

State Speech Tournament Team Championship Proposal

Background: The Speech Advisory Committee has asked the MSHSL to come up with an acceptable proposal for awarding trophies to Teams at the State Tournament. Many, but not all, Sections currently do this and they feel the recognition of winning a team award will provide more exposure and recognition.

Rationale: The following rationale was provided by the Advisory Committee:

- As a team, the students represent their school rather than only themselves. Teams have a character. The most respected teams are not known only for competitive success, but for sportsmanship and decorum in competition and at the awards ceremony.
- Historically, other MSHSL activities, like debate, and athletics with individual competitors, like tennis, bowling, and wrestling, award individual and team awards.
- An examination of Minnesota State High School league events and the awards given at state and sectional events sanctioned by the league might lead one to believe that fine arts activities already receive fewer awards and far less team recognition than nearly every other high school league activity.

Concerns: As the staff member overseeing Speech, I have the following concerns:

- Fairness – Since the State Tournament is an invitation only (you need to finish in the top 3 at Sections in your category) the numbers of entries per school are not consistent from team to team.
 - Currently, our Team/Individual Activities like Golf, Cross Country, and Skiing qualify as team and as individuals. For example the winning Section Golf Team and the top 5 individuals advance to State. Speech currently has no team size restriction or team advancement.
 - Our two individual activities Swimming and Track have very specific entry restrictions at the first level (sub-section or Section), and kids can compete in multiple activities. Some Speech sections have tight restrictions on entries, others do not. Currently, Speech students are allowed to participate in only one event.
 - These two activities (Swimming and Track) have started outside “True Team” events since the number of entries differ from school to school at the State Tournament. Many in those activities feel that the True Team Championship is more prestigious than the State Team Championship because it is truly the entire team’s performance.
- Consistency – The MSHSL model has been to give Sections the autonomy to run their tournaments how they wish. Currently some sections do not even have a Team Champion Award. The allowable number of entries at the first level differs from section to section. The number of prelim rounds even may differ from section to section. At the section level this is not a problem since every team is playing by the same rules.

- Existing exceptions to MSHSL Rules – We’ve carefully positioned the fine arts and separated them from athletics and some of the off-season gamesmanship. Adding incentive for a team at the State Tournament might force us to re-evaluate some of the following
 - Transfer Rule – Currently Speech is exempt from the Transfer Rule for two reasons. It is an educational activity with lifelong benefits and it is an individual activity. At the time there was no fear of someone transferring to be part of a State Championship Team.
 - Season Start Dates/Season Limits – Currently Speech has no limitations on length of season or official start date. With a team/coach recognition at the State Tournament, many coaches may feel pressure to start early or may feel that they are disadvantaged because they can’t or won’t start as early as others.
 - Number of contests – Again, regular season competition is not a part of the MSHSL. I worry that some coaches may feel that others are gaining an advantage by participating in more contests and or NFL events. In addition, we have rules for National level competition and skipping MSHSL events that are not enforced for Speech that may need to be revisited.

Proposal: To create a true State Championship in Speech I propose the following:

- The 8 teams in each class who are “Section Champions” are eligible for the State Championship.
 - If a section currently does not award a champion, a standard formula would be used to determine the eligible team.
 - Every section will follow a standard “entry limit” at the first level of competition.
 - A specific season start and end date will be established, and no team shall compete or practice outside of the season.
- I propose the following point total be used. I feel it ‘balances’ qualifying large numbers and rewards high performers.
 - Every student who breaks finals (1/3 of all participants) receives 2 points
 - Any student finishing in the top 3 receives an additional point
 - Any student finishing first receives an additional point
 - If you do not break finals, you score a negative point for your team.
 - Ex: taking 1st place is 4 points, 2nd and 3rd are 3, 4th-8th are 2 points
 - Ex: Team A has two 1st place finishers, one 3rd, one 6th, and three missed finals:
2(4)+3+2-3=10 points

Going Forward: This proposal is just a starting point for discussion. Any formal proposal needs to be approved by the MSHSL Awards Committee and the full MSHSL Board of Directors.