



Meridian School Speech & Debate Club
Grades 9-12
Terms for Participation

2025-2026

Hello!

We are excited to advise and coach the Meridian World School's Competitive Speech & Debate Club. This is our second year rolling out the club and competing in tournaments. We have chosen to focus on **Public Forum , Lincoln-Douglas, and Original Oratory**. We look forward to coaching students this year in the 2025-2026 competition season. Please take a moment to read through the following terms of participation. It contains information and guidelines as well as forms to have on record for competitions.

[Martha MacFarland](#)
Debate Coach

[Jennifer Radebaugh](#)
Debate Coach

2025-2026 Speech & Debate Officers
Anish Senthilarasu, President
Aarin Sandilya, Vice President of Internal Affairs
Connor Scafe, Vice President of External Affairs
David Hicks, Public Forum Debate Captain
Benjamin Harris, Lincoln Douglas Captain

Instagram @MWSDebate

Mission Statement

The mission of the Meridian School Speech & Debate Club is to promote strong communication skills in a competitive environment while fostering positive collaborative relationships, international mindedness, critical thinking, and research skills.

Eligibility

Character in Good Standing

Please see the [Parent/Student Handbook](#) for school policies. Students responsible for an offense or offenses that resulted in two or more days of suspension while enrolled at Meridian School could be removed from the club/organization roster and could have all club-related privileges revoked, including but not limited to the right to participate in meetings, recognition ceremonies, socials and traditions, such as the opportunity to letter. Enforcement will be at the discretion of Meridian Administration who will inform club sponsors of necessary implications. Disciplinary offenses that would result in mandatory removal to an alternative placement under TEC Section 37.006 (in a traditional public school) will automatically result in suspension from all Meridian extracurricular activities for a period ranging from one month to the remainder of the school year.

Academic Eligibility

Per state law and Meridian school rules, any students who fail or receive an incomplete in at least one class for the quarter are ineligible to compete or perform in extracurricular activities (athletics, theater, Model UN, etc.). Ineligibility starts at the end of school (4:05 pm) five school days after the start of the new quarter. The reason for this one week “waiting period” prior to ineligibility is to give teachers a chance to catch any errors that might have occurred in grading or grade entry, and to give students with an incomplete a chance to clear it. Additionally, if there is a summative assessment that is still eligible for retest (still within the retest window), the retest may be completed during this 5 day waiting period. If errors are corrected or incompletes cleared prior to the end of school that Friday of the first week of the new quarter, then the student is eligible to compete. If not, then they are ineligible until at least the four week progress report period.

At the end of the 4 week progress report period, a student who is passing all classes on their progress report (and has no unresolved incompletes from the previous quarter) regains eligibility to compete and perform. Like with the end of the quarter, however, there is a one week (five school day) “waiting period” before eligibility is regained. Note that failing grades on a progress report cannot cause a previously eligible student to lose eligibility. Under “no-pass-no-play,” progress reports only will result in a student regaining eligibility, not losing it.

Though semester grades are ultimately what counts for a student receiving credit for a high school credit course, they do not determine whether or not a student gains or loses eligibility towards “no pass no play”.

Find [Important Dates for 2025-2026 Academic Eligibility](#).

DP Exception - Diploma Programme students who have failed ONLY one “IB” class may request an Academic Eligibility Waiver. Find the waiver [here](#). The DP Academic Eligibility Waiver must be completed by the student and signed by the teacher of the DP class the student is failing as well as the principal prior to date and time by which eligibility would be lost.

DP Waiver Limits

Qualifying students may request one DP Waiver per academic quarter, but students will only be granted one DP Waiver per subject per school year.

Note: Students may compete over the summer or extended (week or more) breaks regardless of eligibility status, and a failing grade the previous year does not affect eligibility in the subsequent year.

Helpful Resources

- [2025-2026 Academic Eligibility Dates](#)
- [No Pass No Play for Parents/Guardians and Students](#)

Financial Eligibility

Your Meridian School financial accounts must be in good standing to be considered for participation. Log in to your [MySchoolBucks](#) account to check for outstanding invoices before registering for Speech and Debate Club. Check your [MySchoolBucks](#) account throughout the school year to ensure your Meridian School financial accounts are and remain in good standing.

