



Newsletter

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Our Purpose Has Never Been Clearer

The **Wisconsin Lyceum Society** was founded in 1895, and was instrumental in the founding of the **National Forensic League** (NFL) in Ripon, Wis. in 1925. That same year, the Wisconsin Lyceum Society changed its name to **Wisconsin High School Forensic Association** (WHSFA) to align with the new organization it helped to inspire and support.

Toward the end of the twentieth century, **middle level** speech programming was added, while a new concept in television series exploded across popular culture, championed by *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* – forensic science. The common Latin root of the word “forensic” means to seek the truth for the public good, so activities such as Speech, Debate, and Theatre encourage students to research information and literature, so they may share, discuss, and/or perform the truth of a character and that character’s milieu. However, the connotation of the word “forensic” almost universally shifted to law enforcement and science.

Several leaders of the WHSFA have been stymied in attempts to promote the organization and its activities among school administrators and other stakeholders, who either were confused by an organization with “high school” in the name claiming to serve middle level grades, or why that organization was asking students to speak about dead bodies. Additionally, other factors, such as the changing nature of education, shifting demographics – including from the millennial generation to Generation Z – meant it was time to do some deliberative thinking and strategic planning to foster a strong foundation from which to operate, moving forward. Hence, the Board of Control began conversations around strategic planning, culminating in several initiatives it approved this month.

The first phase centered around the organization’s purpose – its identity. After considering how other organizations reoriented their identity, such as the National Thespian Society becoming the Educational Theatre Association (EdTA), the NFL becoming the National Speech & Debate Association (NSDA), and even its own history of name change, the Board adopted a new name, effective with the 2022-23 year: **Wisconsin Interscholastic Speech & Dramatic Arts Association** (WISDAA). “Interscholastic” is inclusive of middle level grades and indicates the multi-institutional nature of contests and programming. “Speech” indicates the central approach to communication in Speech and Debate activities. “Dramatic Arts” is common nomenclature for both Theatre and Film, which will make its debut this year (2021-22).

The purpose phase continued with revising the mission to more clearly reflect what the organization does, and to articulate a vision and core values. Those are reflected in the sidebar, to the right. *This story continues on the next page.*

Mission

WHSFA’s inclusive platform welcomes all middle and high school students to enhance and refine communication skills, to foster creativity, and to share perspectives.

Vision

We envision a future where all students may participate in speech, debate, theatre, and film contests in a safe and supportive environment to express their authentic selves and to grow from constructive feedback.

Values

- Advocacy & Equity
- Creative Expression
- Critical Thinking
- Empathy
- Reflection



Our Purpose *(Continued)*

The final phase of strategic planning entailed determining key goals for the current school year, as well as moving forward beyond this year, particularly as we navigate a post-pandemic, “new normal” in education, as well as decreasing school-age population. Priorities determined included focus on efforts for recruitment, retention, and advocacy; increasing clout as an interscholastic academic sport; providing more transparency for financial accountability; building more capacity for pedagogical

outcomes; and assessing internal and governance structures. Additionally, Association leadership is committed to auditing its efforts toward Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility, and will be working with experts in those respective fields to assess what we can do better as an organization to serve our students, coaches, and adjudicators in the most equitable ways.

We will report on progress toward these efforts in future newsletters.



Film Festival Debuts: Get Your School Involved!

We are excited to debut our Film Festival this year. Online registration opens **February 1**, and closes **March 16, 2022**. Video submissions are due **April 25**, and adjudication/streaming will happen April 27-May 3. Awards and results will be announced Thursday, May 5. Please see <https://www.whsfa.org/state-film/> for details.

Do you have a media/broadcast class or club in your school? Does your art teacher work with animation or film? Help us spread the word with administrators and teaching colleagues who might be interested.

Theatre directors might consider asking students to adapt devised works to the film medium. Speech coaches should consider asking students to consider adapting their work to such film categories as Demonstration, Broadcast News, and Narrative.

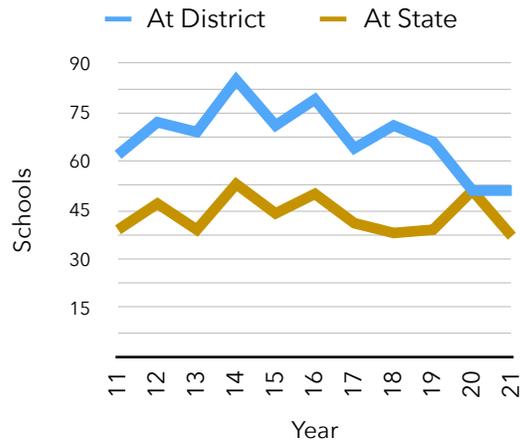
A school may submit any number of film entries in the various categories. To encourage participation, entry fees are just \$20 per film. There are no qualifying levels; just an open State-level contest.

