
Abstain: 3

The motion passes. Judges will be allowed to issue tenths of points in Policy and LD.

- j. **Proposal to change the Rules for State Debate (and anywhere else we have influence) to permit Internet Use during rounds for the following purposes: Evidence retrieval from Dropbox, Stratus or a Google Drive (or any other online storage location I have never heard of) and Evidence Exchange between the teams/individuals competing in a round, and with the judge if a judge wants that.** I would also like to permit in round research, especially into the truthfulness/validity of cards read by the opposition, or in defense of the legitimacy of those cards, if a team does not actually possess the evidence, but I will offer that as a separate proposal if there is opposition, but that could also be a separate proposal. The only thing that would be prohibited, if we accept the maximum amount of access I am advocating, would be communication by any active participant in a round with anyone who is NOT an active participant in that round. Rationale -- More and more schools are issuing Chromebooks and other devices to all students in the name of equity. Such devices do not have sufficient storage for backfiles or a large library of PDFs, and some devices cannot be disconnected from the Internet. Also, evidence exchange between debaters is more efficient when the information is sent by email. Given the expectation that debaters be able to prove that their cards are legitimate (or prove claims that the evidence is not legitimate) Internet access seems pretty essential. Saying that neither Internet access nor electricity is guaranteed (as we say in speech about extemp prep) would be fine, but saying Internet access is prohibited is problematic. I would support ACTUAL disqualification for anyone who violated the no outside (or even observer) contact rule. (Sheryl Kaczmarek)

Josh: In general in favor. However, asks that the tournament director have the authority to ask everyone to get off the internet in order to make the tournament run, if necessary.

Chris asks - is this the national trend? (Answer is yes).

Greg: The NCFL adopted rules such as this this year. There is no way to police internet use effectively, so why restrict it?

Internet access can't be guaranteed. Competitors still need to be able to produce evidence if they can't get it off the internet. They still need their flash drives, but they won't need to take the time to deal with them if internet access is available.

Marc suggests that this be added to overall rules and not restrict it to States. (Friendly amendment).

What if an observer in the round emails/texts participants during a round? How do we police that? We need to make it a point of emphasis that students who are caught communicating with outside folks during the round will be disqualified.

Here's the wording about what we're voting on:

In round internet access in LD, Policy, PFD and Big Question debate events is permitted for research, retrieval and communication but not for communication with persons not actively judging or competing in that debate. Violation of communication rules will result in disqualification of the individuals involved. If a coach is in violation, it will also result in the notification of the principal/head of the associated school. Internet access is not guaranteed. A team that is unable to provide their evidence upon request is assumed not to have that evidence.

Pro: 8
Oppose: 1
Abstain: 2

The motion passes.

k. **Proposal to make the State Debate tournament a two day event. (Sheryl Kaczmarek) See attached.**

Rationale -- Only 4 of 14 4-1s cleared in the 90 team Varsity PF division and only 5 of 10 4-1s cleared in the 65 team Novice PF division. Given the variations in the experience of the judges, missing out on the chance to get to the elimination rounds at the State tournament because of a single loss is really harsh. I would rather see a world where some teams with two losses could also clear since presets could randomly pit some of the best competitors against one another, and there ought to be a way to climb back from that. It is important to the students to reach elimination rounds, especially at the State tournament, given potential bragging rights on college applications, and sometimes the lower seeds do beat the higher seeds. With our current structure, most of the folks who ought to clear will never have the chance to do so, based on the highly arbitrary measure that is speaker points. This is less of an issue for LD, and at the moment not really an issue in policy at all, but LD did clear very few 3-2s in either division and the LD judges pools probably had an even wider gap than PF between the most experienced and least experienced judges.

A two-day tournament would solve the double-stacking room problem.
It's easier on judges.

This isn't a rule change so we will have an open discussion.

Josh: A two-day tournament on a two-day weekend is a lot. In theory you need fewer judges, but you end up with needing two sets of judges.

Need a school that can host for two days -- and have the staff to support a two day tournament.

He suggests that we separate into more divisions (novice, JV and Varsity) to reduce the varsity division. (novice = 1st year; JV = 2nd year; Varsity is others). Maybe we could break to octos and let everyone else go home. So, for most people the day isn't much longer than it has been in the past.

