

MSDL Board Meeting  
Saturday, May 31, 2014  
Milton Academy

The meeting was called to order at 11:23 am by the president, Susan Marianelli.

Board Members Present: Joyce Albert (Natick), Josh Cohen (Newton South), Greg Cunningham (Catholic Memorial), Sue Hennessey (Acton-Boxborough), Jim Honeyman (Newton South), Lisa Honeyman (Newton South), Susan Marianelli (Milton Academy), Chris Sheldon (Bancroft), Debbie Simon (Milton Academy), Paul (PJ) Wexler (Needham), Peter Zopes (Chelmsford)

Others Present: Sarah Donnelly (Natick), Mark Fellowes (Revere), Melinda Phillips (Chelmsford), Dan Sapir (Sacred Heart)

1. Proposed by Patrice Jean-Baptiste: Participation in Mardi Gras (and Needham) high school tournaments should not count against Middle school students' novice status. Because they are specifically invited to Mardi Gras and Needham, why should they lose novice status if they compete at these tournaments?

Discussion

The original rationale for novice status is that students gain experience competing with high school students that gives them a leg up against kids who never compete against high school students.

Question: How does the fact that it was on an invitation change that situation?

Middle school league kids are choosing not to attend Mardi Gras so they won't lose their novice high school status.

Some agreement that students who have the opportunity to compete at a high school level while in middle school are more advanced in experience than kids who don't. Novice status is intended to give brand new kids an opportunity to compete against other brand new kids. By changing this rule, we undermine the intent of this rule.

By not changing this rule, the only thing that middle school kids with lots of high school experience lose is the ability to earn a "top novice" trophy and the ability to enter novice reading.

Moved: Sheldon – Keep the current novice status rule as it is.

Second: Hennessy

For: 9      Against: 1

**The motion fails.**

There will be no changes to the novice status rule.

2. Website updates – Lisa asks is there anything that is missing or needs to be changed?

PJ suggests: It would be nice to have something about our history on the website.

Debbie will put something together, with help from some other long-time league coaches. Once she has something written, Lisa will post it on the website.

3. Double Speak – Should we change the name of double speak at states? Should we completely get rid of the award.

Discussion about the award

- Some like the idea of the award, but hate the name.
- What about eliminating everything except basic “top 6 per event” at States? This is about State Champions, not special diversity etc?
- A general double-entry award seems silly. The kids who would get it are already getting trophies in both events. It seems redundant.
- Encouraging students to “spread their wings” and gain skills outside their comfort zone is something that the league should do where possible. This award encourages kids to not be overly specialized.
- Some wonder if kids even know if this award exists – and if kids are really working hard to qualify for states in two unrelated events in order to get this award.
- Some programs pay attention to this and others do not.
- If we don’t have this award, would we really be discouraging kids from double-entering?
- What is the core value of the league? Does this award have the heart of the league; something that says, “we value diversity.”
- If we are going to do this, we should, as a league, make it a higher priority to educate our teams to know about this award.
- If this is a core league value, should we encourage more local tournaments to offer double-entry awards?
- Are we comfortable with a student who is able to “win” the tournament?
- Can we name it after someone from the league’s history? We’d need to do some research. Perhaps the League founder?

Discussion about which events to put in which categories

- Are congress and debate different enough to warrant separate awards? At the national level they are considered the same. (Congress is now called “congressional debate”). What about group discussion?
- Should we open it up to everyone who double-enters rather than people who enter different genres?

Motion: Sheldon – If this award is to be given, the categories for the award will be:

Second: Albert

INTERP:	HI, DI, DUO, PR, PO, KL, PL, MULT
DEBATE:	DEBATE, CON, GD
LIMITED PREP:	VX, RB, IMP
PLATFORM:	OO, DEC

**The motion passes unanimously.**

**The categories of the awards will be changed as indicated above.**

Motion: Cunningham: Defer naming award until Debbie researches history. We will name the award after an important MSDL figure.

