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Members may request a link of the zoom recording. Please contact David Yastremski.

**JUNE 1, 2021 - 5:00 PM, Virtual, In-Person at The Delbarton School**

Present:

Dave Yastremski (Ridge), Mary Gormley (Delbarton), Katie Burke (Randolph), Malcolm Minor (North Star), John Cierpial (Tournament Director), Gary Yablon (Hudson Arts & Sciences), Kate Clarke-Anderson (Ridgewood), Mike Forte (Manville), Anthony Roman (Elizabeth), Jennifer Li (Princeton), Matthew Malizia (), Jonathan Alston (Science Park), Raymond Shay (Princeton Academy), David Richardson (Arts), Tia Dionne Hodge (Montclair-Kimberley), Michael Sowell (Barringer), Ger McKnight (Bridgewater-Raritan), Gale Murphy (Montgomery Township), Dennis Philbert (Central), Julia Weingaertner (Arts Ed NJ), Amisha Mehta (Westfield), Tierra Brown (North Star), Leslie Patient (Ranney), Christa Smith (Long Valley Middle), Anne McDonald (Morristown), Lyn Berman (Morristown), Adiba Syed (Princeton), Leslie M. (Garfield), A. Harris-Rice (University), Renee Drummond (Elizabeth), Christine DeMarsico, Jordy Barry (Millburn), Zach Sylvester (Freehold), Sean Gaynor (Union Catholic), Adam Leonard (Hunterdon Central)

#### **I. Welcome and Introductions**

- Dave Yastremski greeted everyone and encouraged all those in attendance to introduce themselves, particularly new coaches who are joining the league this year.
- Dave Yastremski reminded everyone that the meeting will be recorded. There are approximately 35 individuals present. There will be two monitors keeping an eye on the chat in the meeting.

#### **II. January Meeting Minutes**

- Dave Yastremski asked if there were any objections to the January meeting minutes. There were none, so the minutes were accepted without discussion.

#### **III. Treasurer's Report**

- Adam Leonard presented the 2020-2021 Treasurer's Report. Highlights included income and expenses for the fiscal year. All things considered, this year was similar to 2018-2019. Adam reminded any school owing funds to the league to submit their payment so that the fiscal year could be concluded at the end of June.

#### IV. President's Report

- Dave Yastremski commented on the amazing experiences that we offered to the students this year. Dave gave credit to John Cierpial for scouting out tournaments around the nation at the beginning of the year to identify what strategies would be successful. Dave is pleased with our ability to stick together and offer a successful program. He listed the following highlights from this year.
  - a. The league is finally insured. This gives confidence to the organization and to the officers.
  - b. The webpage has been redesigned, and Dave hopes that it serves a better function in getting information out to the public.
  - c. The league is now aligned with the National Federation of High School Association. This shows that we are not just a rogue organization. We are also aligned with organizations like NJ Arts Ed. There are great advocates working for this type of program.
  - d. The league had a group of coaches tackle issues of diversity, equity and inclusion. We are addressing these topics in our classrooms. This is something that our organization had to acknowledge and include.
  - e. Parliamentary debate is developing and growing. The league ran this as a pilot at the State Championship tournament.
  - f. Middle school competition became a priority this year. The coaches working on that aspect of the program have established a good foundation. There is significantly more room to grow as we move into next year.
  - g. The league recognized Kate Clarke-Anderson, Katie Burke, and Stephanie Fletcher as leaders this year. The work is not done for accolades, but it is important to recognize the accomplishments of the adults in the organization.
- Dave Yastremski is pleased to have Julia Weingaertner in the meeting. He is excited about the opportunity to collaborate with her organization.
  - Julia Weingaertner summarized that Arts Ed Now is a campaign led by Arts Ed New Jersey. This is an arts advocacy platform. It has a committee that meets several times per month to discuss ways of advocating at board meetings and other gatherings around the state. They are looking forward to having representation from the NJSDL on the steering committee. Julia gave recognition to Dennis Philbert, who participated on the committee.
- Dave Yastremski invited Kate Clarke-Anderson to discuss her experiences with equity.

- Kate Clarke-Anderson attended a few webinars. Attitudes toward equity depend on where you are in the country. Some locations experienced enormous problems. Kate wants to ensure equity in all of the state tournaments. If you experienced any concerns throughout the year, you should contact her and/or Katie Burke
- Dave Yastremski noted that he would like to see groups of coaches focus on different initiatives: equity, curricular issues, the middle school program. The executive committee should take leadership on these programs.

