



Dear Administrator,

What is the most important skill required to be successful in life? In my opinion, it is the ability to communicate effectively with others. Regardless of the goals a student may have, in order to succeed, they must be able to competently share their thoughts and ideas with the world. Whether they are explaining car repairs to a customer, giving an interview after the Super Bowl, or campaigning to be president, it is our duty as educators to prepare them to thrive in the real world.

Students (and adults) are quickly losing the ability to communicate in face-to-face conversations. In today's society, where we find ourselves seeking human connections in our phones and computers, speech and debate programs are even more important. Speech and debate teaches students how to organize their thoughts, speak with confidence, and how to listen and process opposing viewpoints in a civil manner. Having personally experienced both perspectives, as a student and a coach, I can confidently say there are few activities that provide students with the opportunity to develop these critical life skills. Through speech and debate, we have the ability to create the next generation of communicators and leaders by empowering them to share their ideas in ways that effectively bring about positive change and progress.

In order to achieve that goal, we need to reach students as early as we can academically. Speech and debate programs should be made a priority for every student, elementary through high school. If we are able to introduce them to the ideas and concepts early, we can instill a passion for communication and use that to better prepare a foundation for their development. While public speaking is appreciated as an art form, we need to present it as a necessity, not an option. At a time when communication in our social, professional, and even political lives has become such an important topic, educators have a responsibility to further train and educate in the matter—and the National Speech & Debate Association is a vital partner in that.

In the end, these programs are just as important to a school and its community as the football team or marching band. After the last touchdown has been made and the final notes are played, it will be the students who are able to inspire and motivate others with their words who will experience the greatest success in life. It's time we do our part to reach them earlier, plant the seeds, and help them grow into the communicators we will need for the future.



Regards,

Elizabeth Borna

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2015 Inaugural NSDA Middle School Coach of the Year

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