Josh argues that the advantages of a one-day tournament outweigh the advantages of going to a two-day tournament.

There's a fear that smaller schools will not be able to attend. Our tournament may end up being smaller if fewer kids can participate. We depend upon the smaller programs participating in order to provide a diverse judge pool, especially in LD.

Would a two day tournament make our state tournaments more prestigious?

Marc commends Josh for his constant desire to tweak things to try to make our debate tournaments better.

Sarah: Many teams take kids to two-day weekend tournaments like Yale, Bronx etc. Why isn't the State Debate tournament worth two days? Can we prioritize the weekend for this purpose?

Keith: Can we work with schools to find ways to host two day tournaments? If we want the state tournament to be something students work for and see as a big deal, where they get a fair shake, we need to do what we need to do in order to make it worthwhile.

Amanda: Asks Josh & Kacz to chair a committee to address some of the State Debate concerns that were brought up. (They agreed).

-
- I. **Proposal to change judging qualifications for State Debate.** 3.3.5 Judging / 3.3.5.1 Qualifications. This proposal would add the bolded sentence below, not allowing any current high school students to judge at the State Tournament. "Varsity and open divisions may be judged by an individual who is at least 18 years of age and not currently attending high school. Novice divisions may be judged by any individual qualified to judge varsity and open divisions and by students who have earned at least 200 NFL points in debate or who have debated in at least 10 MSDL or Tournament of Championship qualifier tournaments. For the State Championship tournament, a Policy judge must have judged Policy at least once before or competed in Policy debate as a student. An LD judge must have judged LD at least once before or competed in LD debate as a student. A PFD judge must have judged PFD at least once before or competed in PFD as a student. **Judges for all divisions of debate at the State Tournament may not be currently attending high school.** The tab room has the authority to set aside this requirement if necessary for the tournament to proceed." (Matthew Brandstetter & Patrice Jean Baptiste)

Josh: Has not seen any evidence to suggest that current high school judges are inferior as judges for novice rounds at any tournaments, including States.

PJ: Sympathetic to this suggestion for elimination rounds. Suggests we may need to do some additional judge training with these student judges to help them learn how to word their comments in positive ways.

Adam: Doesn't see any problem with varsity students judging in novice rounds at any tournament, including States. It's a great service that we have varsity seniors that are willing to step aside to let

their Junior peers have an opportunity to do well at States. (For college applications, winning States is a big deal.)

Tammy: The number of parents who have never judged who judged at States this year was a disappointment. Having varsity students judge novice would be preferable.

Marc: To the extent that the varsity students who are judging are those who were not good enough to qualify, to what extent are they qualified to judge? Shouldn't the State Final Tournament be prestigious enough to give competitors the best experience possible?

Keith: Do we have the capacity to get enough qualified judges if we don't utilize varsity student judges? Education vs. Fairness. Keith favors Education. He suggests that varsity competitors are in a position to provide better education to novices than inexperienced adult judges.

Kacz: Lexington has a culture in which seniors do not compete at States so that juniors have a shot at doing well and can put that on their college applications. If we don't let the seniors judge, they don't get to come to States. Novices will be judged by adults at plenty of tournaments after their novice year.

Pro: 2
Oppose: 5
Abstain: 4

The motion fails.

New Business:

PJ is working on the history of the MSDL. He has gathered a lot of information and asks for more. If you have things to share about the history of the league, please send it to him.

Keith attended the "gender issues in debate meeting" and reported about some of the things that came up. One thing that came up was the nature of cross-fire and the extent to which judges use "dominates the conversation" as criteria in judging. Is this something that we can address in judge training? How do we improve that? He asks for help in creating guidelines that can be used in judge training.

Tammy asks if there is any follow up plan. What are we doing with the information we gathered regarding the experiences of girls? Part of the meeting was recorded, but not all of it and we don't think there were notes - so we don't have a complete record.

Sarah asked Keith, since he was in the room during most of the meeting, could he type up what he heard and then send it to Greg? (He agreed).

We talked about having an ombudsman at tournaments and some coach training. Jim gathered some resources and Adam called one person and will reach out to some others trying to find someone who could do training about gender issues for the league coaches.

Sarah said this is a conversation taking place on the National level as well and the NCFL is working on resources, too.