Second: Joyce

For: 9      Opposed: 0      Abstain: 1

**The motion passes.**

We will hold off on naming the award with the intent of naming it after an important MSDL figure.

Motion: Cunningham: This is an award we will have at States, name TBD later.

Second: Sheldon

In favor – 7    Opposed – 0    Abstain – 3

**The motion passes.**

We will offer this yet un-named award at States.

4. Ballot release before tournament is over to schools that leave early.

Discussion

Coaches from schools who don't have anyone in finals and would like to leave often ask for their ballots before the end of the day. This is a tournament director decision. Different people handle it differently. Question is, 'how should we handle this?'

Suggestion: No ballots out until finals are done – we need the judges and we want to encourage people to watch finals. It is hard for teams to stick around for multiple hours after students are done when they are getting nothing.

Ballot sorting is often going on during and after finals. Often ballot packs are not ready when teams request them.

What about offering to mail ballots? If a team knows they have a time constraint, a travel constraint etc., then come with a stamped envelope. How hard is it to put ballots in an envelope and drop it in the mail?

Reminder: the board cannot legislate what individual tournament directors do. We only run the novice tournament and the state tournaments. We can only advise/recommend.

Motion: Sheldon – The MSDL Board recommends that tournament directors:

encourage all teams to watch finals.

encourage schools to stay at tournaments because they might win a top novice award.

give out no ballots to a school that is leaving until all of that school's judge commitments have

been satisfied and all of that school's students have finished competing

tell teams that there is no guarantee that all ballots will be in the packet if they take them early.

require that teams leave the building before distributing any ballots to their team members

include these procedures in their tournament invitation.

The MSDL board will use these criteria for novice & state tournaments.

Second: Cunningham

In favor – 9    Opposed – 1    Abstain – 0

**The motion passes.**

The MSDL board recommends that tournament directors release ballots before the end of a tournament day to schools that request them under the conditions listed in the motion, above.

5. Touching in a multiple – We need clarification of the rules. Does “not touching” mean that binders can’t touch or just the students’ bodies that cannot touch?

Motion: Donnelly: Keep multiple rules as written. Add line after “Multiple is an event in which students are allowed to expend creative usage of binders, furniture and the script itself.”  
**“If binders or furniture are used as props, those objects may not make physical contact with one another or other students.”**

Second: J. Honeyman

**The motion passes unanimously.**

The rules for multiple will be modified as indicated above.

Chris suggests that we need to do more to educate the league about what the event multiple can be. Sarah and Greg will write something up and we will post it on the website. Sarah is willing to pull something together so we can put a short demo on the website.

6. PJ: New congress ballots presented

(#1) New general ballot for evaluating congress competitors  
(#2) Standard ballot for ranking students in a chamber  
(#3) Ballot for evaluating a Presiding Officer

PJ explained rationale for each part of the new ballots.

People really liked #2 and #3 as written, with minor typographical corrections.

Discussion about #1:

Folks made several suggestions for modifications for the general student congress ballot.

MOTION: Cunningham – Accept all 3 ballots as amended.

Second: Honeyman

**The motion passes unanimously.**

These new ballots will become the official tools for evaluating students at MSDL tournaments.

Lisa will post the new ballots on the website once PJ sends her the files to post.

7. Congress final session writing committee – PJ would like a writing committee. He has been trying to do it all himself in the past.

Discussion

We need to simplify or be clearer about super-session expectations.

Maybe we could improve the event by giving the kids more time to prepare? For example, publish the super session topic areas in advance, like debate. General agreement.

We need two people + PJ on the committee: Peter Zopes & Susan Marianelli. Sarah Donnelly would like to talk about being involved, as well.

#### 8. Congress rules for cross –examination

Right now, each person gets one question. Suggestion to allow several speakers 30 seconds of back & forth questioning instead.

##### Discussion

In extemp we don't do cross-ex except in finals. In debate they do it all the time. Maybe we just do it in finals for congress? Maybe starting in January?

