



Newsletter of the Illinois Communication and Theatre Association

Fall/Winter 2016

An Update from the IHSA

By Susie Knoblauch IHSA Assistant Executive Director

Welcome back is my theme for this year...welcome back coaches to the start of another successful school year and interscholastic speech/debate/theatre season and welcome back Susie from the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) office to the Illinois High School Association (IHSA) office. The two-year experience at the NFHS provided me with national exposure and valuable networking which I brought back to Illinois. Several organizations that I had the opportunity to partner with was the National Speech and Debate Association (NSDA) and the Educational Theatre Association (EdTA). Both organizations provide wonderful opportunities for performing arts activities.

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The Power of Public Debating

Nick Sciallo, J.D., Ph.D. (Illinois College)

Speech and debate activities often occur in relative isolation. They happen early in the morning, usually on weekends, and often times far away from colleagues, students, friends and family. Some activities like competitive national-level cross-examination debate as well as Lincoln-Douglas, not to mention speech activities like radio announcing, may seem confusing for the uninitiated. Whether it's speed, jargon, or substance, it can be difficult for outsiders who make the trip to tournaments to understand what many of our sponsors, coaches, and teachers are devoting their time to.

There's a solution with numerous benefits: public debating. Below, I'll outline some of the benefits of public debating, that I hope will encourage you to build a culture of public deliberation at your schools. Of course individual circumstances, time, and funding are different for all schools and squads, but even an intra-squad public debate promises to be rewarding.

First, public debating can attract supporters of all sorts. Parents are often excited to observe the public speaking and research skills their students are learning. For

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New this year from the NSDA is Big Question Debates. NSDA received a grant to give up to \$1,700 per event to organizations and schools who host these debates. Schools and organizations can host Big Questions debate events as a part of a tournament, as a stand-alone event, intra-school scrimmage, or as a classroom event. This year schools have used Big Questions to raise funds for their speech and debate programs, as a joint fundraiser with other schools, and even as a scholarship opportunity for their members. More information can be found here: www.speechanddebate.org/big-questions

EdTA, in collaboration with New York City-based companies iTheatrics and Music Theatre International (MTI), has created JumpStart Theatre, a three-year scalable pilot program designed to bring musical theatre into schools that currently do not have performing arts programs. JumpStart is modeled after the successful [Broadway Junior Musical Theatre Program](#) founded by the Shubert Foundation, iTheatrics and MTI in 2005 in collaboration with the New York City Department of Education. JumpStart Theatre aims to: be sustainable and implemented in underserved middle schools nationwide, engage as many students as possible in all aspects of theatre, prepare students for high school, college, and the workforce by instilling the 21st-century skills of collaboration, communication, problem solving, and creativity. For more information about JumpStart Theatre, contact Ginny Butsch gbutsch@schooltheatre.org. <https://www.schooltheatre.org/programs/jumpstarttheatre>

As for the State Level, in Illinois last year:

199 IHSA member schools enter the IHSA Speech - Individual Events State Series.

64 IHSA member schools participated in the IHSA Drama Group Interpretation State Series.

53 IHSA member schools participated in the IHSA Debate State Series.

Entries for the 2016-17 competitive season are in November, so make sure your school has entered through the IHSA School Center if you are participating in Individuals Events, Drama - Group Interpretation or Debate this season. If you have any questions about your entries contact Carol Carr at the IHSA Office ccarr@ihsa.org 309-663-6377.

Below are some important dates to remember in 2017:

IHSA Speech Individual Events - <http://www.ihsa.org/documents/ie/2016-17/t-and-cs.pdf>

Monday, January 30th - Online Speech Individual Event entries due by noon & Regional Entry Meeting (at designated regional sites).

Saturday, February, 4th - Regionals @ assigned sites

Saturday, February, 11th - Sectionals @ assigned sites

Friday & Saturday, Feb. 17th & 18th -State Final @ Peoria Civic Center

IHSA Debate - <http://www.ihsa.org/SportsActivities/Debate.aspx>

Wednesday, March 1st - Online entries due

Friday & Saturday, March 17th & 18th - Debate State Final @ U of Illinois - Springfield

IHSA Drama/Group Interpretation <http://www.ihsa.org/SportsActivities/DramaGroupInterpretation.aspx>

Monday, January 30th - Drama/Group Interp. Title and author due online

Monday, March 6th - The entire final cast lists due online

Friday & Saturday March 17th & 18th - Sectionals @ assigned sites

Friday & Saturday March 24th & 25th - State Final @ Sangamon Auditorium - Springfield

The IHSA Speech Advisory Committee meets at the IHSA office on Tuesday, April 4th - So contact your advisory committee member with any recommendations for change.

