

2026 Magnolia District Speech & Debate Invitation

On behalf of the Magnolia Speech and Debate District Committee and Petal High School, all active member schools of the Magnolia Speech & Debate District are invited to register for the 2026 Magnolia District Qualifier Tournament. All events will be held the weekend of March 13-14 at Petal High School, with the exception of Congressional Debate, which was already held at Forest Hill High School in December. Registration is open at magnolia.tabroom.com

Please read over the information below and contact micah.everson406@gmail.com with any questions. Also, check out <https://www.speechanddebate.org/all-about-districts/>

New to Districts? Here's what to focus on:

1. Ensure that your students and school are eligible. (See Eligibility and Entry limits below.)
2. Discuss with students and decide on event entries, keeping in mind that some events are different from our usual MHSAA events/rules, and that students are limited to two events for the weekend.
3. Ensure that you have completed Single Entry Letters of Intent (really, just a form on tabroom, not an actual letter), for all students who are entered in more than one event, *including* those who entered Congress in December.
4. Do all your usual travel planning and paperwork as you would for any tournament.
5. HELP US RECRUIT LOTS OF JUDGES IN THE PETAL/HATTIESBURG AREA.
6. Consider nominating students and others for District Awards and the Magnolia World Schools Debate Teams (District Awards and Nominations below).
7. Read through EVERYTHING below.
8. Contact me with any questions you have!

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1. General District Tournament Information

Notable differences from MHSAA events:

- Big Questions is added to Debate events
- Congress is split into House & Senate
- Many MHSAA speech events are not included (Dec, Impromptu, Prose, Poetry, Duet Acting, Storytelling, Expos)
- Extemp is split into two separate events: International and United States.

Events, in summary:

Congress Category	Debate Category	Speech Category
House Senate (A student may enter one, not both)	Big Questions Lincoln-Douglas Policy Public Forum (A student may enter only one)	Oratory Informative Dramatic Humorous POI Duo International Extemp United States Extemp (A student may enter two IF not in Debate. Debaters may enter only one. A student may not enter both Extemp)

Supervision

A **coach must be present** on campus at all times during the competition. Students without a coach present will not be allowed to compete. **Exceptions to this must be discussed with and approved by the District Chair.**

Deadlines

Like most tournaments in Mississippi, the deadline for registration will be Monday night the week of the tournament. The deadline for judges will be Tuesday night. Also like most tournaments, it is extremely helpful both for planning and troubleshooting if you are able to get tentative entries registered well in advance.

Deadlines for all special district award nominations and World Schools Debate spots is March 6 (see below for more info.)

2. NSDA Unified Manual

The information in this document is presented as a guide, not a comprehensive rule book. Coaches and competing students should be sure to read and review the relevant sections of the NSDA Unified Manual which can be found here: <https://www.speechanddebate.org/high-school-unified-manual/>.

In the most recent version of the manual (2026.1.4), the event rules start on page 30.

Guidelines for the district qualifier tournaments start on page 81.

In general, where decisions are left up to individual districts, our decision can be found in the document you're reading right now. Some specifics of the rules in which we *don't* have any choice are glossed over in this document, but can be found in the Unified Manual.

For example, there are very specific rules for paneling Speech elimination rounds, calculating ranks, and determining qualifiers on pp. 116-118 of the Unified Manual that differ from what we are used to in the MHSAA rulebook. I haven't included all of those details below. Tabroom's settings will handle most of them automatically anyway, but it's a good idea for all coaches to review those in order to know what to expect, especially because the rules differ from MHSAA.

3. Eligibility and Entry Limits

School Eligibility

- To compete at District qualifiers, schools must be **paid member schools** of the NSDA.
- Also, any outstanding fees to the NSDA (usually student membership fees) **must be paid in full before a school competes** at any of the three weekends of the tournament. This applies even if the unpaid student is not competing - *all* fees for a school must be paid.
- You can check all fee information by logging into your www.speechanddebate.org account and going to "School Finances" in the left-hand menu.

School Entry Limits

- School entries in all categories other than Congress and Big Questions are limited to 4 entries per school, per event **and** to an overall cap on entries which is determined by team strength. (The more degrees you have, the more entries you get.)
- You can see your school's strength on your NSDA school profile (log in at speechanddebate.org). Then find your number of entries allowed by referencing the "Entry Allotment" charts at <https://www.speechanddebate.org/district-tournaments/>.
- Big Questions is special - entry limits do not apply. Schools may enter more than 4 debaters in Big Questions, and BQ entries do not count towards a school's overall entry cap. See note below under individual entry limits, however.