Marc publicly thanked Amanda for her service as president of the MDSL. (applause)

The meeting was adjourned at 3:01 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

--Lisa Honeyman

VP/Secretary

At the conclusion of the 2019 Annual Meeting, the new board had a quick meeting at which the following at-large board members were unanimously approved:

At Large Board Members

Bowden, Joe

Caron, Scott

Hennessy, Sue

Kaczmerek, Sheryl

Sheldon, Chris

West, Keith

We also set the date for the first 2019-2020 Board Meeting: 9/23/19

Respectfully submitted,

--Lisa Honeyman

VP/Secretary

Proposal to add Big Questions Debate as an MSDL Event

Submitted by PJ Wexler

ADD 3.3.1.4 Big Questions Debate

The Big Questions debating format involves opposing contestants debating a topic concerning the intersection of science, philosophy, and religion. Students can compete as individuals or as a team, this means rounds can be 1 vs. 1, 2 vs. 2, or 1 vs. 2. Topics will address deeply held beliefs that often go unexamined. Students are assigned a side of the topic before each round and present cases, engage in rebuttal and refutation, and participate in a question period. Recruiting average members of the public to judge and observe this event is encouraged but not required. In the event that a Big Question entry is composed of two students, the number of speeches shall be evenly divided between both members.

Considerations for Big Questions Debates

Schools which opt to host Big Questions debating format should know that the event is supported nationally by the John Templeton Foundation. While hosts should know there is the opportunity to apply to the NSDA for grant money to support the activity, in no event should the MSDL be held responsible for any financial support, barring the grant-making process described in the MSDL governing documents. Meeting the requirements of any grant is solely the responsibility of the hosting school.

Structure of the Debate

Each debater will make an opening presentation, laying out the arguments and reasons to prefer their side of the resolution. These are called the Constructive speeches, and they are five minutes long. The Affirmative side will always speak first. Following these speeches, there is a three- minute question segment. During the questioning segment, the Affirmative side will ask the first question. Following the first question, the questioning period is a free- flowing question and answer period where both speakers may ask each other questions.

Debate Round Structure

Affirmative Constructive – 5 minutes

Negative Constructive – 5 minutes

Question Segment – 3 minutes

Following the Constructive speeches and the first question segment, each debater will deliver a speech addressing the key claims and contentions of their opponents. This speech will address where there are weaknesses or opposing evidence, identify main areas of clash and how arguments interact with one another, rebuild their own contentions, and offer additional evidence for their position. These speeches are known as the Rebuttal speeches, though their content may not be entirely made up of rebuttal. The Rebuttal speeches are four minutes long and followed by a second question segment, which is identical in form to the first.

Affirmative Rebuttal – 4 minutes

Negative Rebuttal – 4 minutes

Question Segment – 3 minutes

The Rebuttals and question segment is followed by the Consolidation speeches. These speeches are three minutes long and serve to reduce the debate to its core elements. Debaters will focus on identifying the areas they are garnering the best advantage and strengthening the analysis and argumentation in those areas;; the form will not resemble a strict 7 “line- by- line” treatment of the debate. Additional evidence or analysis on existing points of contention will be given, but new arguments are not allowed.

Affirmative Consolidation – 3 minutes

Negative Consolidation – 3 minutes

Debaters will give a Rationale speech – a three- minute summation of the central argument(s) that prove their side and the reasons they have proven them in this debate. No new arguments are offered in the Rationale speech;; the speeches focus entirely on the activity that has taken place earlier in the debate.

Affirmative Rationale – 3 minutes

Negative Rationale – 3 minutes

Both teams will receive a three minute period of prep time to be used at any time (excepting in the middle of a speech which has begun) to prepare their speeches.

Prep Time – 3 minutes / side

The Negative and the Inverse Resolution

Big Questions is designed to pit opposing worldviews against each other in an effort to lead students to explore levels of argumentation that are rarely reached in other debate formats. For that reason, the Negative is expected to present arguments that the resolution is actively false. Negative speaker(s) should view themselves as the Affirmative on the inverse resolution – exemplum gratia , the Negative

on “Resolved: Socrates is a man” should view themselves as the affirmative on “Resolved: Socrates is not a man.” Any prima facie burdens on the Affirmative debater(s) apply equally to the Negative debater(s). Negatives must do more than refute the Affirmative case.

