



Wildcat Speech & Debate
Western High School

Team Handbook

Update: September 2022

A Note from Western Wildcat Speech & Debate Director....

Dear Parent(s) and/or Guardian(s):

Welcome to the greatest speech and debate team in the nation! After a coaching experience of over 28 years, I am proud of the various achievements and milestones we continue to reach here at Western High School Speech & Debate. Watching your student go from the beginning of their freshman year as a novice to becoming a seasoned debater is truly a rewarding experience. Speech and Debate training and competitions empower students to enjoy and take control over their own individual success as well as their team's success. For many of these students, participation in speech and debate is not just an extracurricular activity but also a life changing event, changing their whole attitude toward education and their future endeavors.

By engaging in research, preparing, performing and delivering arguments, team members learn to think critically, develop their academic research skills, improve their communication abilities, solve problems creatively, and increase their self-confidence. Research and argument (in various forms) has proven time and time again that students in speech and debate often achieve higher grades in other subjects, higher SAT/ACT scores and perform better in AP, AICE and Honor courses.

Parental involvement in our team is crucial. The coaches and assistants along with your students, cannot achieve success without you. I encourage involvement at all levels: judging, volunteering for tournaments, involving yourself in the parent booster club or heading up a committee. We cannot continue to grow as a team without you. As we embark in creating new standards and reaching new milestones, we want to make sure you are there every step of the way. We encourage you participate and get involved in our team's success.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

With much appreciation,

Dario Camara

Director of Speech & Debate

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A Note About the Team Handbook...

A speech and debate program is a multifaceted educational and academic program involving students, parents and educators in the task of fostering students' communication, thinking and performing skills. This means involving a lot of different people and efforts.

Speech and Debate involves many rules and explanations; including what speech and debate is officially, the various forms and events in speech and debate, as well as how the team functions.

The goal of this handbook is to orient you to speech and debate, to avoid problems or issues before they arise and to provide you with a basic explanation of what the world of competitive speech and debate.

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Our Team Goals

- Promote the highest level of ethical standards in the classroom, on campus, in competition and outside of the school.
 - Maintain a good attitude, character and responsibility for our actions.
 - Pursue excellence through hard work and self-discipline.
 - Demonstrate good sportsmanship.
 - Support the team by attending speech and debate competitions, fundraising events, meetings and assisting others when needed.
 - Commit to doing our best and aiming to win, while learning from our losses.
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Team Philosophy and Mission Philosophy

It is our belief that excellence is achieved through commitment and intense work effort, and that competitive success follows naturally from the achievement of excellence. Individually, a successful debater is one who sets high goals for themselves and in the process of striving to reach the goals discovers their own abilities and limitations. As a team, speech and debate success is measured in terms of group effort and synergy. Everyone shares in the joy of the accomplishments of everyone else, from novice to national champion. We believe that speech and debate foster not only public speaking, but critical thinking, analysis, creativity, and social skills as well.

Our Mission

Our mission is to provide an academic environment for dedicated students to improve their public speaking skills through the practice of speech and debate. We focus on developing skills for public address, which will translate into success for students as they advance in their studies and further into their chosen professions. We strive not only to develop skills fostered through debate and speech but also to promote citizenship, advocacy, activism, responsibility, respect and values in team and individual diversity.

Student Expectations and Guidelines

Guidelines are subject to change. Students should always follow the instructions on trips and should understand that changes to procedures will be announced and clarified when necessary. Rules and guidelines are put in place to ensure the students safety, and to maximize every opportunity so that we can be model citizens of the school and forensics community. As always, all school, local, state and federal laws must be abided.

1. Practice Sessions

- i. Each student must practice their event(s) practice each week unless excused by the coaches.
- ii. Each member must be prepared or preparing for their event during entire practice session.
- iii. Students must keep copies of past ballots for personal study and critique
- iv. Captains are responsible for weekly tournament analysis review of each member within their event.

2. Tournament Expectations

i. Dress

1. Novice male students should wear black suits with a white or French blue shirt and a tie that must be approved by your captain
2. Novice female students should wear a black skirt suit with a shell (no pastels or prints, solid colors only) must be approved by captain
3. Varsity and novice student's hair must be neatly groomed and out of the face, Males hair should be short (no unnatural hair dye)
4. No student may change out of their competition clothing during the tournament
5. Students are expected to remain in their competition through the end of awards whether they are receiving an award or not.

ii. Behavior

1. In rounds, students must give their undivided attention to ALL performances
2. Students may not use profanity during all speech and debate events.
3. Students may not discuss other competitors or judges in a negative manner with other students on our team or others.
4. Students must go to elimination rounds in their event or a teammate's event if they do not clear into elimination rounds.
5. Students must stay for awards and support teammates.
6. Students must respect other coaches, judges, and competitors at all speech and debate events
7. Students may not leave campus for any reason without approval prior to a tournament with written verification from parent/guardian.
8. Students must attend all of their rounds.