Hybrid Theatre Season a Success

This year's One-Act Play fall Theatre season returned to offering in-person festivals, with the option for schools to submit a recording of their production to be adjudicated virtually. A number of schools were not allowed to hold in-person productions during the previous school year, and some didn't have in-person classes for most or all of last year. As schools navigated new protocols, occasional outbreaks and quarantines, having a virtual option proved most valuable. In one case, a last-minute crisis at a school prevented their attending the State Festival, but they happened to have recorded an archival video of a community production earlier in the week, and we were able to have adjudicators evaluate that video!

Participation numbers were lower than usual this year. Some schools alternate between participating in the one-act contest in even-numbered years, and producing a full play/musical in odd-numbered years. This year, four schools also entered initially, but withdrew before the District festival. Despite many of the challenges that faced schools, directors recounted just how meaningful the experience was for their students to return to seeing their peers' artistic work.

Also different this year: as the WHSFA Theatre Advisory Committee and Board have heeded feedback from directors, the adjudication process has evolved to a standards-based scoring system that provides a more grounded, objective appraisal of schools' work. This likely resulted in more awards in certain categorizations at the State Festival, though this was a year when directors and students needed encouragement for their work against the odds. The Theatre Advisory Committee will assess, and if necessary, recalibrate the standards, scoring, and/or thresholds for awards.

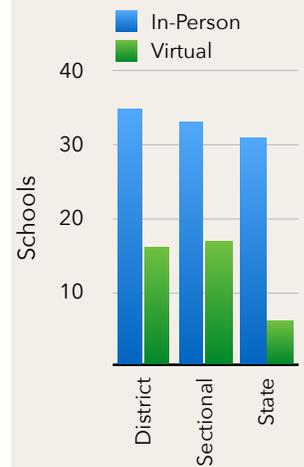


Earning Critic's Choice Awards were:

- ▶ Appleton North HS, *Julius Caesar*
- ▶ Badger HS, *Challenger: To Touch the Face of God*
- ▶ Burlington HS, *Anne of Green Gables*
- ▶ DeForest HS, *The Laramie Project*
- ▶ Greenwood HS, *Bang Bang You're Dead*
- ▶ Hamilton HS, *No Problem*
- ▶ Jefferson HS, *This is a Test*
- ▶ Luxemburg-Casco HS, *Class Action*
- ▶ Menomonie HS, *Almost, Maine*
- ▶ Monroe HS, *Our Place*
- ▶ Neenah HS, *Brian the Comet*
- ▶ Northland Pines HS, *The Three Musketeers and the Very Pretty Diamonds*
- ▶ Northwestern HS, *Bad Auditions by Bad Actors*
- ▶ Owen-Withee HS, *I Don't Want to Talk About It*
- ▶ Pulaski HS, *The Factory*
- ▶ Waterford Union HS, *Archipelago*
- ▶ Waunakee HS, *The Omelet Murder Case*
- ▶ Waukesha South HS, *The Rose of Treason*
- ▶ Waukesha West HS, *Lend Me a Tenor*
- ▶ Wauwatosa East HS, *A Game*
- ▶ Wrightstown HS, *An Experiment*

2021 Season Stats

51 Plays/Schools
917 Students



State Awards:

- 21 Critic's Choice
- 16 All-State
- 29 Directing Awards
- 27 Ensemble Awards
- 31 Technical/Crew
- 100 Acting Awards

[Full Results](#)

Thespy's:

6 entries qualified to the International Thespian Festival Excellence Awards in June in Indiana.

Hamilton HS, Sussex:

Shannon O'Dwyer

Kettle Moraine HS:

Eloise Field (x 2)
Adeline Cramer
Cassidy O'Neil
Ava Carpenter



This year, all schools must enter via the **WHSFA Middle Level Speech Initial Registration** on SpeechWire.

Hosting a Level 1 or Level 2 Festival?

If you haven't already, complete the [date request form](#). All materials requests (copies of evaluation sheets and awards) will be integrated with the SpeechWire registration process. There is no fee to use SpeechWire for Level 1 or 2 festivals.

