

MFL Annual League Meeting
June 2, 2012
Milton Academy

I. The meeting was called to order at 11:13 am by the president, Debbie Simon.

Present:

Bancroft (Chris Sheldon)
Boston Latin (Amelie Baker)
Chelmsford High School (Josh Dorin)
Catholic Memorial (Rob Croteau)
Dighton-Rehoboth (Holly Lowell)
Manchester-Essex Regional High School (Jen Coleman)
Milton Academy (Debbie Simon, Patrice Jean-Baptiste)
Natick High School (Joyce Albert, Sarah Donnelly)
Needham (PJ Wexler)
Newton South High School (Josh Cohen, Lisa Honeyman)
Pike School/Phillips Academy, Andover (Bob Hutchings)
Sacred Heart School (Dan Sapir)
Shrewsbury High School (Marc Rischitelli)

II. APPROVAL of 2011 MEETING MINUTES

The minutes of the 2011 Annual League meeting were approved unanimously.

III. TREASURER'S REPORT (Rob Croteau)

Our current balance is \$10,208.71

We had 40 schools paying dues

Novice tournament was profitable.

States cost us a lot this year: \$2036.00 more than we took in in entry fees.

We ended up the year spending approximately \$1200 more than we took in overall.

We spent \$520 on coaches gifts (do we need to do this in the future?)

Debate lost us money because we had to hire judges, buy more trophies etc. and there were a total of only about 100 entries.

Question to consider for next year: If we're trying to break even, should we charge more for debate at States since that division costs us more than we bring in? This would be in line with most tournament fee structures. We will consider this when planning for 2013 States.

Move to approve – Joyce Albert

2nd – Chris Sheldon

Approved unanimously

IV. REPORT ON MFL TAX EXEMPTION STATUS (Lisa Honeyman).

Lisa explained what Susan Marianelli reported at the Board Meeting that preceded this meeting.

- We will be filing new corporate documents as of July 1, 2012. Our old corporation was incorrectly formed and does not represent who we are or what we do. Our lawyers will be taking care of handling this for us and guiding us forward in the future.

- We will have new articles of organization and bylaws.
These will be replaced on-line after July 1, 2012, once we receive them from our lawyers.
- Voting changes: When our membership elects the board, they will be entrusting the board with the governing of the league. This will no longer a member organization in the sense that participating schools have a direct vote in the day to day operations of the league. The Annual Meeting will be an opportunity for coaches to express their views to the board. (Of course, they can also express their views throughout the year.)
- The current MFL Board recognizes that when they were elected, the voting structure was one where member schools had a direct voice. They have pledged to continue to act in this manner until their terms are over in the spring of 2013. When the new board is elected, they may proceed as they see fit.
- We need to be clear to MFL schools that we had no choice in this major change in our structure.
- No changes take place until July 1.

Statement: Rischitelli – Reminder: There needs to be as clear communication as possible.

Response: There will be a snail-mail letter to league to explain what is going on.

Statement: Rischitelli: It will be important for the Board to pledge to vote along with the wishes of league members.

Response: Yes! The Board is on board with this!

Aside – How do we get more schools involved in the league? Only thirteen schools out of about forty are here today. Chris Sheldon has taken on the role of new team liaison. This has worked really well at tournaments. How do we get more schools more actively involved? With our new structure, it will be even more important to reach out to league schools to find out what their needs and wishes are. Chris explicitly contacted several new programs inviting them to attend today, but few were able to make it.

IV. 2012-2013 CALENDAR REVIEW

[\[Standardized exam dates\].](#)

[\[non-MFL tournaments that many area schools attend\].](#)

OCTOBER

13 – Novice tournament at Sacred Heart

20 –

26-27 – Averill at Manchester-Essex – PFD, LD & all MFL speech events **[ACT]**

NOVEMBER

3 – **[SAT]**

10 – Gracia at Natick – Speech only

17 – Little Lex at Lexington – Debate only [\[Villiger?\]](#)

DECEMBER

1 – Frosty Festival at Dighton-Rehoboth **[SAT]** – Speech & PFD **[GMU]**

8 – Lincoln-Sudbury - Speech & PFD **[ACT]**

15 – Holly Festival at Natick – Speech only

JANUARY

5 –

12 – Newton South – Speech & PFD
18-21 – Big Lex at Lexington – Debate only
26 – [Columbia] [SAT]

FEBRUARY

2 – NFL Quads at Manchester Essex
9 – NCFL Quads at Shrewsbury [ACT]
16 – [Harvard]
23 –

MARCH

2 – Mardi Gras at Shrewsbury
9 – [SAT]
16 – March Merriness at Needham (speech & debate)
23 – Debate States – site TBA (possibly Boston Latin)
30 – Easter weekend

APRIL

6 – State Speech – site TBA (possibly Chelmsford)

We discussed the pros & cons of having both Speech & Debate States on the same date. Marc Rischitelli & PJ Wexler both spoke strongly in favor of splitting the two tournaments. Some schools encourage students do to both debate and speech events. They strongly wish to have these tournaments on separate dates so their students won't have to choose between events in which they have competed all year.

