



2024 NFHS Speech, Debate & Theatre Points of Emphasis

Jana Riggins – NFHS Speech Advisory Committee Chair

Dr. James Weaver – NFHS Director of Performing Arts



National Federation of State High School Associations

located in Indianapolis, IN – Est. 1920

- 🇺🇸 National leader and advocate for high school athletics and performing arts programs.
- 🇺🇸 Serves 51 state associations, 19,500 high schools, and 12 million student participants.
- 🇺🇸 Offers online education courses for high school coaches, officials, parents, students and others.
- 🇺🇸 Ensures that students have opportunity to enjoy healthy participation, achievement and good sportsmanship in education-based activity programs.



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**PLAY.
PERFORM.
COMPETE.
TOGETHER.**

2024 Points of Emphasis

Implicit Bias

Every person is influenced by implicit biases, which can affect our interactions with others. It is the right of every student to compete free from discrimination. It is, therefore, also the responsibility of every coach, judge and peer to acknowledge and resist their own biases. Participating in pre-tournament training can help everyone consider their own assumptions about others and make the choice to abandon them prior to competition. Students should be judged solely on their competitive merit.

<https://nfhslearn.com/courses/implicit-bias>



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Artificial Intelligence

AI has become an invaluable tool in professional and educational spaces to make certain tasks more efficient. At their best, these tools should be used to grow student skillsets (i.e., research, brainstorming and practice). The expectation is that AI may assist in, but not replace, a student's work. It can help students learn and understand information and apply that knowledge to their original work.



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Access

Speech, debate and theatre are powerful activities that have the potential to impact and transform lives. Every student has the right to access these programs, and a lack of resources should never be a hindrance to participation. Coaches and directors should work to provide equal access to electronic resources, supplies, attire, etc. and reasonably provide accommodation for those members of our community who lack access. The focus of the performing arts competition should be on commending and improving the student's content instead of shutting down points of view or being critical of that which is outside of the student's control.



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Support

Speech debate and theatre are a community. Though students may perform on the stage alone, they do so with a team cheering them on, coaches guiding them, and parents encouraging them all the way through. That community is our most vital resource and should be available for individual members to lean on. Coaches are encouraged to aid their colleagues and competitors; students are encouraged to build personal connections beyond the boundaries of their team; and parents shall remember that every child deserves the dignity of a respectful community.



Thank you!

National Federation of State High School Associations

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