

Minutes of the 2024-25 IHSA Speech/Drama Advisory Committee
Wednesday, April 16, 2025

The IHSA Speech & Drama Advisory Committee meeting was conducted at 10:00 a.m. with the following IHSA Division voting members in attendance were: IHSA Division 1, Coach/Director Lauren Wells-Mann, Chicago (High School for the Arts); IHSA Division 2, Coach Michael Piccoli, Prospect (H.S.); IHSA Division 3, Activity Director/Coach/Director Marie Wojdelski, Harvey (Thornton); IHSA Division 5, Coach/Director Tony Kortas, Danville (H.S.); IHSA Division 6, Coach/Director Ken Carter, Chatham (Glenwood); and IHSA Division 7 Coach Adam Jenkins, Belleville West (H.S.); IHSA Division 4, Principal Madeline Hawkins, Galena was unable to attend virtually due to state testing. Additional state final managers and liaisons included: Jan Heiteen, Individual Events State Final Manager; Tom Witting, Drama State Final Manager; Andrea Gustafson, ICTA Representative; and Ben Stewart, SpeechWire. IHSA Assistant Executive Director Susie Knoblauch conducted the meeting.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

SPEECH: INDIVIDUAL EVENTS

Item 1: VI. E. 2.

TOURNAMENT STRUCTURES AND TIME SCHEDULES

State Final Time Schedule

Recommendation:

~~4:00 p.m.~~ AWARDS ASSEMBLY – Immediately following the Final Rounds

Rationale: Adjusting the awards assembly to begin immediately following the final rounds streamlines the event schedule.

Item 2: VII. D. 4. c.

ADVANCEMENT OF WINNERS

Recommendation:

In performance in the round, the eighteen (18) qualifiers from the six (6) Sectionals will be divided into two sections of nine performances each. Entries in each section will perform once and be ranked by a panel of ~~three~~ five-judges. The ~~three~~ five-performances in each section. In the preliminary rounds, the high and low rankings will be discarded, and the remaining ranks will be added, with the lowest cumulative rankings ~~will advance~~ advancing to the finals ~~along with any performance whose total of rankings is lower than the total of rankings for the third-place performance in the opposite preliminary group.~~ The finals will be judged by a panel of five (5) judges; each judge will rank the performances 1st through 6th (no ties). The high and low rankings will be discarded, and the remaining ranks will be added. The performance in the round with the lowest cumulative rankings is first; second lowest is second, and so on. If a tie occurs, the tied competitors shall be separated from all other competitors and assigned relative rankings. If there is still a tie, then the ranks assigned by all five (5) judges will be considered, and the contestant with the lowest total of five rankings will be declared the winner.

Rationale: This recommendation is intended to enhance fairness, consistency, and clarity in the adjudication process for Performance in the Round at the IHSA State Finals. Utilizing a panel of five judges per section and discarding the high and low rankings aligns with best practices in subjective performance assessment. This approach reduces the potential impact of outlier scores—whether overly favorable or critical—ensuring that advancing entries are evaluated based on a more reliable consensus among judges. Additionally, striking the above language from the current rule addresses an overcorrection for perceived imbalance between preliminary groups. Overall, this structure is designed to reward excellence and minimize judging anomalies.

Item 3: SPEECH EVENT SUMMARIES ORATORICAL DECLEATION (DEC) Material

Recommendation:

Material must come from appropriate printed, published sources and must meet high standards for good literature. Material can come from editorial, essays, speeches, commencement address, ~~etc.~~ and be pertinent to current issues. Dramatic literature is not permitted.

Rationale: Clarifying the source requirements for Oratorical Declamation ensures that material aligns with the educational and rhetorical goals of the event. Emphasizing published, non-dramatic sources such as editorials, essays, and speeches reinforces the intent of the event—to showcase a speaker's ability to interpret and deliver material grounded in real-world discourse and contemporary relevance. This distinction maintains the event's integrity and differentiates it from events focused on dramatic interpretation.

STATE SPEECH: INDIVIDUAL EVENTS DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. The committee heard an update from Jan Heiteen, IHSA Speech State Final Manager, regarding the 2025 IHSA Speech: Individual Events State Series. Heiteen was recognized and thanked for serving as the tournament manager.
2. The committee discussed the State Final Venue. Issues of no outside food is still a concern for competing schools. The State Final Venue contract will be up for Request for Proposal for the 2026-27 school year. Interested locations/venues have been Governors State/Contact Lauren Mann, Illinois State/Contact Megan Koch, University of Illinois Chicago/Contact Lavontae Morrow and Elgin Community College/Contact Brian Bohr. The advisory committee is concerned about venues where students and judges would have to go outside to adjacent building for competition rooms. An all-enclosed facility with the ability to have 15 competition rooms (include PIR warm up space), tournament headquarters, awards space and a student holding space for 750 students is ideal.
3. The committee discussed the Speech State Final Time Schedule and will continue to conduct all final rounds at the same time. Recommendations were reviewed to improve the posting of

finals (post PIR, Radio and Extemp. sooner). The committee agreed that PIR could be posted sooner than the other individual events.

