



State Qualification Rules 2004-2005

Voted and passed unanimously by the board on January 15, 2005

Board members present: Mark McNeil, Joyce Albert, Beena Koshy, PJ Wexler, Debbie Simon, Deanie Goodman, & Lisa Honeyman.

1. A student must earn two "bids" in order to qualify for State Finals in any event.
2. Any student who places in the top 30% (rounded up) of competitors in an event will earn one bid towards State Finals, based on preliminary round ranks. If there is a tie in ranks at 30% with students who do not fall in the top 30%, the students with tied ranks also earn a bid.
3. A minimum of 5 entries will earn a bid in any event unless fewer than 5 enter. If there are rank ties with additional students and the 5th place person, students with tie scores also earn a bid.
4. Every school may enter a maximum of 2 entries per event at States, except for Congress, where they can enter up to 4 qualified students.
5. All schools receive two "wild card" entries, which they can use in any event and even with students who have not earned necessary bids to qualify for State Finals. A New School (defined as a school that has not competed in the MFL in the previous 4 years) will receive 4 wild card entries for its first 2 years in the MFL.
6. The State Finals tournament will be double entry in all events except Congress but including multiple.
7. Multiple Teams and Duo Teams qualify for State Finals as a group (or pair.)
8. No student can earn bids once the deadline for dues set by the board has passed if their school has not paid its MFL dues.
9. No student who has earned a bid prior to January 10, 2005 can lose that bid as a result of these new rules.

Meeting: January 15, 2005 at Lexington HS.

The meeting began at approximately 6:45 pm.

Board members present: Mark McNeil, Joyce Albert, Beena Koshy, PJ Wexler, Debbie Simon, Deanie Goodman, & Lisa Honeyman. Also in attendance: Sarah Donnelly (Natick), Marc Rischitelli ((Shrewsbury) for the first half of the meeting), Trisha Griffin-Carty (Ursuline) and Chris Sheldon (Bancroft).

The sole purpose of this meeting was to reconsider the standards for qualification to the State Finals tournament.

Mark McNeil started by summarizing a variety of e-mails he received from a number of coaches. Most agreed that a high standard was desirable and that the two bid requirement was fine. They suggested that the bar was just too high to earn a bid and should be re-evaluated. So the board decided to maintain the two-bid requirement and look at the cut-off. Mark also distributed a packet of results that he compiled regarding currently qualified students in all events.

As a whole, the board maintained that in order to enter the State Finals tournament students should be highly qualified in their events. There was much discussion about how to achieve a balance, one that maintained high standards but also resulted in a viable State Finals tournament. At the half-way point in the MFL season there are events in which fewer than 6 students are currently qualified. There was concern that the board may have raised the bar too high when it previously voted in the new rules last spring.

The board debated where to set the new limit for a bid since it agreed that the current limit was too rigorous. Joyce Albert proposed a system based upon percents. Lisa Honeyman proposed a system based upon a cume cut-off. After consideration, the group decided to go with a percent cut-off since it treated all events equally and did not depend upon the number of students assigned to sections in events. Joyce pointed out that tournament directors often put more students in certain events such as Group, Extemp, Radio, and Poetry because each performance takes less than 10 minutes and fewer in sections of Multiple and Duo since they tend to run longer and therefore systematically make it harder for students in some events to earn lower cumes than in others.

Concern was expressed that a student who managed to qualify under the new system might not be able to attend the State Finals tournament because he/she might have very talented teammates who also qualified in that same event. Some schools focus upon a very limited number of events and have qualified many more than two students in those events. It was suggested that maybe every student who qualified should be able to attend and the 2-entry cap per event per team be eliminated.

However, many felt that this would undermine the evenness of the playing field for sweepstakes standings and the system was left unchanged. The core question of whether the State Finals tournament is a tournament about individual achievement or team excellence was left for a later date.

We also discussed the issue of very small events. Should every student who "made it to finals" in an event with 7 or fewer students receive a bid? Lisa brought up a system Judy Crocker proposed, giving half-bids to students who did not place in the top half of their event but were in finals. The rest of the group felt that half-bids were too confusing and we should either give them all bids or set a minimum number of bids to be awarded to any event. Given that the board had decided to go to a 30% cut-off system this issue became more urgent because 30% of 10 is only 3, so two students who would have earned a bid under the old system would not get one now. At issue as well was Multiple. At the moment only one multiple has qualified for State Finals. In an event that frequently only has 2 or 3 entries it was clear that we might not be able to run that event without a rules change. It was proposed by (?) and agreed by the rest in attendance that a 5 bid minimum per event would be granted.

While we were discussing the issue of "Wild Card" entries, Mark McNeil brought up a concern raised by one very small school that believed it was being excluded from State Finals by the more rigorous standards because their students could not meet them. He suggested a scale that would allow schools that qualified fewer students more wild cards than those that qualified many. Debbie Simon suggested that the solution to that issue was not to lower the standards for low-performing schools, but instead to offer them more support and training so that they could better meet the new standards. Chris Sheldon argued that as a new, smaller school, he found the higher bar beneficial as it required his students to work harder to meet the goal. He also pointed out that it would actually be a negative motivator for a growing team. If they qualified more people, then they would actually lose wild card entries as a 'reward.' Mark McNeil pointed out that under the new system many coaches had to pay attention to a much larger group of students in order to help them reach the necessary higher level. The board decided to leave the existing wild card entry system unchanged.

By allowing double-entry it is hoped that smaller schools will be able to enter talented students in more events, positioning them better in the field. The question of whether students entered in Multiple was considered. After much discussion it was agreed that in order to ensure the quality of judging and competition Multiple would be run three times rather than once and students could not triple-enter in that event.

There was concern about whether Congress will have enough students in order to actually run a meaningful chamber at States. PJ Wexler pointed out that at every tournament up until now 12 students have received bids. Even more would likely receive bids under a new 30% system since more than 36 students generally participate in congress at any given tournament. He suggested that this should ensure an adequate field. Mark McNeil provided a chart with the breakdown of students and the schools they represent that have currently earned bids. Because many students who have even a single bid come from only a few schools (8 from AB, 5 from Needham, and 6 from Shrewsbury) the board agreed that schools will be allowed to enter up to 4 students in congress at State Finals rather than the usual 2 for other events.

After the board voted in the 9 points (see above) Joyce and Lisa agreed to go back retroactively and track students who earn bids under the new system so that their coaches can be notified. There is

concern about getting information about the Hall of Fame Tournament since results are no longer found on the web and a hard copy was not distributed to coaches following the tournament. Lisa will contact Chris Palmer about getting a copy of the results.

Lisa brought up an issue from Judy Crocker (treasurer) that some schools paid their dues prior to the date recorded in the computer and should not be penalized for that. The board agreed to count bids from the date a school's check had been submitted rather than recorded and will leave that to Judy to determine.

Should dues-paying affiliate schools not in Massachusetts be allowed to enter the State Finals tournament? At issue is schools like Bishop Guertin and E. Providence that have no other State Finals tournament to enter vs. school from states such as NY that do. Schools in these situations must appeal directly to the board for permission to attend and decisions will be made on an individual basis. (I missed most of this part because I was trying to write up the 9 points so we could vote on them so I'm not sure what was actually said.)

The meeting ended at 8:40 pm.