## V. Standing Business

### A. Tournament Calendar and Borelli Tournament

- Dave Yastremski reported that there is quite a bit of conversation taking place about next year. These are happening right now, and they have changed, because states have changed their policies and protocols. It sounded like everything up until the end of the calendar year would be online, especially national tournaments. Yale, Duke, Glenbrooks are all online. We are still waiting on Princeton, Villiger, etc. January was originally thought to be questionable, with the possibility of a return to in-person events. This has moved ahead to November. The decision is really up to which schools are involved. Dave mentioned quite a few unknowns, including the vaccination status and the willingness of administrators to permit this. The more we defer to online experiences, then the more administrators will accept this condition. Dave is concerned that administrators will question the need for these resources in the future. Dave would like to encourage in-person events as soon as possible.
- Dave Yastremski allowed the attendees to have a conversation at the tables (in-person attendees) and in breakout rooms (virtual attendees). After calling the groups back together, Dave asked for a report from each breakout room/table.
  - Tia Dionne-Hodge shared concerns about getting the kids on the bus and following the guidelines. She wonders if speech students will be allowed to use masks as a prop. There are concerns about speaking quality. It was suggested that judges remain online while students are in person, which would benefit the judging pool.
  - Kate Clarke-Anderson noted that attendance at more national tournaments was possible this year. Females were more comfortable having everyone on Zoom, where there's a sense of equity. She observed that this was a way to get some schools more involved.
  - Tierra Brown commented that most in the room were in favor of in-person, but they had similar health concerns, discussion of liability, and concerns about needing to see what a hybrid tournament looks like. This might make the activity more accessible for some. Lots of

students had accessibility issues. We must figure out what this means in terms of ranks, qualifiers, etc.

- Katie Burke commented that everyone wants in-person to return, but there were benefits in getting judges involved. This neutralizes the bad judges. Asynchronous tournaments are more equitable and allow more accessibility for students and judges.
- Mary Gormley noted that she was able to recruit students because of the asynchronous opportunities. Many students are not usually available on Saturdays.
- Gary Yablon said that his school had quite a few students join at the middle school level. Because those kids tend to struggle with confidence, this allows them to try out the activity. Students can gain confidence and then translate that into a later experience.
- Mike Forte observed that students compete because they enjoy the in-person experience. There are many unknowns about what districts will allow in the future. There was a preference for online options in his group.
- Jonathan Alston noted that he prefers having everything entirely online or entirely back in person. It's possible to see online folks as being second-class citizens, and there is a qualitative difference in the experience that they have.
- Dave Yastremski noted that there have been some experiments in the Midwest with hybrid options for tournaments. There were issues with running these. The league should probably wait to see what we can do with our local tournaments. We will be listening to what's happening with the national circuit tournaments. Some tournaments have already decided to remain online. Borelli is an example of this- if it becomes an asynchronous tournament then we have the ability to extend the program to other levels. The national debate coaches' association is working on their calendar. The league will table the question of how Borelli will run for now, but it will probably remain asynchronous.
- Mary Gormley noted that Borelli was an excellent opportunity to run the Big Questions tournament.

## **B. States**

- Dave Yastremski observed that the league anticipates having the State Championship tournament at Hunterdon Central in March. We have thousands of dollars of trophies that are ready for this tournament.
  1. **Parliamentary Debate**
    - Dave Yastremski suggested that the league consider elevating Parliamentary Debate in status at the State Championship Tournament. He asked for commentary on this proposal.

- Tia Dionne-Hodge noted that her team has switched to participating in Parliamentary Debate. It fits with the culture at her school, and she credits this event with allowing her team to exist.
- Jennifer Li agreed with Tia. This part of her program has grown and she sees quite a bit of interest. The absence of Parliamentary Debate has prevented her from attending some events.
- Kate Clarke-Anderson agreed that this should be a sanctioned event. She has many students involved in other activities, and this type of debate allows them to participate. If the league does this, then we need to establish specific rules to avoid getting things out of control.
- Ger McKnight would like the program to continue.
- Katie Burke noted that this type of debate allows PF teams to stay involved even when they dislike the topic.
- Jordy Barry asked a question about sweepstakes and how many points are awarded. Dave Yastremski replied that this would become an actual debate event and would have sweeps points attached to it. This might actually even out the points available. We usually have to wait and see how many entries there are to determine the number and type of divisions, we would probably just add it because our current formula was designed prior to some of the current events being introduced. Jordy Barry asked if there would be a qualification. Dave Yastremski responded that this would be stage 2 of the sanctioning process, similar to Congress. We now permit 6 entries in Congress, but do not require a qualification process. We'll probably discuss qualifications in the future.
- Dave Yastremski observed that many of our New Jersey middle schools do this event, so it would be nice to get them involved
- Dave Yastremski asked if there were any objections to sanctioning the event. There were none. Parliamentary Debate is considered a recognized event with a cap of 4 entries with no qualification requirements. We will discuss this more during the summer.

