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## international debate education association

### Teacher Accreditation Standards

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Teachers 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, teachers 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 in schools and classroom settings 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 teachers 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. The minimum requirements for teachers 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
- teachers should also undergo a long-term training course
- teacher training and certification varies so the NGO should cooperate with particular ministries and other official bodies.

#### **II. IDEA educators should share the same basic pedagogical assumptions:**

- A. 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.

- B. 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.

- C. 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.

- D. 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.

### **III. Teachers who are interested in employing speech and debate in their curricular practices should consider the following pedagogical guidelines:**

- A. Classroom speech and debate should foster the development of oral communication skills and the internalization of the decision-making processes.

If they are to become active learners, students must have the opportunity to communicate verbally. When students are encouraged to think aloud (specifically, when they practice discursive skills with their peers), they are developing their own internal reasoning processes. Debate and speech are uniquely capable of assisting students in acquiring these skills, since they emphasize oral communication and require students to make decisions about what they will say and when they will say it.

- B. Speech and debate in the classroom should challenge students to think analytically.

Students learn by actively constructing new meanings, while drawing on prior knowledge and understanding. Accordingly, there should exist opportunities in the classroom for students to experiment with new ideas and to examine new models of thought. Academic debate does more than simply inform students about issues - it equips students with the skills to evaluate and question novel information, and to integrate that information as a critical aspect of their own worldview.

Communication via speech and debate compels students to confront viewpoints that are different from their own, and can help develop the social skills necessary for students to engage in open and analytical discussions with their peers, teachers, community, and the world at large. In order to achieve these goals, academic speech and debate should immerse students in enriching, interactive experiences that are authentic and often practical. That is to say, selected topics should carry a personally meaningful challenge for the student.

Teachers should draw on their knowledge of each individual student's perspective and personality to tailor lessons that have a challenging, personal relevance to the students. In formulating debate topics, teachers should craft cogent guiding questions that have complex, multi-faceted answers - not simply 'yes' or 'no'. Finally each lesson should be constructed with a specific goal in mind, and some type of assessment should be created to determine if that goal was accomplished.

- C. All students should receive equal encouragement and support in their participation.

Even though academic debate takes place in a classroom setting, and is meant primarily as an educational tool, it is still an activity with competitive elements. As such, the temptation may exist to offer debate education solely to those students who exhibit the most promise, or who immediately display talent and success. Preferential treatment of this nature, however, goes

directly against IDEA's imperative that debate and speech be open to all students who wish to participate in its activities. The interactive nature of the debate process makes debate an exceptional learning vehicle, but students learn less when they are asked to assume passive roles and practices. Hence, teachers should solicit and encourage the active engagement of all students in the classroom.

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