True back & forth cross-examination will be learned by doing. It may be intimidating at first, but the learning curve goes up quite fast. Positive educationally. Let's not underestimate the kids in congress. By allowing back & forth, it will also hold speakers accountable for the structure and nature of their arguments.

MOTION: Honeyman - Allow for four 30-second periods of cross-examination for the first two speeches on a piece of legislation and two 30-second periods for the rest of the speeches. This may not be amended by a motion to suspend the rules.

Second: Cohen

##### **The motion passes unanimously.**

Questioning in congress will consist of four 30-second periods of cross-examination for the first two speeches on a piece of legislation and two 30-second periods for the rest of the speeches.

This may not be amended by a motion to suspend the rules.

#### 9. Semi-finals in sweepstakes formula

Suggestion that non-advancing semi-finalists earn an additional point towards their team sweepstakes. (In the past they have not earned any additional sweepstakes points for their teams at States).

##### Discussion

If there are sweepstakes points at stake, we should determine consistent criteria for holding semi-finals in advance. Rule of thumb has been if there are 40 (or sometimes 50) in an event we'll run semi-finals in those events. (Kids actually present, not original entries).

There are logistical issues with having a lot of events go to semi-finals. In order to keep this under control, we could have semi-finals only in the three largest events based upon entries at the beginning of round 1 (with a minimum of 40 entries).

MOTION: Cunningham

At the state tournament we will hold semi-finals in the three largest events with 40 or more entries at the start of round 1 on the day of a tournament. Non-advancing semi-finalists will earn one additional sweepstakes point, beyond what they earn for preliminary rounds, for their team. Non-placing super-session members of congress will also receive an additional sweepstakes point.

Second: Simon

**The motion passes unanimously.**

Non-advancing semi-finalists and non-placing members of the super-session in congress will earn one additional sweepstakes point, beyond what they earn in preliminary rounds.

At States, we will offer semi-finals in the three largest events with 40 or more entries at the start of round 1 on the day of the tournament.

10. Josh/Tim on debate changes – Josh handed out copies of his proposed changes and then explained the rationale for each of them. The intent is to clean up the debate rules and separate individual debate events & congress in the rules document when rules are not the same. Our existing rules evolved over time and have been made piece-meal. This is an attempt to write down what we do in an organized and complete manner. He also wanted to bring our evidence rules in line with national standards in order to encourage integrity in debate rounds and to revise the rules for earning a bid to States in PFD and LD. Rather than top 30%, he proposes “winning preliminary record.” (This is de facto what we have been doing, anyway.)

**Discussion**

PJ asks about form of evidence required. Do kids need to have entire book or can they have a photo-copy of a page from a source?

As a practical matter, since people usually have the sources on their computer, they usually have the entire source with them. But where that's not the case, students should have the important parts, for example, the methodology section for a statistical study. In a philosophical tome, they should have the entire relevant chapter, rather than an entire book. It remains judge's discretion about how to handle it if a team doesn't have evidence. In congress, we have disqualified students who have not been able to produce evidence. If a team is intentionally mischaracterizing the nature of evidence, for example, if students quote the straw-man argument and present it as the author's thesis, then they need to be held accountable.

There was some discussion about details and changes.

Because this document is very long and involves changes to most of the Rules & Regulations document, including those that discuss individual events, we need time to look through the proposed changes in detail. Joyce and Josh will go through the entire document over the summer and present everything before the end of the summer to the rest of the board. All changes will be published before the first MSDL tournament next fall.

Josh requests that we vote on-line on section 3.4 in the next few weeks so we have time to go home and read over the section. We will vote online in a week. In the meantime, Josh will send the entire document to the board. Section 3.4: p. 21-28. The board will conduct an online vote within a week.

11. Rubric on speech ballots update – Joyce

Joyce will be going through the entire rules document over the summer. Our rules document is inconsistent because we have amended so many events over the years. We may need to make

decisions when there are contradictions.