## **2. Tiebreakers**

- John Cierpial noted that this year, we had 8 in Declamation finals at the State Championship. He ran out of tiebreakers. John suggests introducing a third tiebreaker so that this can be avoided in the future.

- Dave Yastremski noted that there were a few possibilities. This could include speaker points or adding the dropped rank bank in.
- Mary Gormley wondered if it would be more fair to add the reciprocal back in before the rank. Dave Yastremski responded that the rank benefits the student. We could just use the last elimination rounds. Mary Gormley mentioned that they used to go back to see if students hit each other in preliminary rounds and then base the tiebreaking on that. Dave Yastremski is reluctant to do this because there is a possibility of another tie in that.
- Kate Clarke-Anderson suggested that the fairest thing to do is to add speaker points. Mary Gormley responded that speaker points just aren't fair.
- John Cierpial suggested that you just add the worst round right back in.
- Gary Yablon is opposed to speaker points too. He considered them to be arbitrary.
- Kate Clarke-Anderson wondered what would happen now that you have speech judges assigning speaker points. This isn't the greatest solution, but it's clear that many judges just do not listen.
- Dave Yastremski commented that is not aware of any tournaments that still use speaker points. Dave would like to revisit a round, add in the tiebreakers that are suggested and calculate the results based on adding that information back in
- Dave Yastremski would like to table this until September to give time to consider the options. This would afford more time to prepare a visual.

### **3. Sweepstakes**

- Dave Yastremski commented that this issue was brought up before and will be revisited.

## **C. NSDA Districts**

- Mary Gormley noted that she is proud of our district and how we responded to the pandemic. The committee that selected the students moving on to nationals achieved equity. The district had more auto-qualifiers than ever. This year, our district is represented by 22 different schools, which is unusual. Our student of the year is in the top 6 and is a candidate for national student of the year: Akshat Parthiban.

### **1. Doubling Judges**

- John Cierpial believes that there was a judge shortage and wonders if we should boost the requirement. This would give us a larger pool to select from at the district tournament.
- Mary Gormley noted that we charged so much for the tournament in the hopes of hiring more judges. We couldn't hire as many judges as we wanted. There was some bad weather that weekend, which might have impacted the pool.

## VI. Old Business

### A. Equity

- Kate Clarke-Anderson noted that it is important to stress the importance of taking the equity pledge. A team withdrew from a college tournament due to racist comments, and others left in solidarity. We can help our students by not tolerating these issues. Carefully consider who you select as judges and be careful with what you tolerate from your judges.
- Katie Burke suggested that we need to educate our students on what the equity statement actually means. It's important to encourage students to report issues promptly. They need to be empowered since they are the ones who witness the issues, while the coaches do not. The Google quiz at NCFL Grand Nationals was a useful tool for promoting equity.

### B. Middle School Initiative

- Dave Yastremski brought awareness to the middle school program and the work done by Ray Shay, Gary Yablon, and Christa Smith.
- Gary Yablon mentioned that the program expanded to 5th grade this year. This gets more students involved. The coaches gathered at the end of January and discussed how they wanted to move forward. The goal was to establish something stable and uniform. The middle schools attended the Borelli tournament, held April and May tournaments, and then had a state championship in May. It would be nice to not have to wait until February and March to get in the mode of participating in tournaments. He would like to see more tournaments include more opportunities for involving middle schools
- Mary Gormley mentioned that when she was at Montville, she started hosting earlier in the year. That program wasn't able to host in the fall this year due to a variety of reasons. She suggested that the middle school teachers stay tuned for the fall and look for options to emerge. Dave Yastremski asked what the program would prefer, in-person or virtual tournaments?
- Ray Shay is hopeful to be in-person by the spring and learn from the experience in the fall. He would like to have events during periods when the league does not have many other activities going on. He was appreciative of the high school students who judged and participated. There was an impromptu meeting for middle school coaches at the January meeting. They will work hard to include more coaches in the future.

