

MSDL League Meeting
Saturday, May 6, 2017
Milton Academy, Milton, MA

In attendance: Joyce Albert (Natick), Josh Cohen (Newton South), Rob Croteau (Catholic Memorial), Greg Cunningham (Needham), Joe Curran (Revere), Sarah Donnelly (Natick), Sue Hennessey (Acton-Boxborough), Lisa Honeyman (Newton South), Jim Honeyman (Newton South), Amanda Parker (Natick), Patrice Jean-Baptiste (Milton Academy), Sheryl Kaczmarek (Lexington), Rodger Nix (BDL), Susan Marianelli (Milton Academy), Adam Nir (Needham), Amanda Parker (Natick), Chris Sheldon (Bancroft), Daniel Tucker (Xavarian), Paul J Wexler (Needham). Pam Sheldon (Bancroft) joined us late.

The meeting was called to order at 1:49 pm by the president, Susan Marianelli.

The minutes from the previous meeting, as posted online, were accepted by the board unanimously.

The Treasurers Report was given by the treasurer, Jim Honeyman. Our current balance is \$19379.78. Outstanding are a few things from the state tournament (flowers, cupcakes etc.) which will bring the total to about \$18,500.

1) Coordination of Tournament Dates Discussion (Roger Nix and Sheryl Kaczmarek)

Dates for BDL are mostly set for next year (a calendar was handed out). The BDL is hoping we can coordinate so we don't overlap too much since we often share human resources (judges, TAB staff etc.). They wonder if we would hold our State Debate tournament earlier because their coaches are done on March 10 and don't want to extend their season any farther into the year. This has limited student participation at MSDL Debate States in the past.

Roger Nix invites middle school debaters who would like competitive opportunities to enter their middle school tournaments.

He also invited coaches to the "Evidence-Based Argumentation and the Common Core" summer graduate course at Suffolk University on August 7-11. More information can be found at: www.bostondebate.org/in-school/eba-grad-class

2) Congress State Bid Rules (PJ Wexler)

PJ proposes that we formally bring the congress qualifying rules in line with what is required for speech states:

Proposed:

6.3.2: "Students must earn two bids to qualify for the State Championship in Student Congress. A student may earn no more than one bid per League-sanctioned tournament.

"All students who rank in the top six of their preliminary chamber, including students tied for

sixth place, shall earn one bid regardless of chamber size. A student who does not rank in the top six of their chamber, but who qualifies for the Super Session of a League-sanctioned Congress tournament, shall, similarly, earn one bid.

~~Students who participate in that tournament's Super Session but elect not to deliver a speech forfeit their bid."~~

There was some discussion about the idea behind this proposal, especially the part about requiring students to speak in the supersession in order to keep their bids. Do we need the last line?

Motion by Rischitelli: remove the last line.

Second by Albert.

Motion passes unanimously.

The board voted to approve of the amended motion (in blue, above), approved unanimously.

Result: The proposal (blue) above, has been approved.

Amanda asks that the congress results list get copied and put in the packet or be uploaded and posted on-line after each tournament so coaches can keep track of bids.

3) Video Taping of Students at Tournaments (Greg Cunningham)

Reminder: The MSDL Board must vote if this is going to happen at any league-sanctioned tournaments. Susan read the rules that are currently in the rules document, which prohibit both audio and video recording. There was an email about video taping at State Debate, although there didn't end up being any taping, and that was brought up because the board never voted to approve that video taping.

Joe C. indicates that at some circuit tournaments, judges audio-record rounds in order to prevent "clipping" in rounds. Emory and NSDAs requires parents to sign in advance for any type of recording (audio or video). We confirmed that the MSDL prohibits audio recording, even for this purpose, without a prior vote to approve by the board.

4) Ballot Quality Check at Tournaments (Greg Cunningham)

Greg proposes adding the following to the MSDL rules document in regards to speech events:

"An at-large committee member will be assigned each year to track issues related to specific judges. These issues may include poorly written ballots, missing an elimination round judge call, or other issues that impact a tournament. Feedback will be provided to coaches of judge affiliated schools. Schools may be fined \$25 by the league if an affiliated judge misses an announced elimination judge call."

The idea is to track the issues so we can address them and also give incentive to schools to get

their judges to the judge call.

Discussion:

Many feel that we should start by tracking the problems and addressing them before we attach a fine to the equation, at least for the first year. Let's try to cure through education rather than punishment.

General agreement that we should track the problem for a year and address it with coaches directly before we go to the fines. Especially where we have so many schools that don't have coaches – sending kids with parents. There are so many circumstances we need to address.

Chris & Rob note that many schools run training seminars for judges. Knowing when judge trainings are being held could be helpful for all teams. This may be something that can be added to the league website.

Suggestion: First step: collect the data. Find out what the situation is and then make a plan.

