

Disclaimer: Page numbers are as they exist in the current PDF of the Handbook, not in the table of contents.

Board Action Needed - Change language for X.B.3. Class B/C Semifinals Sweeps Points  
Passed B/C Interim Committee

Passed the Body

- Page 47, X.B.4. - Change to read:  
4. For Class A, any Speech and/or Drama event with 15 or fewer entries: raw scores will be used for preliminary rounds and semi-finals will not be held (note: remove truncate rank from all tiebreakers in Tabroom and this is an exception to procedures in VIII.A). It must be used for all events with fewer than 15 or fewer entries. Sweepstakes points for semi-finals will not be awarded if they are not held.

For Class B/C, any speech and/or drama event with 15 or fewer entries, semi finals will not be held. *Sweepstakes points will not be awarded.* Class B/C quarterfinals will not be held in any debate event with 7 or fewer competitors. Sweepstakes points will not be awarded for quarter finals if quarter finals are not held. Class B/C semifinals will not be held in any debate event with 3 or fewer competitors. Sweepstakes points will not be awarded for semifinals if semifinals are not held.

- Page 47, X.B.4. - Current language:  
4. For Class A, any Speech and/or Drama event with 15 or fewer entries: raw scores will be used for preliminary rounds and semi-finals will not be held (note: remove truncate rank from all tiebreakers in Tabroom and this is an exception to procedures in VIII.A). It must be used for all events with fewer than 15 or fewer entries. Sweepstakes points for semi-finals will not be awarded if they are not held.

For Class B/C, any speech and/or drama event with 15 or fewer entries, semi finals will not be held. Sweepstakes points will still be awarded. Class B/C quarterfinals will not be held in any debate event with 7 or fewer competitors. Sweepstakes points will not be awarded for quarter finals if quarter finals are not held. Class B/C semifinals will not be held in any debate event with 3 or fewer competitors. Sweepstakes points will not be awarded for semifinals if semifinals are not held.

- Rationale: Sweeps points should recognize achievement, not be awarded for a round that doesn't happen. Also, it is consistent with the procedure for too few debate competitors.

Board Action Needed - Change language for p. 46 X.A.4, Class B/C Filling Divisional Alternate slots at State  
Passed B/C Interim Committee

Passed the body

- Page 46 X.A.4. - Change to read:  
4. In Class A *and B/C*, In the event of a drop after the divisional tournament, the state tournament director shall fill the empty slots. The order of priority shall be the next place finisher from the division that had a drop. If there are no further competitors from the division with the drop, the replacement will be the next place finisher from the other division until all spots are filled. Divisional rankings will not be adjusted (i.e. if the 5th place competitor drops, the alternate will take that slot in rankings and/or pairings).
- Page 46 X.A.4. - Current language:  
4. In Class A, In the event of a drop after the divisional tournament, the state tournament director shall fill the empty slots. The order of priority shall be the next place finisher from the division that had a drop. If there are no further competitors from the division with the drop, the replacement will be the next place finisher from the other division until all spots are filled. Divisional rankings will not be adjusted (i.e. if the

5th place competitor drops, the alternate will take that slot in rankings and/or pairings).

In Class B-C, alternates will not be used to fill empty slots at state.

- Rationale: We already include additional entries from other divisions if a division isn't able to fill all of their allowable entries. Additionally, X.A.4 already provides alternatives for Class A and only excludes class B/C from allowing alternates. In the spirit of competition at the state tournament, we should allow alternates from B/C divisions in cases where the qualified students are unable to attend.

Board Action Needed - Change language for p. 37, VIII.1, Class B/C tournament fees

Amended and passed B/C Interim

Passed the Body

- Page 37 add VIII.1, - Change to read:  
1. To ensure equitable access to tournaments the State Tournament is the maximum allowable amount to charge per entry and per school fees. Regular season tournaments should not charge more than this.
- Page 37 VIII.1 - Current language:  
(none)
- Rationale: The rule aims to prevent financial barriers from limiting participation, ensuring that all schools, regardless of budget have the opportunity to compete.