Argumentation

First, a debater must clearly establish a claim. This is generally a declarative statement establishing the point they are setting out to justify. Second, a debater must clearly establish why their argument is true or based in fact and logic. This is known as the warrant for an argument. Debaters need to go beyond asserting their claims and back them up with analysis explaining why the argument is valid. The warrant can come in many forms, but it is necessary for the development of the argument. Debaters may use logic or research to back up their claims. It is important to note that having an author make an assertion about a topic is not a warrant on its own. Third, a debater must provide an impact for their argument. This means the debater establishes why the argument is significant in the round.

Topicality

Students’ arguments must stick to the specific topic of the debate. The current topic has been designed with input from our pilot debate expert panel to ensure that the debate is timely, relevant, and engaging. Regardless of personal judging preferences, judges are instructed not to evaluate any arguments that are outside of the topic, and tab will automatically forfeit any debater that runs a position that is not about the topic. This rule will be strictly enforced by judges and tournament staff.

Cases

While there is no rule requiring a specific structure, there is a traditional approach to constructing a case. Often, a case starts with a well thought out thesis statement as an introductory lead- in to the position. Next, the case would define key terms and discuss the burdens and other metrics for successfully evaluating a round (sometimes called “framework” or “weighing mechanisms”). Following this introduction, the debater would offer contentions, or main arguments. Contentions may include quotes from qualified authors, scientific studies, or students’ own analysis. Given the five- minute time limit, debaters will prefer a two- point case with substantial depth of argumentation. Because of the more complex philosophical and science topics at hand, community judges may require considerable time with a concept to feel comfortable assigning it weight in the round.

Refutation

After presenting cases, students engage in refuting each other’s arguments. Students commonly refute cases by denying the validity of the argument. Additional strategies include, but are not limited to, justifying the reverse of the argument, showing the opponent’s arguments do not carry as much weight as their arguments, or taking out the link between the opponent’s argument and the priority they establish in the round. Students can pre- write their answers to arguments they expect their opponents to make. These are commonly known as “blocks.” Debaters will be expected to cover important arguments and questions in refutation;; however, with community judges, a strict “burden of rejoinder” – the assumption that every argument must be explicitly refuted or deemed to be conceded and true – is unlikely to be enforced. A common- person understanding of which arguments are important and which are not is a better method to evaluate what must be refuted. Presentation A well- delivered argument with good use of the performative aspects of speech is ultimately more persuasive than the same argument delivered poorly. Debaters will want to develop good communication habits, including eye contact, a conversational speaking speed and tone, road- mapping (or previewing and reviewing arguments in order they will be/have been addressed), use of space, and rhetorical devices. While reading specific text from authors as evidence is expected, fast- paced recitation of evidence is not what this style is designed to present. Rather, the students’ analysis and discussion of evidence will also be necessary. Because community judges will likely judge many rounds, the speed of delivery should be tailored for their comprehension.

Judges

Big Questions rounds are judged by coaches, community adjudicators, and volunteers who believe in the importance of debate and the mission of the National Speech and Debate Association in its Big Questions project. Judges are asked at the end of their ballot to decide “Who did the better debating?”. Each judge has discretion to decide what better debating looks like;;judges should consider argumentative aspects (important arguments won, number of arguments won, etc.) and may to a reasonable degree also evaluate performative aspects (tone, vocal quality, pace of delivery, rhetorical devices, etc.). When feasible, Judges should be encouraged to vote for a team which changes their initial inclination on the topic. Because of the nature of the debates, tournaments are encouraged to train judges to undergo a number of de- biasing techniques. Judges should be given instructions that stress the nature of leaving personal preconceptions outside the round. Additionally, judges will be asked to identify their initial inclination on the topic at the top of the judge primer and each individual ballot. As noted in the above paragraph, judges should be encouraged to vote for a team which changes their initial inclination on the topic, where feasible.

3.3.3.2- Insert the words ‘Big Questions’ “In policy, Lincoln-Douglas debate, and Big Questions...

3.3.3.3- Insert chart with ‘Big Question’ speaking times, as listed above

3.3.3.4- Add ‘In Big Questions Debate, in the consolidation and rationale speeches, no new arguments are allowed. In the rationale speeches, no new evidence is allowed except in reference to evidence first raised by an opponent in their consolidation speech.