9. Students are expected to come prepared for practice sessions while at the tournament and prepared to do warm-ups as a team with excitement.
 10. Students may not vandalize spaces at tournaments. Students must clean up after themselves in the dining commons and classrooms of schools. Students are responsible for any valuables and are encouraged not to bring them to tournaments.
3. Semester Requirements
 - i. Students must compete in a minimum of five tournaments a semester.
 - ii. Students must maintain a minimum of a 3.0 per semester
 - iii. Students can only miss a minimum of two meetings per semester or else they may be removed from speech and debate.
 4. Debate Room Regulations
 - i. Speech and Debate members are not allowed to bring any non- speech and debate into the debate room at any time.
 - ii. No printing without permission.
 - iii. Supplies is to only be used in the debate room, removal of supplies is prohibited.
 - iv. Inappropriate behavior in the debate room may lead to the removal of debate.
 - v. Computers may not be tampered with and all activities on computers must be debate related.
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Travel Expectation & Guidelines

1. FLYING
 - i. Students are expected to arrive to the airport at the time provided
 - ii. Students are expected to pay for any baggage fees if needed.
 - iii. Students are expected to follow all regulations at the airport and instructions from flight and security personnel.
 - iv. Students must bring proper identification.
 - v. Promptness is key. Arrive a minimum of one hour and a half at the airport. It is your responsibility to be on time. **STUDENTS WILL FORFEIT THEIR PRIVILEGE TO COMPETE IF THEIR TARDINESS JEOPARDIZES OTHER MEMBERS OF THE TEAM.** In addition, it will be the students/parent's responsibility to get the student to the competition in a timely manner.
 - vi. It will also be the responsibility of the student/parents to incur any costs associated with getting the student to the tournament or tournament hotel if being late results in a student missing the transportation arranged by the team.

2. DRIVING

i. Bus

- a. If we share a bus with another team, our students will sit together.
- b. Students are expected to show up to load the bus on time so we can load and not hold other teams back.
- c. Students are expected to only pack one main bag.
- d. Students should understand that time on the bus is also to be reserved for working, so it must remain quiet.
- e. Students must be respectful to the bus driver at all times.
- f. Students must clean up after themselves and leave no garbage behind on the bus.

ii. Cars/Vans

- a. Students who drive to tournaments may not leave the tournament at anytime.
- b. Each student's families must arrange transportation to and from local tournaments. The school will not arrange carpooling or transportation for local events.
- c. Arrive 15 minutes before scheduled time if we are leaving from school.

3. HOTELS

- i. Students must stay in the room assigned to them.
- ii. Students may not have guests of the opposite sex in their rooms at any time.
- iii. Students may not take a shared ride anywhere unless the team is travelling by shared ride (Uber, cab, Lyft).
- iv. Students may not charge incidentals on their room.
- v. Students must follow hotel regulations, state and federal laws at all times.
- vi. Students must pickup garbage in room, upon checkout.

Fundraising

Throughout the year we will have a variety of different fundraisers to assist the team in raising necessary funds for travel, consultants and resources/materials. Parents and students are expected, as members of the team who are working towards the same goal to participate fully in all fundraising.

Additional Fundraisers: Throughout the year we may do additional fundraisers – it is the expectation that whatever fundraisers are deemed appropriate by the team that each family assists the team in meeting its fundraising goals. The team and the Booster Fundraising Committee will be scheduling various types of fundraising activities throughout the season, both on and off campus.

Parental Expectations

Running a team that is as big as ours requires support from all of our parents! All parents need to do their part so that we can excel as a team. Thank you for your support!

- i. Parents support the rules and guidelines established by the school, team and coaches.
- ii. Parents assume responsibility of picking up their children from a tournament, on time.
- iii. **PARENTS ASSUME THE FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF THE TOTAL COST OF A TOURNAMENT SHOULD THEIR CHILD DROP THE TOURNAMENT AFTER SIGNING UP. DROPPING THE DAY OF REQUIRES AN ADDITIONAL FEE OF \$50 (minimum) OR MORE IF THE TOURNAMENT CHARGES MORE.**
- iv. Parents must ensure that all payments are paid ON TIME for trips. After one late payments students will lose the privilege to attend tournaments
- v. Parents will fully support all fundraising efforts.
- vi. Parents who attend tournaments (physically or virtually) as judges are to help judge and help with transporting children. Coaches will be the only representatives to interact with tabulation, other coaches, other team's students, etc.
- vii. Parents of students on the traveling team are expected to judge two times a semester.
- viii. Parents of students on the team are to help with the hosting of any tournament at Western. Help can include, but is not limited to, providing food for judges' lounge, donating beverages, working concessions, or serving food to judges.
- ix. Parents will provide support with any fundraising efforts that the team sponsors.
- x. Parents need to pick up their children at the airport and all designated pickup areas at the specified time given in the travel itinerary – do not have students call or text when we land or arrive – you should already be there waiting for them. Parents should be in the baggage claim area or in school parking lot, waiting.
- xi. Parents will not challenge or harass the decisions made by the coaches in regards to leadership positions, traveling team slots, or other decisions that are made in the best interest of the team. Failure to respect the decisions of the coaches can lead to the removal of the student from debate.