4. The committee reviewed a proposal to VIII. E. Timekeeping 3) Overtime Procedures: which recommended eliminating the hand raise by volunteer timers upon expiration of speakers allotted time. The committee discussed that the volunteer timers hand raise is a courtesy and that student speakers are always responsible for their own time limits and that any discrepancy in volunteer timers raising their hand is not a reason to drop time penalties or redo rounds.

5. The committee reviewed and discussed a proposal to expand the source material for oratorical declamation to allow material from any source. The committee did not act on this recommendation however, they did review the material requirement for oratorical declamation and make a clarification.

6. The committee reviewed a recommendation to expand the material allowed for poetry to permit “*various published high quality internet sites*”. The committee discussed to process for coaches to submit internet sites for review by the publication committee. Various allowable channels will be permitted and posted on the speech menu page.

7. The committee reviewed and discussed a recommendation to expand material for HDA, DDA, HI, DI, to permit material from any “*publicly accessible internet source.*” No action was taken.

8. The committee reviewed a recommendation to add language that judges should only comment on the performance. The committee discussed and agreed that the following statement should be added to the “*Effective Judging*” form handed out to all post season judges: (See Effective Judging in [Manual for Managers](#)) “*It is important to remove personal biases and expectations in regards to dress so that we can be inclusive of all who want to participate.*” *Refer to [NSDA dress code and culturally competent judging](#) and [NFHS Implicit Bias Course](#).

9. The committee reviewed a proposal to eliminate the use of notecard in extemp and impromptu speaking. The committee discussed that during the state series a variety of skill levels participate so in extemp “*only notes/notecards of any size/type made during the timed preparation period are allowed for use during the speech*”; and in impromptu “*Only one (1) notecard of any size/type made during the preparation time is allowed for use during the speech*” will remain.

10. The committee reviewed a proposal to move the radio prep time from 45 minutes to 30 minutes. Rationale included: 1) Prep packets have evolved over recent years which allows ease for students to organize their radio scripts more efficiently yet still provide ample time for script reading practice 2) Prep time would align with Extemporaneous Speaking and aid in contest management. The committee tabled this proposal at this time to solicit additional feedback from coaches. It was recommended to have ICTA survey coaches.

11. The committee reviewed and discussed a proposal to combine HDA and DDA and add DUO. No action was taken.

12. The committee did not support a recommendation to remove the use of tables in Humorous/dramatic Duet Acting or Performance in the Round. The IHSA will continue to rely on competing schools to provide tables for competitors to use in these events.

13. The committee reviewed contest procedures – violation, protests, warnings, ranked last & disqualifications.

14. The committee reviewed Performance in the Round rules and awards. There were no recommendations approved to add individual PIR awards for regionals and sectionals, however, standardized certificates can be created by the host school to recognize students. The committee discussed PIR FAQ and rule clarification sessions. This could be an ICTA initiative.

15. The committee heard a report on Debate in Illinois from Brian Rohman, Assistant Principal and Debate Coach at Normal University High School. With the support and collaboration of key statewide organizations such as the [Illinois Debate Coaches Association](#) (IDCA) and [Chicago Debates](#), the IHSA has a unique opportunity to expand competitive opportunities for students through the inclusion of debate events. Brian Rohman, representing the IDCA, along with leadership from Chicago Debates, has played a central role in promoting this renewed partnership. Their efforts have helped foster significant growth ([see emerging activity](#)) in debate participation across Illinois, providing structure, outreach, and resources that have reinvigorated programs post-COVID. Formalizing this partnership through IHSA would legitimize this growth and create a clear pathway for students and schools to engage in high-quality, statewide competition.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS RECOMMENDATIONS

DRAMA

Item 4: VI. D. 2.

TOURNAMANT STRUCTURE AND TIME SCHEDULE

Recommendation:

b. Group Interpretation: Performance order in Group Interpretation shall be made by the IHSA office. An attempt will be made to separate duplicate entries. Adjustments for double entries will be made as necessary. Groups will then perform under the following time schedule.

If one competition room is used:

Friday: PRELIM A PRELIM B

~~Session 1~~ ~~Session 3~~

8:00 a.m. 2:45 p.m.

8:40 a.m. 3:25 p.m.

9:20 a.m. 4:05 p.m.

10:00 a.m. 4:45 p.m.

10:40 a.m. 5:25 p.m.

~~Session 2~~ ~~Session 4~~

11:50 a.m. 6:40 p.m.

12:30 p.m. 7:20 p.m.

1:10 p.m. 8:00 p.m.
1:50 p.m. 8:40 p.m.

If two competition rooms are used:

Friday: PRELIM A & B

9:00 a.m.
9:45 a.m.
10:30 a.m.
11:15 a.m.
12:00 noon
1:15 p.m.
2:00 p.m.
2:45 p.m.
3:30 p.m.