Joe proposes we amend Greg's proposal to be as follows:

["The board will direct the MSDL President to appoint an at-large member to track issues related to specific judges for the coming year. These issues may include lack of preparation, poorly written ballots, missing an elimination round judge call, or other issues that impact a tournament. We will re-address this issue in the subsequent year."](#)

Motion to accept friendly substitution by Cunningham.

Vote:

Motion: G. Cunningham

Second by J. Honeyman.

Motion passes unanimously.

5) Web Pages for Events (Lisa Honeyman)

These will (hopefully) be done and posted by the fall so coaches, students and judges can use them next season.

6) MSDL Logo Contest (Amanda Parker)

We need a new logo. Amanda suggests we run a contest. See if people want to participate. See what we get. Parents, students, alumni – all are welcome. The board will select the "winner." Maybe offer a small prize? \$25 Amazon gift card.

General agreement that this would be a good idea. But, whatever the branding, we should stick with it for a while. One of the criteria might be some consistency/nod to the previous logo.

Vote to allocate \$25 for a prize.

Vote:

Motion: Curran

Second by Cunningham

Motion passes unanimously.

7) Student Advisory Board (Amanda Parker)

SAB seems to have sort of died. (It has been 2 years since we have had an SAB). The existence of the SAB is in our Rules Document. We either need to figure out how to make it work or change our rules.

There was discussion about the purpose and need for this organization. The idea in creating the SAB in the first place was to provide a way to get feedback from students, but it got out of hand – and then died.

We do need a way to get student feedback. Maybe an on-line suggestion box? This would be more inclusive across both speech & debate.

We can also have board members available at some tournaments to talk to students, but this doesn't need to be in our rules document.

Motion:

Remove the Student Advisory board, Section 4 of the Rules and Policies Document (p. 31).
Create a new Section 4.

“The MSDL will maintain an on-line suggestion box for students to provide feedback to the MSDL board. This box will be monitored by a board member, appointed by the President.”

Motion: Parker

Second by Albert

Affirm: 9

Oppose: 2

Abstain: 0

8) Annual Elections (Amanda Parker)

Our bylaws say that board elections should be staggered such that roughly 50% of officers change in each election. Should we change our elections to match what's in our bylaws or change our bylaws to match our current practice?

Motion: This board directs the new board to address this issue, perhaps with consultation with our legal counsel.

Motion: L. Honeyman

Second: Wexler

Passes Unanimously.

9) Set the Calendar (Susan Marianelli)

DEFNITE LEAGUE DATES – More will be added as the dates are confirmed

OCT 14: Novice Tournament at Walpole – Speech, LD, PF & Congress
OCT 27-28: Manchester-Essex - Debate only
NOV 18: Little-Lex – Debate only
DEC 16: Holly Festival (at Natick) – Speech Only
JAN 6: Newton South – Speech, Congress & PFD
JAN 13: Big Lex – Debate only
MAR 3: Mardi Gras (Shrewsbury) – Speech, Congress, PF & LD
MAR 17: Needham – Speech, Congress, PF, LD & CX
MAR 24: Debate States
APR 7: Speech & Congress States

ASSOCIATED LEAGUE DATES

JAN 13 NSDA Congress Quals at Lexington
FEB 3 NSDA Quals
FEB 10 NCFL Quals (both Boston & Worcester)

Motion to accept dates listed above: L. Honeyman

Second: Cunningham

Affirm: 10

Oppose: 0

Abstain: 1

10) Money Allocations (Susan Marianelli)

We have about \$18,500 in our account. Is there something we should be spending this on? Maybe bring in some people to teach us how to do new events: POI & INFO, for example. (Professional Development).

Figure out how to help start new programs? (We already waive their dues). Note –there is a policy on grants in our rules document. Perhaps the new board can appoint a committee on grants and give them the power to spend money.

Motion: Wexler

The new board will appoint a grant committee with the power to spend money to assist member programs.

Second: Rischitelli

Affirm: 8

Oppose: 2

Abstain: 1

The Motion Passes.

11) Event Discussion (Susan Marianelli)

Should we add POI and INFO since they are national events & kids need experience in them? Should we eliminate one or more other events if we add events? If so, which ones?

Susan distributed a packet with comments from programs that participate in GD and RB. We took a 10-minute break to read through the comments.

Because we are limited on time, Susan asked everyone to speak for up to 2 minutes. The new board will meet to continue the discussion at a later date, before the fall, so that teams know what the situation will be before their season starts.

What about Expository? Storytelling? Extemp Commentary? And other national events?

What we offer should be driven by our values of what skills we think are worth encouraging students to develop, not what's popular or unpopular.

Our driving force should be what's best for students.

INFO and POI have been offered at a number of local tournaments and there has been very limited entry. The students don't seem to be getting behind these events in our local league.