6.3.3.4-Big Questions Debate

Any debater who has achieved a winning record in Big Question Debate at an MSDL tournament during this academic year is eligible to attend the State tournament in Big Question in that year. Partners must both qualify (although not necessarily with each other) in order to compete at States.

6.4.4.1 - Add ‘Big Questions’ to the events eligible to receive two wild cards”LD, PFD, and Big Questions debate.”

Proposal to make the State Debate tournament a two day event

Submitted by Sheryl Kaczmarek

Rationale -- Only 4 of 14 4-1s cleared in the 90 team Varsity PF division and only 5 of 10 4-1s cleared in the 65 team Novice PF division. Given the variations in the experience of the judges, missing out on the chance to get to the elimination rounds at the State tournament because of a single loss is really harsh. I would rather see a world where some teams with two losses could also clear since presets could randomly pit some of the best competitors against one another, and there ought to be a way to climb back from that. It is important to the students to reach elimination rounds, especially at the State tournament, given potential bragging rights on college applications, and sometimes the lower seeds do beat the higher seeds. With our current structure, most of the folks who ought to clear will never have the chance to do so, based on the highly arbitrary measure that is speaker points. This is less of an issue for LD, and at the moment not really an issue in policy at all, but LD did clear very few 3-2s in either division and the LD judges pools probably had an even wider gap than PF between the most experienced and least experienced judges.

Additionally, single-fighting all of PF and LD all day is REALLY hard on the students and the judges. No one gets a break and there is no way to avoid it because it is impossible to get in five prelims plus three elims any other way. Also, the 1 to 2 ratio of judges to entries (required by single-fighting) guarantees that schools are scraping to find anyone who will judge (regardless of experience) and then those judges get overworked and never want to return. On the other hand, a two day schedule would allow for double fighting, reducing the pressure on schools to bring so many judges and allow the

judges that are present to breathe a bit. It would also lessen some of the pressure to create enough spaces

for debates. Beyond that, schools might be more willing/able to bring bonus judges with double-fighting in prelims, but they can't because so many judges are actually required. It might also be possible to consider single fighting only on Sunday, which could end the day earlier, but that would complicate judge obligations. Assuming people are even willing to consider a two day State Debate tournament, here is a possible schedule.

Saturday

Registration 8 a.m.

Rd 1 9 a.m. (All Events)

Rd 2 11:15 a.m. (All Events)

1:15 Lunch Break for Policy

Rd 3 1:30 p.m. (PF and LD)

Rd 3 1:45 (Policy)

Rd 4 4:00 p.m. (All Events)

Everyone Goes Home 6:00 p.m.

Sunday

Rd 5 8:30 a.m. (PF and LD)

Semis 8:30 a.m. (Policy)

Rd 6 10:45 a.m. (PF and LD)

Finals 10:45 a.m. (Policy)

Lunch 12:30 p.m. (All Events)

Speaker Awards/Roses/Cupcakes 1:00 p.m.

Elim Pairings for LD/PF Released at the Close of the Festivities

Doubles (PF)/Octos (LD) 1:30 p.m.

Octos (PF)/Quarters (LD) 2:45 p.m.

Quarters (PF)/Semis (LD) 4:00 p.m.

Semis (PF)/Finals (LD) 5:15 p.m.

Finals (PF) 6:30 p.m.

I am imagining clearing all 4-2s in PF and in LD, up to a full Double in PF and a full Octo in LD.

Although Sunday gets a bit late for a handful of folks (assuming there are no closeouts), we would be including a lot more kids in elims (and make things much more interesting for their judges). Along with this, I would recommend requiring judges to remain for two rounds beyond the elimination of their last competitor in a particular event. rather than ALL DAY on Sunday, and would suggest that panels be selected in advance for the finals (and maybe semis) in PF and LD. I would be willing to commit people I am paying to judge policy to judging LD (or PF) later in the day on Sunday, in addition to having some of my kids stay beyond obligation or come in later in the day to take over in the novice divisions, and since I need to stay until the end, I would also pledge myself as either a VLD or VPF judge, wherever I fit best, assuming there weren't closeouts anyhow.