Student Eligibility

- In order to compete at any District qualifier, students **must** have already earned the **degree of Merit** (25 NSDA points). Those points must be **posted** through the coach's NSDA (speechanddebate.org) account prior to tournament registration.
- Students must have also **created accounts** on both speechanddebate.org and tabroom.com and linked to their school on both websites, and student **membership fees** (\$20) must have been paid. (Coaches, not students, handle membership fees through the school NSDA account.)

Student Entry limits

- Students are limited to **three events** across the two weekends: one entry in Congress, and two entries in other events.
- Big Questions is the exception in the official NSDA rules - it does not count towards any entry limits. However, because all debate events happen at the same time at our district tournament, a student who enters Big Questions *may not* enter Policy, Public Forum, or Lincoln-Douglas.
Beginning last year, due to the combined Speech & Debate schedule, we have also restricted individual BQ entries to one speech event, if they choose to double-enter. (Prior to 2025, we allowed BQ debaters to still enter 2 speech events because they were held on different weekends.)
- Congress weekend: a student may enter the House or Senate, but not both.
- Speech & Debate weekend:
 - a student may enter ONE debate event and ONE speech event
 - OR a student may enter TWO speech events
 - but no student may enter BOTH International Extemp and US Extemp
 - Senate/House entries have no bearing on Speech & Debate entries
- **In partner events** (CX, PF, Duo), students who double enter in partner debate *and* Duo Interp are **strongly encouraged**, but not required, to enter both events with the *same* partner. Entering with different partners will make the Single Entry letters of Intent (next item below) complicated.

4. Single Entry Letters of Intent

A student may only enter one [main] event at nationals, regardless of the number of events they qualify in. All students who enter more than one event at District Qualifiers (inclusive of House & Senate) must have their entry preferences submitted to the district chair **before competition starts on March 13**. In plain English, students competing in more than one event must have ranked their choices of events in case they qualify in more than one event, and that ranking must be in the district chair's hands before Round 1 on March 13 and is considered binding.

For example, a student who ranked Extemp as their first choice prior to the tournament, but who qualifies in both Extemp and Oratory, either outright or as an alternate, *must accept the spot in Extemp* - they may not change their mind mid-tournament or post-tournament and opt to go in Oratory. They would only compete in Oratory at nationals if they did not qualify at all (either outright or as an alternate) in Extemp. To take the example one step further, if that student *does* qualify in Oratory as of the end of the tournament, but is in the alternate list for Extemp, and a spot opens in Extemp, they would be expected to

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take Extemp spot and give up their Oratory spot, in accordance with the ranking they submitted pre-tournament.

Entry preferences should be entered by coaches (in conversation with their students) under the **NSDA Forms tab** on the **Tabroom.com** tournament registration page. (Look for a blue button that reads “**Enter SELI Preferences.**”) Those preferences can be changed online up until the tournament, but will be considered binding as of **8:00am on March 13**, when the district chair downloads them all.

5. Fees

School Fees

\$25 per school, per weekend of competition

Student Fees

\$10 per student, per event (meaning partner events cost \$20)

Judge Fees

\$50 per missing judge in Debate or Speech - see additional notes on judges below.

Late Fees

\$10 per registration change after Monday evening deadline

All fees are paid to **Magnolia Speech & Debate**.

Mailed payments should be sent % Micah Everson, P.O. Box #4263, Jackson, MS 39296.

6. Topics

Debate Events will use the **designated March 2026, March-April 2026, or 2025-2026 annual topics**, depending on the event.

Extemp Topics and Questions are provided by the NSDA.

Note that the BQ topic has changed since we last debated it in Mississippi at the Madison Central Tournament.

International Extemp

Listed in no particular order. One topic will be used for each round, but not all topics will be used:

- Africa
- Asia
- Europe
- Southwest Asia
- Americas
- Energy & Environment

United States Extemp

Listed in no particular order. One topic will be used for each round, but not all topics will be used:

- Politics
- Business & Economics
- Supreme Court & Legal Issues
- Health, Education & Social Issues
- Energy & Environment
- Foreign Policy & National Security

Public Forum - March 2026 NSDA Topic

Resolved: The United States federal government should ban corporate acquisition of single-family residences.