The State Office will communicate to hosts in January on how to access and manage their contests in SpeechWire. This is where they will access entries from schools.

Adjudicator Training

We just launched our free and online Middle Level Speech Initial Adjudicator Training course. It takes about 3 hours.



Middle Level Speech Initial Adjudicator Training

Middle Level Speech Details

In-Person or Virtual Festivals

Each host school sets its own COVID-19/ Public Health Protocols, which all attending schools must follow. If they wish, coaches may enter any number of students or their entire team in a virtual, statewide Level 1 and/or Level 2 festival, run by the state office (see diagram, p. 5).

To facilitate this hybrid approach, **all schools must register their entries online, using SpeechWire** (this is FREE). The state office will share entry information with contest hosts. This is also to track participation, to help WHSFA advocate for further development of forensic programming across the state.

Rules Changes; New Handbook

Complete [details of rules changes, along with a downloadable handbook, are available](#). Changes for this year include:

- (1). All Level 1 contestants will advance to Level 2, irrespective of ratings.
- (2). Each of the five evaluation criteria on evaluation sheets will have standards-based ratings of: minimal, emerging, developing, proficient, and mastery.
- (3). Evaluation sheets will change from the arbitrary As and Bs to an overall rating of excellence and merit. These will not be tied to the evaluation standards, but will be an overall recommendation by the adjudicator and will determine which award a student earns.
- (4). For Level 1 festivals, certificates will be replaced by yellow and green ribbons, which will correspond with the overall rating of excellence (yellow) and merit



(green). Level 2 will continue using blue and red, respectively.

(5). Moments in History: revised rule to stipulate that costumes may serve as a visual aid, but may not be worn. This is to discourage cultural appropriation, and to be consistent with rules in all other categories.

(6). Rules to Follow for each category were streamlined and arranged in a consistent manner; some rules were removed from individual category rules if they apply universally -- such as those dealing with content and repetition of material or substitution of group members, since they're covered in Middle Level Speech Rules & Policies. We conducted extensive review of grammar/ sentence structure, along with delineating what should be part of category descriptions (top of the page) versus rules. Accordingly, evaluation criteria were reviewed, and made consistent across types of categories. Please review each category carefully to understand rules and evaluation criteria.

See [this year's category topics, along with brief descriptions of categories](#).

Virtual Options

Just like last year, the State Office is running a statewide Level 1 and statewide Level 2 festival. Your **entire squad** may participate, or **select students** who are unable to go to an in-person festival (for any reason). See the flowchart on p. 5 for reference on how this works. You may select virtual festivals [as part of online registration](#). [Click here for timeline](#).

Resources Pages Enhanced

We have refreshed our Theatre, Speech, and Debate Resource webpages to assist educators with advising students in these activities. Of particular value are free courses offered by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) and the National Speech & Debate Association (NSDA).

[Middle/HS Speech Resources](#)

[Theatre Directing Resources](#)

[Learn to Debate](#)



NATIONAL
SPEECH AND DEBATE
EDUCATION DAY

CELEBRATING EDUCATORS. INSPIRING STUDENTS.
TRANSFORMING TOMORROW.

Sat., March 5, 2022

You and your team can celebrate Speech & Debate and help show what a wonderful activity this is for young people.

[NSDA Info/Resources](#)

Membership/Dues Renewal

We extended the *early bird discount* of \$50 off dues for both high school and middle level membership, to December 31, 2021. To qualify for the discount, an advisor from the school must simply **complete the membership form** at <https://www.whsfa.org/membership/>; if the form is completed by 12/31/21, payments reflecting the discount may be received by February 1, 2022. On that same page, there is a button to check membership status; please check your status before submitting duplicate payment.

Recognize Colleagues

Do you know a deserving new coach/advisor, or someone who has demonstrated amazing servant-leadership? Please consider nominating them for one of the educator awards we bestow or partner with a national organization to honor. Visit <https://www.whsfa.org/educator-awards/> for more details.

Help Build Video Library

Having recorded presentations yields an opportunity to help other coaches and directors with a library of instructional videos. If you have middle/high school presentations and/or plays you are willing to grant permission to WHSFA to utilize, please complete this linked form. You must get permission from each of the students and their parents/guardians; plays must be public domain/devised works.

[Video Volunteer Form](#)

Especially this year, stay connected with WCTE

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*for classroom ideas
for organization updates
for professional development opportunities*

We're here to support you!



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