

## **Proposal to Amend Board Policy – Virtual Competition and Practice for Speech & Debate**

**QUESTION:** Should the Executive Board approve Speech and Debate competition to transition to virtual tournaments during comprehensive distance learning?

**RATIONALE:** In light of in-person school closures due to safety concerns related to COVID-19, most in-person activities, clubs, and sports competitions will be postponed or cancelled in the 20-21 school year. Nationally, many speech and debate tournaments have already transitioned to virtual competition, including the National Speech and Debate Association Championships and the Ronald Reagan Foundation Great Communicator and several states (WY, WI, KY, MA) held their state championship tournament virtually last spring.

Due to the unique nature of speech and debate competitions, teams can still experience a robust and competitive season without ever meeting face to face. In the months since schools initially closed in March, many platforms for hosting virtual tournaments and practices have been created, some of which have already been used and tested by Oregon Speech and Debate coaches. Moreover, in anticipation that many clubs, activities, and sports programs will not be allowed to continue as normal, the opportunity to continue to compete, build relationships with teammates, and stay connected to schools will be available through virtual speech and debate competition.

**RULE CHANGE SPONSORED BY:** OSAA Executive Board

**NEXT STEP IF PASSED:** Effective immediately, see start dates outlined in motion.

### **CLARIFICATION ON CONTEST PROCEDURES:**

1. Start Dates:
  - a. Practice: August 17
  - b. Competition: September 23
2. Access:
  - a. All students and coaches have been using computers, Internet, and voice/video conferencing systems for distance learning, so students and coaches will have access to materials needed for virtual competitions
  - b. The speech and debate contingency planning committee will offer multiple workshops to support new competitors, all competitors, and all coaches in the transition to virtual competition in order to facilitate getting more schools/students involved in the activity statewide
  - c. As other activities, clubs, and sports are cancelled or postponed, virtual speech and debate offers a unique opportunity for students to get involved
  - d. Cost of online competitions is not a concern
    - i. Tournament entry fees for competing schools will be equal to fees for in-person competition

- ii. Competing schools will see a cost savings in transportation and associated overnight costs for many schools that historically travel to Oregon tournaments
    - iii. Software/Virtual platform fees for hosting schools will be equal to fees for in-person competition
  - e. Building relationships/community online is harder, but it works! Some of the online platforms seek to replicate the camaraderie and team spirit that is found at in-person tournaments. The contingency planning committee will support Oregon coaches in sharing resources and best practices for building relationships/community for students in the virtual practice room
3. Vehicle
- a. There are many online platforms to choose from
  - b. We've seen success with online tournaments already this past Spring
  - c. Coaches will teach each other how to use/onboard schools with the new platform
  - d. The Contingency Planning Committee will meet regularly to share benefits, lessons learned, and best practices about the various platforms
4. Long term planning
- a. Based on the state metrics, if in-person competition is approved for all schools, we can transition back to in person
  - b. A deadline to determine the platform used for the 2021 State Championship will be decided in consultation with the Assistant Executive Director assigned to Speech and Debate
5. Current rules to be suspended during virtual competition
- a. Any rules that prohibit use of electronics or Internet access during competition