



Dear Colleagues,

The beginning of year 2020 has certainly been unique. We are taking unprecedented measures to protect our public from a virus which to date has no inoculation. During these uncertain times, instruction and guidance from our education-based speech and debate coaches and staff may be more important than ever. While our speech and debate coaches may not be meeting with students in traditional settings, their support and counsel has probably never been more needed.

Our students are hurting and confused about the world around them and its current offerings. Many are grieving the loss of their seasons and the loss of their high school experiences. Fear and uncertainty seem to be the mantra. Social interaction and the freedoms associated with attending school, practices, rehearsals, and competitions have been removed for the time being and will most likely be restricted for extended periods of time. This is where our coaches and directors must SHINE! We can model and be examples of how communication can heal.

We speak often about the lessons learned through participating in school-based speech and debate activities. Themes such as perseverance, determination, grit, togetherness, compassion, loyalty, and work ethic come to mind. By discussing these characteristics with our young people, our outstanding coaches and directors may provide navigation, understanding, and hope through these inexact times. The Illinois High School Association (IHSA) encourages this dialogue across our great state from those individuals that our students look up to the most—their teachers, directors, and coaches. Leadership at the grass roots level is vitally necessary and what better individual to provide this than “Coach”? No matter what this time of year would normally look like for you, your students all need you! Continue reaching out to them and keep them engaged!

Our current adversity provides an unparalleled opportunity to teach, lead, and grow character among our most prized possessions, the young people of our communities. Thank you for your service as speech and debate coaches. Our schools need you now, more than ever! Be safe.



Truly,

Susie

Susan M. Knoblauch
IHSA Administrator for Speech & Debate

Find this and other letters of support on our website:
www.speechanddebate.org/resources