To maintain financial eligibility throughout your club's season, the students' financial accounts with the school must stay in good standing. Once an invoice or fees become three days past due, a \$25 late fee can be added to the invoice and the student could lose eligibility in all extracurricular activities and events until the past due fees and late fees are resolved. In the case of lost financial eligibility during your club's season, it is the parent/guardian's responsibility to email the Secondary Enrichment Assistant as soon as the past due fees have been paid to expedite restored financial eligibility status for the student.

Robyn Tester, Secondary Enrichment: secondary-enrichment@mwschool.org

For those students on a Payment Plan for their tournament's Participation Fee, their Payment Plan must be paid according to the terms and schedule outlined in the agreement in order to maintain financial eligibility.

Financial assistance is available to those who need it. Please see below.

Financial Agreements

Annual Membership Registration Fee

Students are required to pay a **\$209.20 annual membership registration fee** through MySchoolBucks (includes 4.60% MySchoolBucks user fee) when submitting their annual registration form. The registration fee is required in order to cover the expenses associated with operating the club and includes dues for Texas Forensic Association and National Speech & Debate Association. (Registration fees cannot be paid by check or cash.)

Tournament Participation Fees

Tournament Participation Fees cover the costs associated with attending specific tournaments. Students opt-in to each tournament, and then the student is invoiced to be able to participate in the tournament.

Method of Payment - Participation fees for tournaments are issued by MySchoolBucks invoice. Unlike the Annual Membership Registration Fee, which can only be paid through MySchoolBucks while submitting the registration form, tournament participation fee invoices can be paid by check or online via MySchoolBucks. (Cash cannot be accepted.) If paid online, a 4.6% MySchoolBucks user fee will be applied. There is a \$25 fee for returned checks. Payments by check will be accepted through the payment deadline. Payments after the deadline must be made through MySchoolBucks. Once an invoice is more than 3 days past due, a \$25 late payment fee will automatically be issued. At that point, the student has lost financial eligibility until the past due invoice and the \$25 late payment fee have been paid using MySchoolBucks.

Tournament Commitment - When the student and parent/guardian commits to a Tournament, there is a financial commitment made by the school on behalf of that student. Therefore, Tournament Commitment indicates that the parent/guardian commits to paying for the student's tournament participation fee in full by the due date(s).

Tournament Participation Fee Deadlines -The Tournament Participation Fee must be paid for each participating student for each tournament by the deadline(s).

Students may not participate in the tournament unless the fee is paid in full by the deadline. Failure to pay the tournament participation fee by the deadline could result in forfeit in the student's spot on the tournament roster, and the entire participation fee amount remains due.

Students who fail to maintain eligibility, and are removed from a tournament roster due to lost eligibility, will not be refunded any payments made toward the tournament participation fee, and the entire participation fee amount remains due.

Students who have been removed from the tournament roster for failure to achieve or maintain financial eligibility (for two or more tournaments), and students who have been three or more days late to pay two or more Tournament Participation Fee invoices, may not be allowed to participate in Speech & Debate Club tournaments in the future.

Tournament Fees

Local Tournaments

Additionally, students will have to pay a tournament registration fee for **each** tournament, approximately **\$40-50** per person. Meridian School Speech & Debate Club will choose 4-5 tournaments throughout the year to attend in the local Austin area. Please see the tentative debate tournament [schedule](#). Parents/guardians are responsible for providing transportation for their students to all Austin area tournaments.

State Tournament

If students advance to the state tournament for the Texas Forensic Association, the tournament will require overnight travel to the Dallas area from March 12-14 and will involve additional travel expenses to attend.

For students advancing to the State Tournament for the Texas Forensic Association, students are expected to pay for the State Tournament participation fee along with travel expenses required to attend, including transportation, the hotel stay for the duration of the tournament, and meals.

The State Tournament is March 12-14 in Prosper, Texas (near Dallas).