Policy - 2025-2026 NFHS Topic

Resolved: The United States federal government should significantly increase its exploration and/or development of the Arctic.

Lincoln-Douglas - Mar-Apr 2026 NSDA Topic

Resolved: The United States military ought to abide by the principle of non-intervention.

Big Questions - 2025-2026 NSDA Topic

Resolved: Moral systems rooted in theism are preferable to non-theistic moral systems.

7. Judges

- Every school competing must provide **at least** one judge for the tournament's duration. You may not "buy out" *all* of your judging obligations.
- Buying out *any* judging obligations is strongly discouraged. The fees are meant to **disincentive** buyouts. They are not magical judge-supplying fees.
- One judge is obligated for every **two debate** entries.
- One judge is obligated for every **five speech** entries.
- Uncovered judge obligations will be charged \$50 each.
- **Please bring judges, even above and beyond your obligation. Qualifier tournaments in particular thrive or grind to a halt based on judge availability.**

Judges should watch the 6 min video and read the brief materials on judging Speech & Debate found on the NSDA Website: <https://www.speechanddebate.org/judge-training/>. NFHS training is also strongly encouraged (ask me about that if you don't know about it).

8. Schedule

This is different from any other tournament this year, so please spend some time looking it over!

See a more detailed schedule with some additional commentary [here](#).

Friday, March 28

- 2:30pm - Team Registration (Coaches Check-in with Everson)
- 3:00pm - Round 1 of all debate events (BQ, LD, PF, CX)
- 4:00pm - Round 2 BQ, PF, LD
- 4:45pm - Round 2 CX
- 5:30pm - Round 3 BQ, PF, LD
- 6:45pm - Round 3 CX
- 7:30pm - Round 4 BQ, PF, LD
- 8:30pm - Round 5 BQ, PF, LD
- 8:45pm - Round 4 CX

Saturday, March 29

- 8:00am - Quarters BQ, PF, LD; Round 5 CX
- 9:00am - Extemp Prep
- 9:30am - Round 1 of all speech events
- 11:00am - Semis BQ, PF, LD
- 11:30am - Extemp Prep, Round 2 of all other speech events
- 12:00pm - Extemp Round 2
- 12:15pm - Semis CX
- 1:00pm - Extemp Prep
- 1:30pm - Round 3 of all speech events
- 3:30pm - Extemp Prep
- 3:45pm - Semis of all speech events
- 5:30pm - Extemp Prep
- 5:45pm - Finals of all speech events
- 7:30pm - Awards Ceremony

9. Breaks and Elimination Rounds

Debate Events with 7 or more entries

- Five prelim rounds will be held.
 - This is more than the minimum required, but is what we're already used to for MHSAA tournaments. It also gives every team a clear winning or losing record at the end of prelims.
 - We'll aim to get 4 prelims in on Friday, with the 5th Saturday morning, but if we can squeeze in 5 on Friday, all the better. (We are not allowed to start any round after 9:30pm.)
- We will advance all debaters with a winning record (3-2 or better)
 - This gives the maximum number possible the chance to compete in elim rounds, and remains consistent with MHSAA practices.
 - In a large field this *may* mean a partial octa-final round, if necessary. In a smaller field, it may mean a partial quarter or even straight-to-semis.
- We will use a single-elimination bracket for elimination rounds.
 - This keeps the tournament consistent with MSHAA practices, making it predictable and easily understandable for debaters and coaches. A double-elimination bracket would lengthen the tournament significantly. With single-eliminations, even if the 4th or 5th prelim ends up on Saturday, we should still wrap up at a reasonable time Saturday afternoon.
 - We won't actually need a final round, since (at least) the top two in each event will be qualifiers. There will be no need to distinguish between 1st and 2nd place.
- The order of alternates will be determined by using records in elimination rounds, then preliminary seedings. (i.e. We will not hold run-offs)
 - Further explanation: assuming two qualifiers, the winners of the two semifinal rounds would qualify. The losers of the two semifinal rounds would have the same elim record, so who comes first in the alternate list will be determined by their prelim seeding. (But an entry that was knocked out in quarterfinals will always be below an entry that was knocked out in semifinals, regardless of prelim seeding.)

Debate Events with 6 or fewer entries will use a Round Robin

- There will be no elimination round unless an unbreakable tie somehow exists after the Round Robin (which is unlikely since the tie should be broken by the head-to-head debate that would have already happened).
- There is no chance of a Round Robin in Big Questions, since we are required to have 10 entries to hold a Big Questions qualifier.

