



Dear Colleagues,

After 33 years of working in public education, it still surprises me that each new school year is always a fresh start for teachers and students alike. It is a time for them to renew their commitment to teaching and learning while setting goals and intentions for a year of phenomenal growth, new experiences, and endless possibilities.

This is so true for the year-long journey of those who participate in speech and debate, especially students.

Participating in debate and speech events empowers students to break the fourth wall to connect with the audience in an authentic effort to understand the world and society in which they live. By its nature, forensics promotes curiosity and advocacy through the power of words to question assumptions, examine issues, and introduce solutions.

This is why it is vitally important for campus administrators across the United States to continue to support speech and debate in our schools. The academic rewards are not just anecdotal but are supported by years of research. Studies have shown that students who participate in competitive speech and debate activities are more likely to have higher academic achievement and an overall better educational experience. Through the process of developing an argument, crafting a speech, or interpreting a piece of literature, students become better thinkers, writers, and communicators.

These benefits extend well beyond the schoolhouse doors. Students who get involved in a quality speech and debate program gain immense confidence, learn how to collaborate with others, and forge lifetime friendships. In other words, forensics instills the confidence necessary for young people to thrive in life and become advocates of what is fair, what is right, and what is just in their communities.

Yours Truly,

*Leonidas Patterson*

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