Board Action Needed - Change language for p. 47, X.B.4 about numbers for semifinals

Passed B/C Interim

Passed the Body

- Page 47 X.B.4., - Change to read:  
4. For Class A, any Speech and/or Drama event with 15 or fewer entries: raw scores will be used for preliminary rounds and semi-finals will not be held (note: remove truncate rank from all tiebreakers in Tabroom and this is an exception to procedures in VIII.A). It must be used for all events with fewer than 15 or fewer entries. Sweepstakes points for semi-finals will not be awarded if they are not held.

*For Class B/C, any speech and/or drama event with 11 or fewer entries, semi finals will not be held. Sweepstakes points will not be awarded. Class B/C quarterfinals will not be held in any debate event with 7 or fewer competitors. Sweepstakes points will not be awarded for quarter finals if quarter finals are not held. Class B/C semifinals will not be held in any debate event with 3 or fewer competitors. Sweepstakes points will not be awarded for semifinals if semifinals are not held.*

- Page 47 X.B.4., - Current language:  
4. For Class A, any Speech and/or Drama event with 15 or fewer entries: raw scores will be used for preliminary rounds and semi-finals will not be held (note: remove truncate rank from all tiebreakers in Tabroom and this is an exception to procedures in VIII.A). It must be used for all events with fewer than 15 or fewer entries. Sweepstakes points for semi-finals will not be awarded if they are not held.

For Class B/C, any speech and/or drama event with 15 or fewer entries, semi finals will not be held. Sweepstakes points will still be awarded. Class B/C quarterfinals will not be held in any debate event with 7 or fewer competitors. Sweepstakes points will not be awarded for quarter finals if quarter finals are not held. Class B/C semifinals will not be held in any debate event with 3 or fewer competitors.

Sweepstakes points will not be awarded for semifinals if semifinals are not held.

- Rationale: Qualifying for semifinals will have more meaning since students will have to score higher than 8 students instead of just 4 in full events. Semifinals rounds will run faster with 6 competitors each instead of 8. Only 4 would then have to be cut for Finals.

Board Action Needed - Change language for p. 1 to encourage schools to host invitational tournaments

Amended and passed A and BC Interim

Passed the Body

- Page 1, - Change current 7,8 to be 8,9, and Change 7 to Read:  
7. Schedule your invitational tournament.
  - a. Meet with your Athletic Director to select an available date to host
  - b. Have your AD confirm the date with MHSA.
  - c. Reach out to fellow coaches for help organizing and hosting.(redo numbering for the current 7,8 to become 8,9, respectively)
- Page 1 - Current language:  
(Current numbers 1-8 do not include anything about the need to host tournaments)
- Rationale: Lack of tournaments continues to be an issue. Listing the expectation at the beginning of the handbook informs new coaches, and reminds ALL coaches, of the responsibility to host.

Board Action Needed - Change language for p. 36, VII.F.4. About Sweeps trophies

Amended and passed A and B/C Interim

Passed the body

- Page 36, VII.F. - Add 4. And Change to read:  
4. When ordering awards, tournament directors should endeavor to have a tangible physical award (plaque or trophy) for the top 3 places in each sweepstakes category, along with physical awards for the top 8 places for individual events (certificates, medals, etc...).
- Page 36, VII.F.4. - Current language:  
(There currently is no 4.)
- Rationale: Having certificates or trophies for 2nd and 3rd place sweeps placings will help advocate for Forensics programs. Having physical representations to share with administrations/boards allows us to show the hard work our teams are doing and increase backing of our programs. Many schools are facing cuts and administrators who are unwilling to host because they do not understand the value of what our students are achieving.

Board Action Needed - Change language for p. 15, IV.A.2.e. To change the dates and topic for Public Forum

Passed debate committee

Passed the Body

- Page 15, IV.A.2.e. - Change to read:  
*e. The September/October Public Forum topic from the NSDA shall be utilized from the start of the season through November 16th. The topic shall switch to the November/December topic on November*

*17th, to the January topic on January 1, and to the February topic on February 2.*

- Page 15, IV.A.2.e. - Current language:  
e. The September/October Public Forum topic from the NSDA shall be utilized from the start of the season through November 18th. The topic shall switch to the November/December topic on November 19th, to the January topic on January 1, and to the February topic on February 2.
- Rationale: Needs to change for the 2025-26 year

Board Action Needed - Change language for p. 14 IV.A.1.b. To change dates and resolution for Policy debate  
Passed debate committee  
Passed the Body