Joyce noted that in the past have we have a lot of difficulty running the debate tournament when it is not on the same date as Speech States. Not enough Board members are debate schools, so it becomes a burden on the event-planning side of things for the board. We will look towards the board members with debate programs: Josh Cohen, Dan Sapir, PJ Wexler, Rob Croteau & Jim Murphy to take on the responsibility for planning State Debate if it is not going to be on the same date as State Speech.

After some discussion we agreed to attempt to split the 2 tournaments if we can find 2 sites. Tentative dates listed in schedule (above).

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Congress (Wexler)

3.5.16.1 Bills and Resolutions for debate must be submitted in advance of the tournament and approved by the Student Congress Chair. The Student Congress Chair will review the proposed legislation and will accept or reject it based upon its suitability for debate and compliance to the composition guidelines. Schools which do not submit legislation and fail to receive an exemption from the congress chair for doing so will have their congress entries' ranking altered as listed in 3.5.16.11

3.5.6.11 The student congress should take place throughout the tournament day. Tournament directors choose from one of two models when they offer congress. In either case, students from schools which have failed to submit legislation or receive a waiver from the congress chair to do so shall have one rank per judge, including the parliamentarian, added to their score.

There was discussion about when to have bills submitted, what else we could do to encourage programs to do their part to get legislation in.

Motion: Sarah
2nd: Holly

Vote: 7 = yes, 4 = no, 2 = abstain
The motion passes.

This means, if schools participate in congress but have not submitted legislation, they will be penalized as described above if no waiver has been granted.

We talked about how to be absolutely make sure coaches know about this change. PJ will remind coaches when he puts out a call for legislation. Also, tournament invitations should include this information as well as deadline for submission of legislation for each tournament.

We will also try to include a seminar on writing legislation at the novice tournament. This will help empower newer students to write legislation that is debate-worthy.

B. Congress (Wexler – to codify current practice)

After 3.5.16.11, part 2. "The parliamentarian would have a fifth vote, which shall count twice for the purposes of determining a student's cumulative total."

Motion: Rob
2nd: Patrice

Vote: 2 = yes, 8 = no, 3 = abstain
The motion fails.

This means that the parliamentarian has a fifth vote, but it only counts once for the entire day of debate.

Follow-up: The board should consider clarifying the rules to indicate that the parliamentarian vote only counts once so that everyone involved understands how tabulation will take place.

C. Change to 'Student Professionalism' section

Add 2.1.10 – Plagiarism is grounds for disqualification

Plagiarism is the act of presenting as one's own, the words, musical or artistic composition, computer program, data, or the work of someone else, whether published or not, and presenting it as one's own original work without proper acknowledgment. This includes, but is not exclusive to

- 1) Direct recitation of text without attribution from a book, article, electronic, video, or audio sources, including fellow students' work, coach's work, or other third party's work (published or not), unless specifically authorized or required by either a) the event rules or b) authorized, furnished, or required by the tournament hosts/organizers.

2) Student written speech text in which said student has received assistance other than general criticism from someone else.

Everyone agreed that plagiarism is something that we absolutely need to curtail. What was not clear is how we should go about achieving this goal. Some questions that came up in discussion:

If a coach edits student cases, does that need to be cited?

What about teams that write a group case in debate? Would they need to cite every line based upon who wrote it? Perhaps students could footnote their cases with notes about collaboration with coaches, teammates, adults etc.

What about research material that is purchased and included in a debate case? How should that be cited?

Josh - There is a lot of collaboration in debate. As written, this proposal doesn't seem workable for debate.

Chris – In speech, there isn't so much an issue of plagiarism for pieces, because students write the title(s) & author(s) of their material on the board. But what about intros? Assistance in cutting by coaches? Do students need to state that their coach wrote their introduction or helped them with their cutting?

The issue is so complex. We didn't really know how to proceed. Perhaps we need a committee to look at this?

Motion by Sapir: Table Motion to committee

Second: Albert

Passed unanimously.

This means that this issue has been tabled for the time being. We will revisit the issue of plagiarism at a future date.

D. Proposal to drop Dramatic Performance as an MFL event and add Dramatic Interpretation and Humorous Interpretation as MFL events (Sapir).

Sapir – would like to see humor separated from drama. How is this working for other teams? Some college tournaments are offering DI and HI.

Donnelly –The same could be said for Prose, Poetry, Play, Duo etc. Why should this event be different?