Post-Finalists – Announced ~~Directly~~ after the last performance

Saturday: FINALS

8:30 a.m.
9:20 a.m.
10:10 a.m.
11:00 a.m.
11:50 a.m.
12:40 p.m. (~~1:30 p.m. if needed~~)

Rationale: At state final venues, the primary goal is to run two GI preliminary sections simultaneously, when space allows at the host site. The revised schedule—including a second GI room—should be presented alongside the standard schedule to provide clarity and flexibility in planning.

Item 5: VII. B. 3. a.
ADVANCEMENT OF WINNERS

Recommendation:

The three (3) performances from each preliminary group with the lowest totals of judges' rankings (after high and low are discarded) shall be advanced to the finals, ~~along with any performance whose total of rankings is lower than the total of rankings for the third place performance in the opposite preliminary group.~~

Rationale: Strike the above language from the current rule, as it represents an overcorrection for perceived imbalance between preliminary groups.

Item 6: VIII. F.
TOURNAMENT RULES – Special Rules and Limitations

Recommendation:

F) Special Rules and Limitations:

1) The following items are prohibited:

- fire
- firearms and explosives
- animals
- non-member school students

2) All crew members must wear shoes during load-in, set-up, and strike.

~~2)~~ 3) (*adjust numbers accordingly*)

~~3)~~ 4)

5)

Rationale:

To ensure both consistency across events and the safety of all participants, footwear requirements should be clearly defined for all aspects of State Drama's Group Interpretation and Contest Play. While the Terms and Conditions specify that GI performers must wear shoes, and the Qualifier's Manual mandates footwear for Drama set-up crews, there is currently no language addressing footwear for Drama performers or GI set-up crews. Clarifying and aligning these requirements promotes uniform expectations and helps reduce the risk of injury during performance and technical transitions.

STATE DRAMA DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Tom Witting provided an update of the Drama State Series. Tom was recognized and thanked for serving as the state final manager. Richards High School in Oak Lawn served as the State Final host and was commended for their exemplary job in conducting the event. Mike Jacobson and the entire school staff provided amazing planning and leadership that directly contributed to an amazing State Final.

2. Tim Connors (Short Film and Musical Theatre State Final Manager) provided an update on the Short Film and Musical Theatre events. These two events continue to grow exponentially. Musical Theatre Review will continue to be showcased on Friday at 6 p.m. and Short Film at 10 a.m. Saturday of the State Championship weekend. Tim will chair a subcommittee that will work on rule clarifications; reviewing the documents: rubrics and critique sheets; and implement online adjudicating (SpeechWire/Drama Wire) with the help of Ben Stewart.

3. The committee approved awarding "All-State" medals to the Critic Choice Award Winner in Short Film and Musical Theatre and will be incorporated into the awards assembly.

4. The committee reviewed and discussed a proposal to increase Drama CP and GI entry fees from \$100 to \$120 to offset the cost of some site-specific awards. No action was taken.

5. The committee approved the creation of a standardized certificate for All-Sectional cast that sectional site host can present to qualifying students.
6. The committee discussed Drama 2025-26 Points of Emphasis Item F) Special Rules and Limitations 3) All competing schools must follow all provisions outlined by the host site in the qualifier's manual. Behavior deemed unsafe by a state official will first be given a warning and then penalties may include but not be limited to warnings, lowering one rank per judge and/or disqualification.
7. The committee discussed universal sets in Contest Play.
8. The committee was updated on future Drama State Final hosts. Reavis High School will host in 2026, Sterling High School will host in 2027, and Oak Lawn Richards High School has expressed interest in being a standard host if no site is confirmed. Governors State University/contact Lauren Mann has expressed interest in hosting. The IHSA will accept proposals for State Drama host site for 2028.
9. In 2026-27, the standardized week 38 for the State Drama Final lands on Easter Sunday weekend. Per past practice and the terms and conditions, the date can be amended. The recommended adjustment will be Sectionals week 36 and state week 37 - March 18-20, 2027.

ITEMS OF GENERAL DISCUSSION

1. Andrea Gustafson provided an update on the Illinois Communication and Theatre Association (ICTA). President elect Tim Connors shared that the [ICTA conference](#) will be held September 18-20, 2025, at Heartland College. Several IHSA rules sessions and coaching & directing sessions will be presented. The IHSA will continue to present rules session at this conference. The presentation will also be posted on the Speech & Drama menu pages. The committee encourages all coaches to become a member of ICTA.
2. Ben Stewart, reviewed some tie break proceeded to confirm alignment in Tourney Wire/SpeechWire. SpeechWire, was commended for his continued support of IHSA events.
3. Lauren Mann provided an update on the NFHS Speech, Debate and Theatre Committee.
4. Knoblauch reviewed NFHS Awards: • Heart of the Arts Award Nominees • Outstanding Educator Coach/Director Nominees - Speech & Debate and Theatre Recommendations of nominations for any of these awards can be directed to Knoblauch.
5. Knoblauch shared information regarding the NFHS Debate Topic Selection meeting and the NFHS Performing Arts Conference.
6. Knoblauch acknowledged and thanked the following outgoing committee members Marie Wojdelski, Madeline Hawkins, and Anthony Kortas for their service on the advisory committee and for their support of the IHSA.