Nationals

For students advancing to the [NSDA National Tournament](#), the National Tournament Participation Fee will include airfare, hotel, meals, tournament entry, and chaperone travel expenses.

The National Tournament is June 14-19 in Richmond, Virginia.

Participation Expectations

Meetings & Practice

Team members must attend practice or deliver speeches each week. **We meet after school every Thursday from 4:10 - 5:10 pm in Mrs. MacFarland's room, HS 1.11.** Additional practices may occur at the team's officers' request. Members will be ineligible to compete at tournaments if they have poor meeting attendance. **Meetings during the week of tournaments are mandatory, and absences from those meetings could result in removal from the competition roster.** Please work with the coach to find a suitable solution for conflicts with other obligations. Members who have missed 3 meetings in a row without communication will become inactive members.

Travel

All Speech & Debate club members must have a parent complete a **Permission Google Form** with their names, emergency contact information, medical information, and permission to travel with the club. The form must be filled out with a parent's email address. The coaches will send out the Permission Google Form at the start of the season which will cover permission for the local tournaments.

Please note students are required to stay on the tournament site once they arrive. Students should bring their own food or purchase food through concessions or Door Dash, but should NOT walk or drive to neighboring restaurants without one of the coaches, Mrs. MacFarland or Ms. Radebaugh or without a parent for safety reasons.

If a student advances to state or nationals, then a separate overnight travel permission form will need to be filled out prior to the overnight travel.

Competitive Events

Meridian World School Speech & Debate Club will participate in Texas Forensic Association and National Speech & Debate Association events. The coaches will work with the officers to determine the list of debaters competing at each event. There will be additional fees to sign up for individual competitions, around \$40-50. This is in addition to the membership fee. There will be no refunds for tournament fees.

Promptness and Time Management

Speech & Debate tournaments can be 12-14 hours long; please be on time. Failure to communicate with the coaches on the day of competition will result in removal from competition **for the remainder of the academic year**. These policies are enforced at the discretion of the coaches.

Dress Code

Debate competitions do not require any particular attire. It is common and encouraged for competitors to wear a **clean, pressed, fitted** business professional suit. Students who do not dress to the “suited and muted” norm may find it difficult to exude confidence to their judge and engage their audience.

Sportsmanship

Debate contests are just that, contests. In a competitive setting, a winner and a loser is declared. Regardless of the outcome of a round, members of the Meridian School Speech & Debate Team are expected to showcase good sportsmanship to all with whom they come into contact. Emotions are real, so remember there is a time and a place to share concerns and disappointment in defeat.

Lettering Policy

For the academic year, 2025-2026, members of the Speech & Debate Club will be eligible to be nominated for lettering in Speech & Debate if meet all other requirements.

Participation Requirements for a Lettering Nomination

Students who compete at the **varsity** level at all tournaments in which they participate may be nominated by the club advisors to letter in Speech & Debate Club after meeting one of two participation requirements:

- Competing in at least **3 high school debate tournaments at the varsity level, OR**
- Advancing to nationals for **National Speech & Debate Association**, and/or qualifying and competing at the state tournament for **Texas Forensic Association State (TFA)**.

All other lettering requirements also apply. See [Letter Jackets & Lettering](#).

Speech & Debate Club Constitution and By-Laws

ARTICLE I: NAME & PURPOSE

Section A: Name – The name of this club shall be Meridian School Speech & Debate Club

Section B: Local and National Affiliation – The rules and regulations of the National Constitutions shall be followed when not inconsistent with the rules and regulations of Speech & Debate Club.

- [Texas Forensics Association](#)
- [National Speech and Debate Association](#)

Section C: Purpose – The purpose of this club shall be:

1. To engage students to enhance communication and critical thinking skills for argumentation and debate.
2. To facilitate a means of competition in debate, both within and outside of the Meridian World School system.

ARTICLE II: MEMBERSHIP

Section A: Eligibility – All Meridian high school students are eligible to become members of this organization. All active members may vote. Active members are those who abide by the eligibility clause above. Tournament attendance requires payment of tournament fees, passing grades, receipt of appropriate permission forms, and necessary preparation for the debate.