Honeyman – Splitting DP into DI and HI artificially forces students to perform to the extremes. Material in the middle is no longer viable for competition – and that's where the majority of outstanding material lies. Students should be encouraged to act the entire range of emotions, not to focus on only one at a time.

Rischitelli – The numbers in DI and HI used to be quite small. Now there is a lot more participation. We can't say this was caused by the change, but it is an observable fact. Do we have any evidence that DI or HI is favored consistently? If not, what is the problem?

Donnelly – Real acting happens in normalcy. There is no normalcy in DI or HI.

Croteau – It's not about size issues. By combining the events, we sent fewer trophies home with students. If the only reason is size, there's no issue about combining. Notes sense that Drama trumps Humor. (But others suggest humor is favored over drama – we would need statistics to investigate this claim..)

Jean-Baptiste – Advocates separating the two, allows students to do both, too. Humorous pieces can have some drama and vice versa. Making a choice is important.

Sheldon – Our decision is to do what is best for our students, not what is done on the national stage. Thinks that DP has done damage to PL. PL numbers have gone down. HI seems to be something different.

Sapir – Does the title of the event, "Dramatic Performance" skew the event?

Rischitelli – Giving kids more trophies isn't really an issue. We added an event (impromptu), so it was a net zero change.

Honeyman - When students do this sort of material and put it in DI or HI, judges are confused and suggest that students switch events.

Wexler – If we think the anecdotal evidence is any factor – we should track the DI/HI divide over the coming year and re-examine at the end of the year.

Albert – If we're going to study this over the year, we should discuss this with judges, too. Judges find measuring extremes against each other to be difficult.

This discussion continued for a while and was then called for a vote:

Motion: Croteau

Second: Sapir

Vote: 6 = yes, 5 = no, 2 = abstain

The motion passes.

Joyce – will find the old rules so we can include them in the bylaws. This takes affect in the fall of 2012.

This means that the MFL will no longer offer DP as an official event. Instead, students may compete in DI or HI at MFL tournaments starting in the fall of 2012.

E. Extemporaneous Speaking (Risshitelli)

Risshitelli – It is time for the MFL to move into alignment with the rest of the country. There is a computer program out there with a subscription component attached to it that is useful for organizing

data and allows students to share files on-line at school and then move the information onto their individual computers before traveling to a tournament.

How do we monitor the prep period to be sure students are not using their computer to access the web or communicate with others? What are the penalties for violation? We need to be clear that students WILL be disqualified if they are caught breaking the rules?

Rischitelli – Benefits probably outweigh the potential problems.

Baker – Kids searching online or preparing huge quantities of sources are probably at a disadvantage because of the time they waste searching and reading rather than prepping.

Proposed amendment to by-law 3.16: "Use of internet connected electronic retrieval devices in prep is forbidden. Use of non-internet connected electronic/computer file storage systems is allowed in prep."

Friendly amendment (Honeyman) so that the language matches that used for Group Discussion: Electronic device use in Extemporaneous Speaking will be allowed with the following stipulations: Computers or other electronic devices may not be used to receive information from any source (coaches or assistants included) inside or outside of the room in which preparation and/or competition occurs. Internet access, use of email, instant messaging, or other means of receiving information from sources inside or outside of the competition/prep room are prohibited.

This amendment was accepted by Rischitelli.

Donnelly – Friendly amendment: Host schools are not required to provide power for electronic devices.

This amendment was accepted by Rischitelli.

So, the proposed rule now reads:

Electronic device use in Extemporaneous Speaking will be allowed with the following stipulations: Computers or other electronic devices may not be used to receive information from any source (coaches or assistants included) inside or outside of the room in which preparation and/or competition occurs. Internet access, use of email, instant messaging, or other means of receiving information from sources inside or outside of the competition/prep room are prohibited. Host schools are not required to provide power for electronic devices.

Motion: Croteau

2nd: Baker

Voice Vote: The motion carries.

This means that Extemporaneous Speaking competitors will be allowed to use electronic storage devices during the preparation period at MFL tournaments as long as all connectivity is turned off. Host schools will not be required to provide power for devices, so students should come with fully charged batteries and backups as needed. Students caught breaking the rules will be disqualified.

F. Multiple (Honeyman)

Our current rules do not state that tables can be used, yet students are using them and they are not using them safely. We had an issue of a broken table at Shrewsbury, but the bigger issue is student safety. If a student who is sitting on a chair on a table were to slide off backwards, he could be very seriously injured. Standing on tables is also an issue.

Conversation included the following:

- Will our insurance cover us if we allow students to stand on tables or sit on chairs on tables? What about standing on stools? Standing on chairs? If not, it will change the nature of the event.
- What about eliminating tables entirely? It's not allowed in our rules now and is potentially dangerous when kids are standing on and sitting on the tables. Why is it so important to allow people to stand on tables? (Answer: To create visual levels).

