Schools with a history with speech and debate often refer to the campus-wide changes they see after starting a team as the "speech and debate effect." Administrators report that offering a program improved overall classroom performance, increased engagement in the classroom, increased school pride, and decreased negative student behavior. By supporting speech and debate at your school, you can positively influence student outcomes across the board.

Speech and debate supports the development of academic skills, as students learn to research, read, and write more effectively. They use critical thinking to deconstruct the logic of what they read and consider creative solutions to society's problems. Studies have linked the activity to a 36% increase in reading test scores and an 87% increase in analytical skills for participants. "As a result of the "speech and debate attitude, earned dual credits increased 800%, ACT scores increased an average of three points, and scholarship dollars offered doubled in three years," says New Mexico Principal Douglas Wine. Speech and debate gives students portable skills that serve them in all their academic endeavors.

Speech and debate also supports the development of social and emotional skills. Participants work as part of a team, find a place to belong, and talk through complex and divisive issues with understanding and respect. Regardless of skill level, age or background, students who participate in speech and debate programming learn that their voices matter and are valued by their communities, which naturally builds confidence. Participants have reported 15% higher self esteem after participating in competitive forensics and schools have experienced a 31% increase in regular attendance. "At an age when bullying is so common, speech and debate celebrates kids who often fall through the cracks in more traditional settings. Specifically, girls are encouraged to be smart and argumentative as much as boys, in whom strong emotional awareness and expressiveness are celebrated," says Robyn Kaiyal, an Associate Headmaster from Florida. Students become comfortable translating their experiences and feelings into words and sharing them with others, which prepares them for success both inside and outside of the school environment.

Speech and debate changes lives. National Speech & Debate Association membership offers the tools and support to make it happen. Invest in programming to see what the speech and debate effect can do at your school. Learn more at ***www.speechanddebate.org/administrators***.