The MSDL should not be driven by what other leagues do. We are our own league.

Group Discussion & Radio are valuable events. If Group discussion is getting too big, maybe we should limit entries or limit the number of years students can do GD before moving into other events. There are lots of student testimonials about why they think GD is valuable and worthwhile. Maybe we need a modification. Perhaps rename: "Civic Round-Table" to give a better sense of what the event is about.

RB – good for kids who are not extroverted and want to "try things out."

Some are in 100% support of keeping our current slate of events, but not against adding. Some don't think we need to add anything.

Programs without the resources of the larger & more established programs need "easier" events.

A proposal to add Extemp Debate was introduced.

We have a lot of overlapping events: PL, PR, PO, KL etc. Maybe consolidating and then offer different divisions: Novice, JV and Varsity reading. Once you break some set number of times, you advance to the next division.

What about piloting some new events for one year and then reassessing?

Any reduction in events should be for philosophical reasons, not popularity (or non-popularity) of events.

Group Discussion in the real world shouldn't be competitive. It should be a cooperative endeavor. By offering it as a competitive event, we play weird games with kids' heads about what "winning" a discussion means.

If we're thinking of skills worth promoting, one person suggests KL isn't valuable and can be combined into another event (Prose, PO or maybe NR). Radio isn't all that valuable because kids don't have to look at their audience. Maybe adding an original event like Original Poetry would serve an important educational need.

The opportunity that RB provides to just speak – focus on diction, pronunciation – not available in any other event.

We need to be sure we have enough entry-level events.

From the standpoint of the ballot table, it is clear that there is something fundamentally wrong with GD. It's the only event that judges recoil from. They are dismayed that what they are instructed to judge, is not what they are seeing. They report that kids are just yelling at each other. If we keep GD, we need a committee to figure out how to change the rules to fix it.

RB gives a voice to kids who are maybe quiet and insecure when someone is looking at them.

The concept of a competitive conversation is an oxymoron.

What people say GD is good for sound great. But those are not the skills we are seeing being developed.

From the judge perspective: It's not a group discussion; it's "group aggression." Kids just keep talking over each other until someone backs down. Judges are repelled by what they see the kids doing in the rounds. There seems to be a disconnect between what coaches say they are teaching & what the kids are doing that the judges are seeing.

Multiple has only 2-5 entries per tournament. Should it go?

Our biggest schools are competing at the national tournaments. It would be very helpful to have the national events offered locally.

Extemporaneous Debate is great, but the debate tournaments don't have room/time to add it.

POI – seems cool. The ability for kids to integrate different forms of literature (not just fiction) – this sort of creative process does not exist in any of the events currently offered in our league. We're not really encouraging the skills this event encourages.

INFO – Oratory meets most of the skills this event fosters, even though there are certainly differences.

Maybe offer POI and INFO on a one-year trial basis to see if they take off?

If we're going to offer an event, it should meet some sort of criteria. The league should have a well-articulated list of what skills it wants to promote or teach. Each event should meet some of the needs that have been articulated.

Should we combine some events?

Modify events?

Only offer some events to students during their first year or two in the league and then ask them to move on? (Like the novice events).

Some objection to the visual aid aspect of INFO.

Some coaches are uncomfortable eliminating events that other schools value, even if they don't value them themselves.

Novice Reading – do we need it? Sure, novices have competitive disadvantage, but they can learn from watching the better competitors.

Motion : Cunningham

Second: N/A

Direct the next board to examine the 16 MSDL events and bring back to us in one year any specific proposals regarding events that the MSDL offers that they would like to see in order to best meet the needs of our students.

Joyce will seek consult from other coaches / form a committee to create mission & goals for each event and re-evaluate each event and continue the conversation.

Marc would like to table the discussion. Marc requests a specific motion to be presented.

Sarah agrees with Joyce, would like to see a committee form to discuss the events in greater depth.

Motion: Jean-Baptiste

The MSDL will add POI as an official MSDL event

Second: Wexler

Sheldon offers a friendly amendment to offer POI on trial basis for one year.

There is some discussion about what POI does and does not offer to students.

Rischitelli calls question.

Motion: Cohen

Delay the question because there was not enough notice given for a vote on something of this significance. Delay any movement until more complete proposals can be put forward.

Second: Sheldon.

Jean-Baptiste withdraws motion, but asks that it the new board continue discussion soon so a decision can be made by the fall.

Motion: Cunningham

Direct incoming board to meet over the summer to determine best course of action to add events to MSDL, POI especially.

Second: (missed)

Approve: 5

Oppose: 2

Abstain: 2

The motion passes.

Motion to adjourn: Cunningham.

Second: everyone

The motion passes unanimously. Everybody applauds!

The meeting was adjourned at about 5:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Honeyman

VP/Secretary