What about standing on chairs? Is that any safer?

Will school rules supercede MFL rules? For example, if a school has a policy that students are not allowed to sit on anything except the chair portion of a chair, will they be able to restrict what can be done in their building? The school's concern will be liability. It doesn't really matter whose table it is. If kids are standing on tables, that's not going to fly.

What is our priority? Student safety? Liability? Creativity?

Even though our current rules do not allow the use of tables, Jean-Baptiste suggests that the rules change (proposed below) implies that the use of tables would be allowed.

Proposed change to rules in Multiple (Honeyman)

Description of event: This event requires the use of a manuscript. A group of 3-8 students will present a scene or scenes from published material (play(s), work(s) of prose, and/or work(s) of poetry. The material may be either serious or humorous in nature. The students may use focal skills, facial expressions, and/or hand gestures to develop a narrator and character/s; however, the focus of the performers should be off-stage. The students may only touch and make eye contact during their own written introduction. If lines from the selection are used in the introduction, the contestants must adhere to the rules of the event. The presentation should include an introduction that cites the name(s) of the piece(s) and the author(s). The cutting should provide a cohesive scene or storyline (containing a definite beginning, middle and end). The material must be found in printed literature. Props, costumes, and other theatrical devices are prohibited; however, reader's stands, chairs or stools may be used. **Students are prohibited from placing chairs or stools on top of tables.** Time: 12 minute maximum, including introduction (30 second grace); no minimum.

There was a discussion about what "Theatrical Devices" are. The rules, as written, are incorrect. We need to adjust the wording so that the rules make sense.

Amendment proposed by Sheldon:

Replace: Props, costumes, and other theatrical devices are prohibited; however, reader's stands, chairs or stools may be used. Students are prohibited from placing chairs or stools on top of tables.

With: Theatrical props and costumes are prohibited, with the exception of reader's stands, chairs, tables or stools. Students are prohibited from placing chairs or stools on top of tables. Teams must provide any/all of their own furniture.

Motion to amend: Sheldon

2nd: Croteau

Vote: 8 = yes; 3 = no; 2 = abstain.

Motion to adopt amended resolution: Croteau

2nd: Rischitelli

Vote: 8 = yes; 3 = no; 2 = abstain.

The amended motion passes.

This means that students in the MFL may continue to use chairs, stools and reader's stands in Multiple. They may now officially use tables, but they may not stand furniture on tables. They must also provide their own furniture.

VII. OPEN FORUM

A plea from Debbie to the entire membership: PLEASE, please feel free to be in touch with the MFL board about concerns. We want to hear what people have to say!

Baker: 2 issues

1. Do we have a new schools/new coaches liaison?

Answer: Yes – Chris Sheldon is the official liaison. Jim Murphy is the debate liaison. We do have a process to contact coaches when they establish new accounts on the MFL website. However, some new coaches are taking over existing programs and do not know how to get brought in to the league.

2. She has felt penalized (in attitude) that her inability to do certain things is frowned upon. For example, staying to end of tournaments to collect ballots is a hardship for programs that have no one in finals. The inside lingo gets tricky. Finding enough judges is always an issue for non-English speaking parents. Parents are unwilling to stay for the whole event. Kids say that they sit at a tournament for eight hours, but only participate for four.

She asks for some sympathy, leeway, support for new coaches who can't 'live up' to the MFL expectations.

We discussed the issue of releasing ballots early. If they are not sorted at the time people want to leave, clearly that's a problem. But, what if they are ready?

What about this issue of the length of the day? How do we deal with this?

Not having enough judges who are English speaking and/or willing to spend an entire day and evening at tournaments: This is an issue for a lot of cities and towns, including many with established programs. It is not an area where we have any leeway to give. Without enough judges, we can't run the tournaments. We suggested allowing judges to split days so they don't have to stay so long and

running judge trainings so that adults feel comfortable judging. We pointed out that we offer a judge training at the novice tournament and can give materials to coaches so that they can run their own trainings.

Giving "small school awards" helps encourage smaller schools to attend tournaments. Can we encourage more schools to give small school awards? Is it better to run deep (give awards to the top 10-12 schools overall) or to give separate trophies to small schools so they place higher. Consensus from smaller programs seems to be that it's better to be able to say you are 3rd in the small school division than 10th overall. We need to consider how we define "small school". Should it be based, like the athletic programs, on school population or on the number of students who attend a given tournament?

Hutchings: The middle school league will be undergoing some major changes this coming year. He asks people who have ideas of how to bring the middle and high school leagues closer together to please let him know.

Coleman: Thanks for everyone for being so patient with M-E as we underwent major changes this year.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Honeyman

VP/Secretary