### C. NFHS Affiliation

- Dave Yastremski noted that the biggest role right now is that they develop the policy debate topic. This gives us a seat at the table with copyright and other issues. Membership also gives Dave a chance to coordinate with individuals across the country and he can hear about issues

that come up in different worlds. One of the greatest benefits is our ability to mention that we are members when administrators ask questions about our activity.

## **VII. New Business**

### **A. Student of the Year**

- Dave Yastremski noted that Akshat Parthiban is the finalist for student of the year. The district student of the year gets submitted to the national organization, and the student goes through an interview process.

### **B. Constitutional Update**

- Dave Yastremski noted that we are due for an update, since the last update was 5 years ago. There have been changes made at this meeting, which should be reflected in the constitution.

### **C. NJSDL Retreat**

- Dave Yastremski reminded everyone that the league discussed going to the Princeton ETS Conference center in the past. This is a nice facility with quite a few amenities. Dave would like to know if coaches would be interested in attending the NSDA virtual conference together. We could get some of the work of the league done while we attend the conference and resolve some of the questions that come up at this meeting. The NSDA conference is free. There is a day package at the conference center. The dates are August 3-5, and Dave would like to start during the evening of August 2. Dave is not looking for a definitive commitment right now, but you can register to attend the NSDA conference now.

### **D. Outreach**

- Dave Yastremski would like to get our brand and work into classrooms. Maybe we should develop asynchronous opportunities that would be open to schools that aren't competitive. This is something that people in classrooms could enter and get some experience. They might then be interested in checking out a tournament. The events would be linked to different themes for each month. This could reach down to the elementary level. This could be publicized, and we would focus heavily on advertising throughout the state.
  - Anthony Roman is interested in a Veteran's Day program.
  - Kate Clarke-Anderson noted that she already has a middle school curriculum.
  - Jonathan Alston would like to consider what it means for debate to be a performance course. Students could get credit. Mary Gormley responded that this changed under No Child Left Behind when it became an elective requirement; Dave Yastremski



responded that it's important how you define the course because it now might count as 21st Century Skills

#### **E. Online Policy**

- Dave Yastremski mentioned that this idea was developed by a group of Northeast coaches. The thinking is that this could be better served in an online format rather than in person; The group requested that the events be placed on our calendar; Some coaches are interested in having students travel

#### **F. Speechwire Updates**

- John Cierpial commented that several new features have been added. There is now a feature that shows which judges haven't put comments on their ballots. Ben Stewart asked for a list of features that should be added or changed. John suggested that anyone interested share their list with him, and then he can pass that along.
  - Mary Gormley suggested a dashboard so that coaches can see how the judges are being used.
  - Kate Clarke-Anderson would like to see a breakdown of the times for each round right on the ballot.
  - Mary Gormley observed that Tabroom is no longer free, starting in September
  - Jonathan Alston wanted to remind the group that he prefers Tabroom. He suggested that we compare the two programs and determine which one is better.

### **VIII. Elections**

- A. President: Mary Gormley nominated Dave Yastremski; Kate Clarke-Anderson seconded; Dave Yastremski accepted
- B. Vice President of Speech: Mary Gormley nominated Malcolm Minor, Kate Clarke-Anderson seconded, Malcolm Minor accepted
- C. Vice-President of Debate: There was a nomination for Laurie Schmid in the RSVP form Schmid, Kate Clarke-Anderson seconded, Laurie Schmid accepts
- D. Vice-President of Outreach: There was a nomination for Dennis Philbert in the RSVP form, Mary Gormley seconded, Dennis Philbert accepts
- E. Secretary-Treasurer: There was a nomination for Adam Leonard in the RSVP form, Kate Clarke-Anderson seconded, Adam Leonard accepts
- F. Executive Council: Mary Gormley was nominated, accepted
- G. Executive Council: Anne Poyner was nominated, accepted
- H. Executive Council: Jennifer Li was nominated, accepted

- I. Executive Council: Kate Clarke-Anderson was nominated, accepted
- J. Executive Council: Ray Shay was nominated, accepted
- K. Executive Council: Katie Burke was nominated, accepted
- L. Executive Council: Dave Richardson was nominated, not accepted
- M. Executive Council: Leslie Patient was nominated, accepted
- N. Executive Council: Jonathan Alston was nominated, accepted
- O. Executive Council: Renee Drummond was nominated, accepted
- P. Executive Council: Jordy Barry was nominated, not accepted

- Dave Yastremski proposed revisiting the alternates at the fall meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 7:00 P.M. by Dave Yastremski.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Adam Leonard*

NJSDL Secretary-Treasurer