Since we're looking at rules for each event at this time, it is a good time to reformat our ballots. Debbie has shared the middle school ballots, which include a rubric, which we can use as a potential model.

Joyce is looking for direction. Do we like the idea of a chart?

- Some feel that if there is a chart, it should be a very small part of the ballots.
- We want to be sure that judges understand that criteria should not necessarily be weighted equally. This is a guideline for the students, not the judges.

Landscape instead of portrait format?

Joyce will work on this.

## 12. Calendar for 2014-2015

SEPT: 20-21 Yale

OCT: 4 –

- 11 – NOVICE SAT (Columbus Day weekend) – Sacred Heart
- 18 – PSAT
- 25 – ACT – Possible Brandeis
- 31/Nov 1 – MANCHESTER – ESSEX (debate only)

NOV: 1 – DIGHTON-REHOBOTH

- 8 – SAT
- 15 – NATICK (Gracia)
- 22 – Possible Brandeis (Little Lex (debate only))
- 29 – Thanksgiving

DEC: 6 – LINCOLN-SUDBURY SAT

- 13 – ACT
- 20 – HOLLY FESTIVAL (Natick)
- 27 – Christmas/Winter vacation

JAN: 3 –

- 10 – NEWTON SOUTH
- 17 – NSHS Snow date (Big Lex)
- 24 – (Columbia) SAT
- 30-31 – NFL DISTRICTS

FEB: 7 – CFL QUALS ACT

- 14 – (Harvard)
- 21 –
- 28 – MARDI GRAS (Shrewsbury)

MAR: 7 –

14 – SAT  
21 – NEEDHAM  
28 – STATE DEBATE – need location

APRIL: 4 – GOOD FRIDAY/EASTER  
11 – STATE SPEECH – need location  
18 – ACT

13. Debbie's Announcement: Middle school league has now created a constitution and will be their own independent league soon. She will send the Middle School league schedule to the board. They need high school support (student judges).
14. Greg - HI/DI versus DP

Greg is tired of comments like, “This isn’t dramatic enough for DI.” Dramatic has come to mean it has to be overly dramatic. DP is the only way to send the message to judges that material can be humorous, serious or somewhere in the middle. The middle is where “real” lives.

#### Discussion

Eliminating the division of DP into HI/DI makes the most sense in terms of art and drama.

Students, coaches and judges need to realize that “drama” does not mean you have to collapse and die by the end of the piece. A similar argument can be made when talking about extremes encouraged by HI.

Some say there is no reason to split HI/DI if we’re not also going to do it in DUO or PR or any other interp event.

Are the skill sets significantly different?

One argument against combining HI/DI into DP is that it may restrict participation in interp events. One fewer States trophy. Six fewer people advancing to finals at tournaments.

However, by splitting DI and HI, you lose all sorts of potential material. An unintended consequence is that all of the material that is not “cartoon interp” or “death and dying” is being forced into play reading.

What about the kids who are doing both DI and HI? What happens to them?

*The real question is, what do we value as a league?*

As a note, we don’t do our students a service by going back and forth every 2 years. We did DP for 3 years. Then we did DI/HI for 2 years. Now we’re considering DP again. Constant change is not a good thing. If we make another change, can we vote to make it stick for a certain period of time before it can be switched back? It takes time to adjust to one or the other and we need to allow the time for programs to adjust.

MOTION: Greg – Combine HI and DI to make one MSDL category called Dramatic Performance. If this motion passes, stick to DP for four years in order to provide consistency for our students.

Second: Albert

In favor – 5    Opposed – 3    Abstain – 2

**The motion passes.**

The MSDL will offer Dramatic Performance (DP) instead of Dramatic Interp (DI) and Humorous Interp (HI) at MSDL tournaments.

The MSDL board cannot vote to change this decision until the completion of the 2017-2018 season.

## NEW BUSINESS

Next meeting: 6 September at 11:00 am at Milton Academy

Motion to adjourn: Cunningham

Second: Sheldon

The meeting was adjourned at 3:17 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Honeyman

VP/Secretary