Please remember that, with a team of this size, not every decision is going to please everyone. Decisions are made in the best interest of the entire team, and sometimes that means that individuals will not get what they want – that is unavoidable. Challenging a coach and not thinking holistically about what is being done and accomplished is unfair. Parents must trust the coach to make the BEST decision for the ENTIRE TEAM – even if that means their individual child does not get what they want or desire.

Parent Booster Club Membership

Booster Club Goals

The Booster Club objective is to provide financial support and to promote the welfare of the Western Debate Team and its members; to facilitate communications, team goals and understanding between the Debate Team, parents and the community. In order to make those benefits possible, certain financial and service commitments are required.

Debate Membership Fee

Each debater is expected to meet the financial obligations for membership. Annual dues are \$125.00 per year and are tax-deductible and include a team shirt. These funds are crucial to the team; satisfying the minimum financial requirements for its operation. Members are also encouraged to volunteer both time and abilities when needed or asked to facilitate the betterment of the debate team.

Membership is mandatory for each member. Payments should be made online at wildcatdebateparents.com. Checks are made payable to "Wildcat Debate Parents." Contact the team treasurer for additional payment information.

Membership includes: Team and individual league registrations for: the NSDA (National Speech & Debate Association), SFCFL (South Florida Catholic Forensic League) and FFL (Florida Forensic League). This general fee also includes Booster Club Membership, varsity cords, recognition awards, supplies and minimal operation costs. *It does not include out-of-town tournament transportation, hotel fees, or tournament entry fees. Local and out-of-town tournaments will be paid for as a separate fee per tournament.*

All funds are controlled and managed by the Wildcat Debate Parents booster club.

Hardship: Family membership dues may be waived if financial hardship is demonstrated. Financial hardship may be declared if a student qualifies for free lunch, or if the booster treasurer declares financial hardship after consultation with the student and the student's family. Financial hardship shall **NOT** prevent a student from participating in any event with the Wildcat WHS Speech and Debate Team. Parents who wish to invoke hardship shall contact the team director, Dario Camara (dario.camara@browardschools.com)

Additional Donations

We Need Your Help: It is very expensive to run a successful debate team that competes nationally against other schools. With school cutbacks and rising prices, it is more expensive than ever to run the team, especially if we want winners. So, beyond the required Member Level fee of \$150 we hope and ask that those with the financial wherewithal, additional funds to enable us to increase the amount of resources available to our children (i.e. coaching, tournament price reductions, printing, IT, supplies, equipment, food, advertising, etc.). Below are a few different ways you, as a parent can get involved:

DONATIONS: The easiest source of funds for the debate team is additional cash contributions from friends and family. Set forth below are the levels of donations and this year we hope that you will consider a donation to the booster club. The booster club is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt non-profit organization. **All donations may be made online at wildcatdebateparents.com**

- **Nationals Level \$2,000 and above**
- **Harvard Level \$1,500**
- **Yale Level \$1,000**
- **Blue-Key Level \$500**

Corporate Sponsorships and Donations” In addition to outright monetary donations, the team is willing to accept corporate sponsorships and in-kind donations that can be used to generate funds for the debate team. For example, donations of certain products that the team may be able to resell, without first coordinating with the club.

Matching Gifts and Grants: Many large companies have programs to match donations or provide grants. If you have an opportunity to help earn such donations, the booster club will provide the additional documentation and assistance to help earn the funds. The most important issue is to ask your contacts if their firms have such programs. If you find the programs, we can help get the donation. The key is to ask and find out if your company has such a program.

Special Note: Funds donated to the booster club are for the benefit of the entire debate team. The booster club will abide by specific limitations and restrictions applicable to donated funds to the extent they are not unreasonable and do not create problems for the club. The booster club retains the sole right to control the use of donated funds.

Meetings:

Parent Booster Club Meetings will be held the only during events and will be updated on the website and monthly emails.

Tournament Fees & Expenditures:

Members and parents should expect to pay fees throughout the season for additional local and out-of-town tournament entry fees, judging fees, transportation, travel and meals not covered by the base membership fee. To help keep costs down it is important that debaters do not sign up for tournaments and then drop out last minute. The team is fined by the league for no-shows; both for member and Parent judges! Parents and students will be responsible for these fines.

- i. Local Tournaments: Meals may be provided throughout the entire event.
- ii. Out-of-Town Tournaments: It is highly recommended that debaters carry some amount of cash. Bank debit cards and Bank gift cards are an ideal way to make sure your son/daughter has funds available to them while away. We suggest they bring approximately \$35-\$55 a day for meals.
- iii. For the end-of-year banquet each debater will be asked to provide a donation for our silent auction. This could be in the form of an item, service or monetary donation.
- iv. Team fees can be paid by check or with credit card. Credit card transactions carry an additional charge of \$3.00 per every \$100

Payments can be made at: paypal.me/wildcatdebatebooster