- Page 14, IV.A.1.b. - Change to read  
b. *The policy debate topic for 2025-2026 is Resolved: The United States federal government should significantly increase its exploration and/or development of the Arctic.*
- Page 14, IV.A.1.b. - Current Language  
b. The policy debate topic for 2024-2025 is Resolved: The United States federal government should significantly strengthen its protection of domestic intellectual property rights in copyrights, patents, and/or trademarks.
- Rationale: Needs to change for the 2025-26 year

Board Action Needed - Change language for p. 14 IV.A.2.d for LD and Legi dates and topic changes  
Passed debate committee  
Passed the Body

- Page 14 IV.A.2.d. - Change to read  
*The LD and Legi topics shall switch from September/October topic to November/December topic on November 17 and to the January/February topic on January 1.*
- Page 14 IV.A.2.d. - Current language  
d. The LD and Legi topics shall switch from September/October topic to November/December topic on November 19 and to the January/February topic on January 1
- Rationale: Needs to change for the 2025-26 year

Board Action Needed - Change language for p. 21 IV.G.9.g concerning evidence in debate  
Passed debate committee  
Passed the Body

- Page 21 IV.G.9.g. - Change to read:  
g. *Time required for data/evidence transfer is to be subtracted from the entry originally presenting the evidence in question.*
- Page 21 IV.G.9.g. - Current Language:  
g. Time required for data transfer is to be counted as prep time.

- Rationale: This clears up confusion about whose preparation time is lost when evidence is being located and presented. This also incentivises debaters to be organized and have their evidence easily accessible.

Board Action Needed - Change Language for pp. 45 I.X.B.3 and p. 47 X.B.3 about membership dues and tabbing.

Passed rules committee

Passed the Body

- Page 45 I.X.B.3 AND page 47 X.B.3. - Change to read:  
3. Results of competition shall be tabulated as soon as possible after each round. *The tabulation room will be open to paid members coaches of the Montana Forensic Educators Association to observe the tabulation procedure. Those coaches who are not paid members will not be allowed entrance to the Tabroom but will still be allowed to view feedback and results.*
- Page 45 I.X.B.3 AND page 47 X.B.3. - Current Language:  
3. Results of competition shall be tabulated as soon as possible after each round. The tabulation room will be open to coaches to observe the tabulation procedure.
- Rationale: Many coaches this last year have experienced push-back from their districts, ADs, or both about membership in MFEA. Providing tangible incentive worked in at least one case that I'm aware of. In my conversations with Amy Bartels, she and MHSA are supportive of this to try and boost support for the organization. If membership declines, it puts our ability to have this meeting in person in financial jeopardy.

Board Action Needed - Change Language for p. 10 D.8. concerning online scrimmage participation

Amended and passed rules committee

Passed the Body as amended

- Page 10 D. - Add 9. and Change to read:  
*9. Online NSDA Springboard Scrimmage events taking place during the regular season are exempt from the interstate meet restrictions and will not count toward a student's 11 interschool meet maximum. Any costs incurred due to participation in these events will be the responsibility of the individual competitors.*
- Page 10 D.8. - Current Language  
8. Invitational meets: Any interstate meet in which four or more schools participate or which involves three or more state high school associations, any interstate meet where travel is more than 300 miles one way, or any interdivision meet involving three or more schools must have prior approval of the Montana High School Association Forensic and Drama committee and Executive Board. See Rule (14), Association and Executive Board Rules and Regulations. The MHSA Executive Board has authorized the Executive Director to approve the invitational schedule.

(There is currently no rule D.9.)

- Rationale: Schools across the state are having issues with money and proposed budget cuts. By allowing the ability to participate in online NSDA tournaments schools can effectively cut annual travel costs. This will also allow students to participate in tournaments in which NSDA rules are used making students ready for the national level.

Board Action Needed - Change Language for p. 36 VII.D.3. For First-Year-Out judges.

Amended and passed rules committee

Passed the body

- Page 36 VII.D. Change 3, and 4 and reorder current 4-6 to 5-7, respectively. - Change to read:  
3. At invitational tournaments, First Year Out judges (Judges who have been out of high school for less than one academic year) are not permitted to judge any events in which they competed (with the exception of novice divisions of debate) and are not permitted to judge any competitor from the school for which the FYO Judge competed. It is the tournament host's affirmative responsibility to ensure compliance with this rule.  
  