ARTICLE III: OFFICERS

Section A: Officers – The officers include the President, the Vice President of Internal Affairs, and Vice President of External Affairs. Officer roles are outlined in Article IV.

Section B: Eligibility – Officers must be a full-time Meridian School student in high school maintaining passing grades for each nine week grading cycle, effectively participating in club/officer meetings, and fulfilling their position to the best of their ability (as deemed fit by the coaches).

Section C: Selection – Starting in the spring of 2025, officers shall be selected by a vote of active members and the coaches. Members running for office will be required to fill a multi-step application process. While the vote of the members will be considered, the coaches will make the final decision. Those running for officer positions must be active members and frequently attend tournaments.

Section D: Term – The officers shall serve for one year, and their term of office shall begin at the end of the school year in which they were selected.

ARTICLE IV: DUTIES OF OFFICERS

Starting in April-May 2026, there will be an election process for selecting officers. Please see detailed information [here](#).

Section A: President – (Lead Organizer) it shall be the duty of the President to:

- Run practices acting as Presiding Officer.

- Create plans **with** Vice Presidents and captains.
- Enforce team's rules on ethics and standards.
- Create agendas for team meetings.
- Help develop and manage curriculum within all events.
- Be the example of humility, sportsmanship, and a team player during and outside of team meetings.

Section B: VP of Internal Affairs (Secretary/Record Keeping) it shall be the duty of the Secretary to:

- Take attendance at meetings.
- Keep a record of those interested in attending tournaments **with** sponsors.
- Finalize rosters for tournaments **with** sponsors.
- Confirm that all members are added to Google Classroom.
- Confirm member registration and tournament commitments **with** sponsors.
- Help develop and manage curriculum within all events.
- Remove inactive members from communication.
- Be the example of humility, sportsmanship, and a team player during and outside of team meetings.

Section C: VP of External Affairs (Communication/Marketing) it shall be the duty of the VP of External Affairs to:

- Create team activities and celebrate team members throughout the year.
- Take pictures at tournaments, socials, and special events and post a few on the Instagram account.
- Maintain social media presence and contact with all team members along with coaches.
- Ensure everyone is on the Meridian Debate Team Stack Team App and work with coaches to send messages through the app.
- Help develop and manage curriculum within all events.
- Lead marketing related activities to increase both a physical presence at Meridian HS and online.
- Be the example of humility, sportsmanship, and a team player during and outside of team meetings.

Section D: Public Forum Debate Captain (New 2025-2026 school year)

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- Train members in Novice and returning members for Varsity Public Forum.
- Be the example of humility, sportsmanship and a team player during and outside of team meetings.

Section E: Lincoln Douglas Debate Captain (New 2025-2026 school year)

- Guide team on debate strategies and research for the Lincoln-Douglas debate format.
- Train members in Novice and returning members for Varsity Lincoln Douglas.
- Be the example of humility, sportsmanship and a team player during and outside of team meetings.

ARTICLE V: MEETINGS

Section A: General Meetings – Regular meetings shall be held at a given time and place during the regular school year: one meeting per week in one of the coaches' rooms.

Section B: Officer Meetings – Officer meetings will occur as needed at the discretion of the coaches and officers.

ARTICLE VI: Coaches (Sponsors)

Section A: Duties – The responsibilities of the coaches (sponsors) shall be to:

- Maintain an awareness of the activities and programs.

- Meet on a regular basis with the officers of the team to discuss upcoming meetings, long range plans, goals, and problems.
- Establish a plan/calendar for competitions in conjunction with officers.
- Attend regular meetings.
- Assist in the orientation of new officers.
- Explain and clarify campus policy and procedures that apply to the club.
- Maintain contact with the administrative staff over clubs and business offices.
- Provide direction in the area of meeting facilitation, group-building, goal setting, and program planning.
- Monitor expenditures, fundraising activities, and corporate sponsorship to maintain an accurate and up-to-date account ledger.
- Inform club members of those factors that constitute unacceptable behavior on the part of the club members, and the possible consequences of said behaviors.
- Attend tournaments with the team.