Speech Events

We have to hold three prelim rounds in every event. It is unlikely that we'll have to hold more than 5 total rounds in any event (prelims, semis, finals)

- Events with 7 or fewer entries will stop after 3 prelims
- Events with 8-15 entries, **top 6** advance to a single final round after 3 prelims.
- Events with 16-30 entries, **top 12** advance to two-panel semifinals after 3 prelims.
- Events with 31-45 entries, **top 18** advance to a three-panel semifinals after 3 prelims.

(All of this falls well within the NSDA baseline requirement to advance at least 25% from prelims.)

Qualifiers

In all Speech & Debate events except Big Questions, our district will have **2** national qualifiers, unless...

1. There are fewer than 4 entries in an event. Then we do not get to hold the event and we have no national qualifiers.
2. There are 30 or more entries in an event. Then we get **3** national qualifiers in that event.
3. There are 50 or more entries in an event. Then we get **4** national qualifiers in that event.

In Big Questions, there must be at least 10 entries to get **2** national qualifiers. If fewer than 10 enter, we get *no* national qualifiers. We cannot get more than 2 national qualifiers in Big Questions.

10. Equity and Inclusion Policies

The **Belonging and Inclusion Station (BIS)** is the upgrade to NSDA's "Equity Office." We aren't really staffed up enough to have a wholly separate room and personnel for this, so the process will start with an online form: <https://bit.ly/magnoliaBIS>. Go ahead and look at it. There are some notes there to consider for you or your students if you have a concern to raise, and it would be a good idea to get familiar with it in advance.

Basically, the Belonging and Inclusion form is for addressing concerns about harassment, discrimination, bullying, or behavior/equity issues. It is NOT for filing a protest regarding the results of a round or reporting a violation of event rules.

If you have a protest or rules concern this weekend, you should contact Mr. Everson and/or other Committee Members directly in the tabroom.

Audit Procedures

As in the past, we are required by NSDA to post results of each round to coaches for y'all to audit. The primary concern here is for you to check that the results seem to make sense and that your students are indicated as being on the right side of debate rounds, especially in Public Forum, where we have the coin flip.

The purpose of the audit is to catch mistakes. It is NOT for giving you information to coach your students in between rounds. RFDs and other judge feedback will not be posted until after the tournament. If you have a concern, please bring it to our attention in the tabroom ASAP.

Keep an eye on tabroom.com emails so that you know when results have been posted for you to see.

11. District Awards & Nominations

Nominating forms are open for the following district awards. The deadline for all of these is **March 6th**. You can read more about each of the awards [here](#) (or you can wade through 15 different pages of descriptions on speechanddebate.org). **Please do NOT use the nominating forms on the NSDA website.** We'll only use those for submitting our district winners to the national competition.

We'll recognize all of these either at the Magnolia awards ceremony on March 14 or at the MHSAA awards ceremony on April 26.

[District Student of the Year Nomination Form](#)

[District Coach & Admin Awards Nomination Form](#), including:

- District Coach of the Year
- District Assistant Coach of the Year
- District New Coach of the Year
- District Administrator of the Year

[Other District Awards Nomination Form](#):

- District Volunteer of the Year
- District Alumni Achievement Award
- District Communicator of the Year

World Schools

World Schools Debate is a special event at NSDA Nationals, where we get to send two squads of 3-5 students made up of debaters from all over the state. Those students work together in May & June prior to the tournament to prepare, and then debate teams from other states and even other countries at nationals.

The ideal candidates for the WS teams are upperclassmen who are qualifiers or alternates in other events, are quick learners, and are excited to work together as a team to represent the whole state. That does not necessarily rule out underclassmen or students who are not high up in the alternate list. Above all, we are looking for students who can help our state be competitive. We have had an [excellent track record in recent years](#) of getting teams to elimination rounds at nationals, and we look to continue that success.

You and your students can watch an online demo World Schools debate here if this is a new event for you: <https://www.speechanddebate.org/world-schools-online-demo-round-2020/>.

If you have questions about World Schools, please reach out and ask!

Even if you already indicated that a student is interested in World Schools on your school's single-entry preference forms, you must fill out [the nomination form](#) for them to be considered. Indicating where World Schools lies in the student's preferences on the single-entry preference form is also required (via the NSDA forms tab in tabroom), but it is not sufficient to nominate a student.

Please finish your nominations for World Schools by Friday, March 6th.