4. At the Divisional and State Tournaments, Judges will not be eligible to judge until they have been out of high school at least one academic year.
- Page 36 VII.D.3. - Current Language:  
3. Judges will not be eligible to judge in events until they have been out of high school at least one academic year.
- Rationale: We had some disagreement on the use of first year out (FYO) judges at invitationals and State. When the rewrite of the rulebook occurred, a section was put in invitationals that should have been only in State/Divisionals. This corrects and clarifies the expectations for FYO judges.

Board Action Needed - Change language for p. 12 III.8. and p. 35 VII.C.4. Concerning cell phones

Passed rules committee

Passed the Body

- Page 12 III.8.c and III.8.d. - Change to read:  
c. No audience member may *use a cell phone or have it visible during the round*, gesture, or otherwise attempt to affect the performance of any competitor.  
d. Students may use cell phones as timers *but must store them out of sight as soon as their performance is over*. The use of laptops, iPods, or other electronic devices during rounds is prohibited except when permitted by specific event rules. Devices may be also used in any event for medical purposes.
- Page 12 III.8.c and d - Current Language:  
c. No audience member may gesture or otherwise attempt to affect the performance of any competitor.  
d. Students may use cell phones as timers. The use of laptops, iPods, or other electronic devices during rounds is prohibited except when permitted by specific event rules. Devices may be also used in any event for medical purposes.
- Page 35 VII.C.4. - Change to read:  
4. A contestant may use a cell phone or other electronic device as a timing device provided that the cell phone/device is in airplane mode during their presentation and is off *and stored out of sight* during all other competitors' speeches.
- Page 35 VII.C.4. - Current Language:  
4. A contestant may use a cell phone or other electronic device as a timing device provided that the cell phone/device is on airplane mode during their presentation and is off during all other competitors'

speeches. If the phone/device goes into sleep mode or other mode it would be a timing violation.

- Rationale: We had multiple issues this season with students distracting competitors in rounds with cell phones--playing games, passing them to each other during performances, etc . . . There were also several instances of videotaping concerns, including at state and NSDA. It is time to ensure that cell phones are not used for any purpose by audience members and are kept out of sight entirely--by both seated competitors and audience members. They are too much of a temptation and are becoming a competitive issue during rounds.

Board Action Needed - Change Language for p. 33 VI.A.4 to split into two rules

Amended and passed drama committee

Passed the Body

- Page 33 VI.A.4. - Split into 4 and 5 and Change to Read:
  4. Sound to be used in scenes shall be inherent to the scene and actuated by the actors. Singing, playing musical instruments and use of recorded audio are allowed.
  5. *Personal authorship of original work may not be claimed. Contestants may not announce that the piece is original or self-written or may not claim the piece is autobiographical.*
- Page 33 VI.A.4. - Current Language
  4. Sound to be used in scenes shall be inherent to the scene and actuated by the actors. Singing, playing musical instruments and use of recorded audio are allowed. Personal authorship of original work may not be claimed. Contestants may not announce that the piece is original or self-written or may not claim the piece is autobiographical.
- Rationale: These are really 2 different rules and should not be grouped together.

Board Action Needed - Change Language for p. 33 VI.A.2. and eliminate part of VI.A.3. to simplify the costume rule

Passed drama committee

Passed the Body

- Page 33 VI.A.2. and 3 - Change to read:
  2. Competitors may use costumes, *masks, wigs, stage makeup* and/or props. All items must be furnished by the competitor.
  3. No use may be made of lighting effects (with the exception of battery-operated props excluding those with seizure- inducing triggers, for example strobe lighting).
- Page 33 VI.A.2. and 3 - Current language
  2. Costumes and props may be used. Contestants must furnish all costumes and props.
  3. No use may be made of lighting effects (with the exception of battery-operated props excluding those with seizure- inducing triggers, for example strobe lighting) or stage makeup. Stage makeup is makeup put on the face or body to enhance the character.
    - a. Masks and Wigs are allowed.
- Rationale: We should lift the make-up ban and combine all the fun parts of drama into one rule.

