



international debate education association

Coach Accreditation Standards

Coaches assume a central role in IDEA's activities. By introducing students to debate education, to the skills essential for effective public speaking, and to the critical analysis of complicated issues, coaches provide students with the foundation for the successful practice of speech and debate. They are a tremendous influence on the lives of students, and represent the vanguard in promoting free and open discussion.

The practice of speech and debate offers enormous benefits to students, both as a means of encouraging the analytical examination and exchange of ideas, and as a means of developing students' self-confidence. For these reasons, IDEA stands firmly committed to the introduction of, and experimentation with, speech and debate as teaching and learning devices.

IDEA encourages coaches who wish to introduce speech and debate into their classroom to pursue accreditation. In doing so, an educator acknowledges not only the benefits of speech and debate, but also commits him or herself to the principles and mission of IDEA.

I. Educators seeking accreditation should meet the minimum requirements and standards listed below.

A. The minimum requirements for any coach wishing to be accredited includes

- submitting a portfolio (including a resume, two model lesson projects of speech and/or debate trainings, diplomas of honors, training materials, publications)
- a plan of action for the upcoming year, and an activity report
- coaches should also undergo a long-term training course

B. IDEA educators should share the same basic pedagogical assumptions:

1. They should recognize that speech and debate are student-centered activities.

Participation in academic speech and debate develops students into questioning, analytically minded consumers of intellectual discourse. These qualities are most effectively realized when students are granted opportunities to express their own ideas and to find their own voices.

2. They should be knowledgeable, and should effectively convey information to others.

Trainers, teachers, and coaches should be committed to intellectual openness, and should be willing to assist students in conducting research. Moreover, educators should provide adequate information (both general and specific) to assist students in understanding the issues at hand. However, the students themselves (and not their coaches or teachers) should prepare cases, analyze topics, conduct research, and develop strategies. In the learning process, the role of the trainer, teacher, and coach should be that of a facilitator.

3. They should be organized.

Trainers, teachers, and coaches should plan diligently in structuring their teaching time and in constructing their syllabi or teaching program. Every session should have clearly defined objectives, and following each session, the trainer, teacher, or coach should evaluate the achievement of those objectives based upon sound, pre-established criteria.

4. They should create a positive learning environment.

A supportive and caring environment – one in which all students receive attention, and in which they are challenged to reach their full potential – is the most important element in the facilitation of learning. This occurs when educators fully engage their students in the educational process. Effective educators recognize the importance of adapting speech and debate principles and practices to the specific needs of their audience, and convey these concepts in a sensitive manner.

IDEA believes that exposure to competitive debate and speech events provides students with skills and opportunities to examine issues affecting both the students themselves and their communities. Similarly, these events empower students to participate confidently in public discourse. Coaches play a fundamental role in contributing to this process. Coaches often introduce students to speech and debate, and guide their students in practice, research, and discussion. A good coach can instill in his or her students the confidence and skills that are vital to developing a deep-seated, lasting spirit of exploration and a willingness to confront intellectual challenges. Most importantly, though, coaches act as *educators* and *role models* of inestimable influence.

II. Coaches seeking accreditation should meet the following standards and levels of participation.

Coaches also play a vital role as administrators. Without this contribution, the infrastructure that enables students to participate could not exist. For all of these reasons, IDEA steadfastly supports the coaching efforts of its affiliates, and offers the following guidelines to assist coaches in their activities.

- A. Coaches should be committed to their students.

A coach should act as a responsible chaperone whose primary concern is the well being of his or her students. At all times, students must feel safe in the presence of their coach.

- B. Coaches should behave ethically and professionally, and should encourage ethical conduct on the part of their students.

Although a coach's role is not strictly that of a disciplinarian, a coach should strive to instill in their students exemplary respect and civility – qualities that should be displayed even under the pressures of competition. Moreover, coaches should serve as positive role models for their students, and should behave responsibly, ethically, and professionally, not only at tournaments, but also during practice and in the execution of their administrative duties.

- C. A coach should be an effective administrator.

A coach should administer his or her speech and debate team with foresight and efficiency, and should coordinate and facilitate regular meetings, emphasizing the regular and steady attendance of both their team and themselves. In addition, a coach should demonstrate a willingness to help increase the resources and revenues of the team.

In their capacity as administrators, and in recruiting students, coaches should always adhere to principles of fairness and equality. In addition, in order to cultivate a positive team atmosphere, it is imperative that a coach develops mature, professional, and productive relationships with his or her students.

Coaches should ensure that their students remain abreast of the aspects of their speech and debate activities that are relevant to their local communities - not only by debating issues relevant to community life, but through volunteer efforts and the exercise of civic duties.

- D. A coach should foster participation, involvement and the individual growth of the participant.

A coach should focus on enlisting participants who exhibit different levels of experience across many activities. A coach should offer students the opportunity to assume a variety of roles, and should promote peer assistance and support. More experienced students should be encouraged to assist those less experienced, and should have the opportunity to serve as coaches' assistants. Furthermore, a coach should make every effort to retain students.

- E. A coach should ensure that educational resources are available to all, not just an elite few.

IDEA believes that speech and debate education are crucial for the establishment and growth of democracy, and consequently maintains that all youth, as future participants in political life, should have equal access to educational resources. Speech and debate coaches should thus bear the spirit of democracy in mind and make their organizations, activities, and educational resources available to all interested youth, regardless of their background. Likewise, success in competitive activities should not determine participation.

Coaches can become inactive but once they are accredited, they will always be accredited. Coaches can become inactive because of inactivity. Inactivity will be determined based on data entered into [DebateTracker](#), the IDEA online database. Coaches will become inactive if no students they coach receive a seal of excellence during the academic year.

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