



Wisconsin Interscholastic Speech & Dramatic Arts Association

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Building confidence since 1895
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May 8, 2026

State Speech Contest Announces School Awards

LA CROSSE, Wis. – Twenty eight Wisconsin schools received recognition for their overall performance at the Wisconsin State Speech Festival. This year, more than 3,100 students, representing nearly 300 schools advanced to the State Festival. While the event was planned for UW-Madison all weekend, severe weather forced several schools originally scheduled for Friday, April 17 to participate virtually by submitting a video of their performance to be evaluated online, delaying final results.

Adjudicators rated each student or performing group to determine a medal award, and the **top five percent of medal-earning schools** are recognized with *Excellence in Speech Awards*, with the school and coach each presented with a plaque. This year, 14 schools earned this honor (sorted by school, alphabetically):

| School (<i>city listed, if not in name of school</i>) | Coach(es) |
|---|--|
| Barneveld High School | Duane Draper |
| Brookwood High School | Kim Neal Nofsinger |
| Burlington High School | Robbie Twohig |
| Darlington High School | Clarey Knellwolf-Schwartz |
| Fox Valley Lutheran High School | Aleah Friemark & Ben Perushek |
| Menomonie High School | Andrea Smith, Melissa Nolte, Cassandre Grape |
| Muskego High School | Joe Meinecke |
| Oshkosh West High School | Michelle Huettl |
| Platteville High School | Rachel Keleher |
| Sauk Prairie High School | Ryan Mussack, Alexandra Dorman, Bethany Fredericks |
| Southern Door Schools | JamieLynn Teska, Mary Hall, Josie Kennedy |
| Waunakee High School | Walter Stenz |
| Westosha Central High School | Brenda Bursek-Krekling |
| Wrightstown High School | David Winkler |

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Additionally, the following schools earned the *Distinction in Speech Award*, for medal achievement in the top six to ten percent. Those schools and coaches earning plaques are (sorted by school, alphabetically):

| School (<i>city listed, if not in name of school</i>) | Coach(es) |
|---|---|
| Badger High School | April Machan, Mike Smith |
| Cameron High School | Sheri Hagen-Salm, Bambi Forcey, Ryan Mikula |
| Cuba City High School | Becky Sitts |
| Eau Claire Memorial High School | Johannah Erffmeyer, Mielle Rundall, Mackenzie Pfund, Olivia McNally |
| Fennimore High School | Jaime Lathrop |
| Hudson High School | Jessica Flanagan |
| Iowa-Grant High School | Amanda Linscheid |
| Lodi High School | Anne Lembcke, Erica Bardwell, Garit Schmidt |
| Marinette High School | Maxwell Finger |
| Niagara High School | Ginger Anderson |
| River Valley High School | Marisa Romanelli |
| South Shore High School | Rebecca Lallemon, Mikaela Franson, Emma Kimball |
| St. Lawrence Seminary High School | Martin Vu |
| Waterford Union High School | Kelly West |

“Severe weather, including hail and tornadoes, had hit the state multiple times that week,” said WISDAA Executive Director Adam Jacobi. “After being advised by UW Police and the National Weather Service, we prioritized safety of participants. While the Saturday rounds ran quite smoothly, we were grateful COVID equipped us to pivot online rather quickly.”

Jacobi added: “It has been a challenging time for schools to participate in interscholastic academic sports like Speech. As an association affiliated with the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), we are aware participation numbers among schools are lower across the country, and Wisconsin is no exception. In a time when we are bombarded by information, cultivating effective communication in young people through activities like interscholastic Speech is more important than ever.”

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About the Wisconsin Interscholastic Speech & Dramatic Arts Association

Founded in 1895, the Wisconsin Interscholastic Speech & Dramatic Arts Association (WISDAA) has provided programming for middle and high school students in theatre, debate, and public speaking (archaically called “forensics”) activities. Each year, our nonprofit organization serves about 7,000 Wisconsin students from more than 350 high schools, and 150 middle schools in the longest-running high school speech contests in the nation. Our aim is to empower students to enhance their skills in presentation through interscholastic assessment. For more information, visit www.wisdaa.org.

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