Board Action Needed - Change Language for p. 33 VI.A.1. Standardizing competitor introductions

Passed drama committee

## Passed the Body

- Page 33 VI.A.1. - Change to read:
  1. The combined introduction and actual acting shall not exceed ten minutes. *Competitors must only ask if their judge is ready, state their code, and say their timer is set before they start the timer.*
- Page 33 VI.A.1. - Current language:
  1. The combined introduction and actual acting shall not exceed ten minutes. Competitors must only ask if their judge is ready and state their code before they start the timer. No other words may be spoken.
- Rationale: this standardizes what every student introduction should be, adding the timer and removing “no other words may be spoken” so students aren’t penalized for a trivial “oops” or other comment. This is more in line with what speech also does.

Board Action Needed: Add a resource to the MHSA Speech, Drama, and Debate website.

Amended and Passed memorized committee

## Passed the Body

- Referencing pp. 22, 24, 25, and 31 parts V.A.4.b., V.B.4.b., V.C.3.b., and V.H.1.f. Add the following to the MHSA website under “Speech, Drama, and Debate”, “Forms”, “Class A and B/C Speech and Drama Events” titled “Certificate of Affirmation”. The pdf form is linked here:  
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1d8privy4XQwJEESuiS2Y5DIRjCSEposT/view?usp=sharing>
- Pages 22, 24, 25, and 31 parts V.A.4.b., V.B.4.b., V.C.3.b., and V.H.1.f. Current language:
  - V.A.4.b.: A certificate affirming that the speech does not exceed ten percent (10%) quoted material and is otherwise the original work of the student.
  - V.B.4.b.: A certificate affirming that the analysis does not exceed ten percent (10%) quoted material and is otherwise the original work of the student.
  - V.C.3.b.: A certificate affirming that the speech does not exceed ten percent (10%) quoted material and is otherwise the original work of the student.
  - V.H.1.f.: The script must identify quoted materials, including a works cited page in APA or MLA format, and both the competitor and the coach must attest by signature that the program of oral interpretation is the original work of the competitor.
- Rationale: The rules require a “certificate of affirmation” or that the coach and student “attest by signature” in four speech categories, yet there is no clear form to use. Making this form available on the website will alleviate confusion about this requirement and will be especially helpful for new coaches.

Board Action Needed: Change language on comment sheets for all events requiring memorization to include a checkbox

Passed memorized committee

## Passed the body

- Change “MHSA” “Speech, Drama, and Debate” “Forms” “Class A and B/C Speech Events” (currently, this would affect M.P.A. and O.O.) comment sheets to include a checkbox:

Competitor used notecards or manuscript  yes or  no

- Current Language: Comment sheets do not currently have this option.
- Rationale: Currently, it is difficult to verify whether students are performing memorized events without notecards or manuscripts. This would make that clearer and encourage judges to take memorization more under consideration.

Board Action Needed: Change language for p. 28 V.F.3. to add i. about AI usage in extemporaneous.

Passed short prep committee

Passed the Body

- Page 28 V.F.3. - Add i. and change to read:  
i. Generative Artificial Intelligence: Speeches must be the original created work of a competitor. Students are prohibited from utilizing generative AI during prep time. Quoting or paraphrasing text from generative AI sources is prohibited.
- Page 28 V.F.3.i. - Current language  
(There is no rule regarding generative AI currently).
- Rationale: The short prep committee had concerns about the use of ChatGPT and Generative AI. We wanted to ensure that it was very clearly outlined as prohibited.

Board Action Needed: Change late fees for MFEA dues.

Presented on the floor and passed the body

- Dues and Conference Letter on MHSA website under "MFEA" - Change to read:  
Dues received after the deadline will increase to \$55.00 but must be received before State tournaments in order for coaches to be considered for Coach of the Year.
- Dues and Conference Letter on MHSA website under "MFEA" - Current Language:  
Dues received after the deadline will increase to \$40.00 but must be received before State tournaments in order for coaches to be considered for Coach of the Year.
- Housekeeping - This would also affect Page 1 5. - Change to read:  
5. Pay coaches' dues to the MFEA Treasurer.  
a. Dues paid on or before December 1st are \$35/coach, after December 1st are \$55/coach.
- Page 1 5. - Current language:  
5. Pay coaches' dues to the MFEA Treasurer.  
a. Dues paid on or before December 1st are \$35/coach, after December 1st are \$40/coach.
- Rationale: We need to motivate the timely payment of dues to MFEA.