*May 6, 2021*

*Dear parents,*

*Thanks for showing interest in having your child attend the NSDA Middle School Speech Challenge. While we are bummed out that the tournament is not happening in person and the online format is much different than the normal experience, we do want to make sure our students who are interested in this opportunity get a chance to attend. The great news about it not being in person is there is no cost to travel.*

*The bad news is that despite it being online and the push to get more students to participate in speech and debate, the NSDA has still not changed their decision from 2016 that prohibits academies like ours to sign students up for the National tournament even the Middle School Speech Challenge. As such, much of the work to get into the tournament has be advocated by and done by you as a parent.*

*This set of instructions and template should guide you through the main things that you will need to do to get started. As such, please read carefully and if you have any questions, please let us know. If not, please make sure you get this process started with your school administration as soon as possible as deadlines are quickly approaching. If your administration rejects your request, not to worry, we will issue a full refund. Beyond that unfortunately there is not much we can do or suggest to change their mind. We would recommend that at that point you consider attending the NOFC Middle School Nationals tournament hosted the week before this event. More details can be found on our website.*

*If you have any questions about this or the instructions included in this document, please let me know and I am more than happy to answer your questions. If not, we hope we get to see many of our students representing their schools at the Middle School challenge! Best of luck!*

*Victor Rivas Umana*

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*Instructions*

*Please read these instructions carefully. Should anything be unclear please reach out to us. If not, make sure that you follow these steps and that you are expedient about it as the deadline to receive everything is May 15th. We may be able to get some last minute entries in but there is no guarantee so do you best to get this done by May 15th. If anything is delayed, let us know so we can inform the organizers. Thanks.*

1. Please contact the principal of your school using the email template below. Please make sure to alter the required portions in highlighting when emailing the principal. Alternatively, you could talk with the principal in person if that is a possibility without an appointment.
2. Once you have confirmed with the principal you can have an in person or telephone conversation with them. Please make sure you are ready to ask them about having your child compete at the Middle School Challenge. You should repeat and remind them about the benefits you have seen and could see in the future with speech and debate and that you’d like to see your child represent the school at the tournament. If there is a team on campus you’d like to ask the school permission to allow them to join the tournament as a member of the team for the competition. Most of you won’t fall in this category. Most of you will be asking for permission to have them join as a representative of the school and will need the school’s permission to allow us to be the temporary advisor of your child over the course of the tournament in order for us to sign them up for the tournament and a school account to be created for the registration process of the tournament. Without their explicit approval via an email to the NSDA indicating they are ok with your child competing and myself (Victor Rivas Umana) being the advisor, we cannot register them.
3. Once they have emailed info@speechanddebate.org with a short message indicating they don’t object to your child competing and allowing myself to be the advisor, the tournament organizers will respond back with a set of information they need to collect in order to create the school account and/or add us as advisors to the current account. **This step is absolutely vital to us being able to register your child for the tournament!** Should this not get done we won’t be able to register them and we will have to wait until it is finalized to enter them into the tournament.
4. Once that has been done, we will go in and finalize anything that is required for us to have your child compete. You will then be receiving additional steps and reminders including when to turn in video submissions from us. If you decide to judge, we will also send you the expectations for judging to avoid losing your judge bond.

*I hope that this covers everything. If there is anything that is confusing or you are unsure what to do about, please DO NOT continue further. Please make sure you reach to me to ensure I can clarify any concerns you have before talking with the principal/administration. If after you talk to them you get certain objections, we can discuss them to see if there is a chance we can persuade them but understand usually once they have said no, it is very hard to get them to change their mind. So we wish everyone the best in this process and we will do our best to support you along the way.*

*Hi [Principal/Admin Name],*

*My name is [Your Name] and I’m reaching out regarding allowing students like our child from [School] to attend the NSDA Nationals Middle School Speech challenge. As a parent, I’ve seen firsthand the impact speech and debate can have on students and the school environment. [Add a personal anecdote about your child.]*

*Through speech and debate, students learn to see both sides of an issue, to persuade, to think creatively, and to confidently communicate to any audience. You can get a feel for what speech and debate looks like in the video below.*

Choose one, depending on what’s popular in your area:

* Informative Speaking: [Nationals 2017 - Jordyn Allen - “The Birds and the Weaves”](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pRNa6d9NP_E&t=3s)
* Original Oratory: [Nationals 2019 - Halima Badri "Won't You Be My Neighbor"](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Q_uRUP8SmY&t=2s)
* Dramatic Interpretation: [Nationals 2015 - Daniel Williams - "Not a Genuine Black Man"](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KK41EKohCW4)
* Humorous Interpretation: [Nationals 2017 - Evan Eiglarsh - Tammy: A Coming of Age Story About a Girl Who Was Part T-Rex](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-5l6M2sOVFA&)
* United States Extemp: [Nationals 2019 - Christopher Maximos - “How will the Green New Deal influence future environmental legislation?”](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cgkTm-_Igdg&t=1s)

*Schools with speech and debate programs report increases in attendance rates, classroom engagement, test scores, school pride, and student self-esteem. I’ve included a letter from an administrator to you about the value of investing in the activity.*

*I’d love to see what it can do for [School] and our child. Do you have some time to talk/meet on [Date 1] or [Date 2]?*

*Sincerely,*

*[Your Name]*