<http://www.ihsa.org/SportsActivities/DramaGroupInterpretation/AdvisoryCommittee.aspx>

Have a great season and remember the Future Plays Here at the IHSA!

Membership Survey

Last year, the ICTA Board sent out a survey to the membership about some of the changes that need to be made moving forward in the organization as well as at convention. Using that information, this year more collegiate forensics panels were included at convention as well as experienced coaches' workshops for high school speech coaches. Please take a moment to fill out this year's member survey. The ICTA Board looks at the data and will make changes accordingly. We want to hear it all, the good, the bad, the ugly, and the helpful. While we may not be able to enact every change in the next year, our hope is to collect data over the course of several years to continue to inform decisions that are made to better our organization and increase membership and attendance every year. We appreciate your time!

Click here to fill out the survey: <https://goo.gl/forms/rHHvOJgq2R6Dre1x1>

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parents, a public debate at school also represents an easier event than a multi-day tournament. Administrators often enjoy students putting skills to work outside the classroom that support curricular objectives. Potential debaters like the opportunity to understand what debate can do for them and why competition is fun. These are all reasons why public debating can help debate teams grow and succeed. But what about benefits to debaters? Debaters benefit from public debating by learning how to adapt to different audiences, time constraints, and venues. These skills are valuable, obviously, and portable as debaters can apply these lessons directly to the next debate competition. I now turn to another related area, external demand and support.

Second, public debating can be an excellent way for community leaders to become interested in debate. Imagine the benefit of putting on a short debate for the local Kiwanis Club, chamber of commerce, or historical association. These are opportunities to build good will. Furthermore, schools often measure scholarship dollars as a way to assess the strength of graduates or graduating classes, and the relationships debate team's build with external actors can solidify existing scholarship dollars as well as open avenues for new scholarships. Public debating for local community groups might also bring debating alumni into the debate family and perhaps help with funding or even judging needs.

Third, public debating can support teachers who feel that debate has a civic calling (as most of us do). Debating in public harkens back to the Greek Agora, the corner, the stoop, the barbershop, and the French salon, reminding educators that debate is and should be a public activity. For debate to matter the most, it needs to be experienced by as many people as possible. A good way to do that is to step outside the classroom, squad room, or library and bring the benefits of debate to the public.

Public debating is hard work and not every program has the resources or administrative support to sustain non-competition debating. Even at the college level, public debating does not receive the attention or support it should. At Illinois College, I'm happy to report that we have begun a tradition of a home-and-away series debating McKendree University in the unofficially titled "Battle of the Oldest College in Illinois." I am also reaching out to other colleges in the state to hold public debates at Illinois College's campus in the Fall and Spring semesters. I hope other colleges and universities will follow suit. The more public debating we all do, the more debate's civic virtue shines through the morass of middle and high school, and the easier it is to attract and sustain interest in this enthralling and competitive co-curricular activity.

Nick J. Sciuolo is Assistant Professor of Communication and Rhetorical Studies and Director of Debate and Forensics as well as Affiliate Faculty to the Gender and Women's Studies Program at Illinois College in Jacksonville, Illinois.

Reflections on the 2016 ICTA Convention

By Richard G. Jones Jr. Ph.D. (Eastern Illinois University & Higher Education Chair)

This year's ICTA convention in Lisle was another great chance for communication, speech, and theatre educators from across the state to gather to discuss ideas, make new connections, and provide encouragement and support for each other during a tumultuous time for higher education in Illinois.

The Higher Education Division had eight presentation slots on topics including: student research, creating classroom climate on the first day of class, teaching critical and creative thinking, and mentoring. As the higher education chair, I would like to commend our current president, Kacy Abeln, for a timely and provocative theme – “Let's Get Critical.”

Now that we've learned some things, taught some things, made some new connections, and reinvigorated old ones, let's take some time to reflect on our experiences at the convention.

**“I'm inspired by seeing all the different facets of our discipline in action.”
Alyssa Obradovich, University of Illinois.**

“I think of ICTA as a great brainstorming session in which I gain valuable actionable ideas for the upcoming year.” Clinton Brown, Purdue University.

“ICTA is unique in that it connects high school with higher education practitioners - inviting us to reflect upon, learn, and celebrate communication together. Very few disciplines have created such opportunities for their academic leaders to connect in this way, and I am grateful for this community of scholars.” Amanda Frioli, Eureka College.

“What I always enjoy about ICTA is the opportunity to network and learn from individuals in both higher ed and high school. As someone who works in higher education, I find it incredibly beneficial to talk with the educators who are working with my students before I meet them.” – Emily Vajalla, Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

As you can see from the quotations above, ICTA's convention is a place where we see the multiple sides of our discipline at work, where we learn new ideas to put into action in our classrooms, and where we celebrate communication. I hope to see you at next year's convention to continue to build on this wonderful legacy.

2016 Convention “Let’s Get Critical” Reflections

By Kacy Abeln (College of DuPage & President)

I chose the theme “Let’s Get Critical” because I truly believe we are at a unique moment of change in education, in our given disciplines and in our state. For many of us, change has become so terrifyingly regular that change has become our professional constant. We discuss these changes with our friends, co-workers, and colleagues but I fear we have not engaged in conversation about these changes on an organizational level. Changes at our institutions, in our disciplines, and in education have significant impacts on ICTA - ICTA’s ability to serve and ICTA’s ability to act. I hoped that “getting critical” would provide us with an opportunity to have these discussions and to, if anything, meet others who are facing the same issues on an everyday basis. I believe we had these conversations and, in so doing, have taken the first steps towards strengthening our organization.

After convention I spent a month reflecting, reflecting on convention and our organization. In my reflections, I realized that I am energized. I was and continue to be energized by our vigorous conversations. I am energized by the amazing suggestions of each of our members. I am energized by each of the incredible award winners who are disciplined students, dedicated teachers, innovative researchers, and, maybe most importantly, caring individuals. I am energized that we have begun a conversation about how to best progress and strengthen our organization.

Capturing this energy is key! As we move forward with the remainder of the fall semester and beginning of 2017, you will be hearing more from us. We will keep the conversation going! We will keep the momentum! We will remain energized!



Thoughts from the Newsletter Editor

By Brian Rohman (University High School & Newsletter Editor)

This month, we all witnessed the culmination of a campaign season that left everyone feeling underwhelmed by the process and the candidates. We are now entering even more uncertain times as the winner continually sends mixed signals about how he will lead the free world. I know I am preaching to the choir in this publication when I say that this election has solidified the need for communication and civic engagement in our high school and college classrooms. We know that our 'soft skill' set is important, but what we rarely engage is the impact of a society that has a severe deficiency of these skills. It has been over a decade since Illinois has eliminated the Speech Certificate for teachers. Since then, fewer and fewer teachers of communication have been prepared and sent into the work place. Since then, two and four year institutions have been gutting communication programs to save budget room for others. Since then, the level of public debate in this country has become incredibly dysfunctional due to a growing impact of a 24 hour news cycle and the rise of the seven second sound bite. Individuals are no longer being taught skills that will help them sift through the message and make an informed decision.

We are at an unique crossroads. Currently, what the future looks like is up to us. First, we have to expand upon the call to action we all agreed upon at the TownHall Meeting. We have to advocate for our discipline across Illinois. From there, we need to look at how to adapt for the future. Our traditional model has been to train fifteen and sixteen year olds to become better speakers and thinkers. Once they get to college, then they will get a repeat of what they had in high school at age 18. That is where the training stops! Moving forward, we have to figure out how to demonstrate to students that communication is a skill that requires work and how that skill is applicable in every aspect of their lives. A scientist that can articulate their findings or a mechanic that can effectively communicate the issues a car is having to a client will be more successful at their jobs. I am not going to say that I have all or even any of the answers to our dilemma. I will say that we have to work together if we hope to raise the level of communication and critical thinking in our country.

Questions for a specific interest group can be directed to the persons below:

Higher Education: Rich Jones (rgjones@eiu.edu)

Secondary Education: Kenny Knox

(kknox@spoon-river.k12.il.us)

Secondary Individual Events: TJ Kahrman

(tkahrman@olchs.org)

Higher Education Forensics: Judy Santacanterina

(jsantaca@niu.edu)

Debate: Brian Voss (brian.voss@d128.org)

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