

# NORTH CATHOLIC FORENSICS

TO COMMUNICATE IS TO BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND.

## PHILOSOPHY:

The North Catholic forensic program is open to all students of North Catholic High School who are in academic good standing with the school and who are not on disciplinary probation.

The purposes of the program are

- to provide an opportunity for all students to gain experience in the field of public speaking;
- to learn the fundamentals of good public speaking;
- to learn and use basic research skills;
- to foster an interest in local, national and global affairs;
- to develop an appreciation of the arts and literature and/or an awareness of current problems.

The program also attempts to provide an arena where students can demonstrate their acquired skills. This is done through local, regional and national competitions, and through various scholarship competitions throughout the year. To achieve these goals, North Catholic is a member of the National Forensic League, the National Catholic Forensic League and the Pennsylvania High School Speech League. Its coaches are members of all of the above and additionally are part of the Pennsylvania Speech and Debate Association and the National Federation of Speech and Debate.

Student membership is voluntary, but in registering with the school program the student assumes several responsibilities. At a minimum, the student must understand that

- s/he represents North Catholic
- s/he is accountable to the coaches for work agreed to be done
- s/he is accountable to the coaches for behavior at any forensics related activity
- s/he is expected to support the school in some seemingly non-related activities.

Following the guidelines established in this philosophy, the North Catholic Forensic program is detailed on the following pages.

# Bylaws

## I. **Membership**

- A. The North Catholic forensic program is open to all students who adhere to the following guidelines as established by the administration of the school:
1. North Catholic will follow the WPIAL/PIAA guidelines regarding the passing of courses. However, it is strongly recommended that the student be passing all subjects.
  2. Students involved in serious disciplinary problems may be prevented from participating in their activity.
  3. In order to practice or participate in an activity, students must be in school by 9:00 a.m.
  4. Any student who has a serious indebtedness to North Catholic will be unable to participate in their activity.
- B. Students may join the North Catholic forensic program at any time. In order to receive "credit" for participation for any one year, a student must earn 25 competition points in that year. (The assigning of points for competition is described in the National Forensic League manual.) Students who do not earn 25 points are considered inactive, and it is up to the discretion of the coach as to whether or not the student is given credit for participation on permanent records and transcripts.
- C. Because the cost of competition is extremely high, members of the team are required to help defray costs through several means.
1. Parents are required to judge two tournaments per forensic season. Parents will be assigned to judge at the opening forensic meeting in October and will be expected to be present on the dates indicated. If a parent cannot judge, they are asked to find a suitable replacement or to pay the \$50.00 judge fee that the school will be fined for not providing enough judges.
  2. Sometimes students will be asked to pay a per-tournament fee. This fee will vary depending on the particular tournament, but the minimum will always be \$3.00. Because some tournaments involve higher entry fees, greater transportation costs, and lodging, participation in some tournaments may cost substantially more. Sometimes that cost can be partially satisfied through money that is designated for the forensic team through school fundraisers. Because some students compete more than others, they sometimes use up their fundraising money and then need to contribute in cash towards the cost of a tournament.

3. In all cases, the coach makes the final decision as to individual cost per tournament. It is hoped that a student would never forego competition because of individual costs.
- D. Each year students and parents must complete and return to the Director of Forensics a permission slip and a medical records form. These papers are kept on file for the year.

## II. **Events**

- A. The following events are open to all students on a regular basis:
1. Policy debate - Sometimes called team debate because a student debates with a partner on policy issues of the day.
  2. Lincoln Douglas debate - Single debaters argue both sides of a value resolution.
  3. Public Forum debate – A team of debaters argues on a current events topic that changes monthly.
  4. Oral interpretation of literature - Students choose a prose or poetry selection and read it for a judge.
  5. Dramatic interpretation of literature - Students choose a portion of a play, memorize and deliver it with correct character and mood interpretations.
  6. Original oratory - Competitors write and deliver a memorized persuasive or informative speech on a subject of their own choosing.
  7. Extemporaneous speaking - Given a limited amount of preparation time, students write and deliver a speech on a current topic of national or international interest.
  8. Duo Interpretation of literature - Students follows the guidelines for dramatic interpretation, but work with a partner on a play that involves two characters.
- B. The following events are open to students who compete in one or more of the above listed categories. These events are sometimes national or state qualifiers, but they do not occur with any frequency during the year.
1. Student congress - Students participate in a congress session - researching, writing and debating legislation.
  2. Impromptu speaking - Given a very limited amount of preparation time, students write and deliver a short speech on a topic of general interest.
  3. Extemporaneous commentary - Students follow the guidelines for extemporaneous speaking, but topics are

not worded as questions, are open-ended, and students are permitted to offer more opinion than in extemp.

4. Declamation - Open only to freshmen and sophomores, this category involves finding a speech written by another individual, memorizing it, and delivering it.

### III. **Meetings and practice sessions**

- A. Meetings are held two or three times a year, before school at 7:50 a.m. There is usually an introductory meeting held early in September and then a second organizational meeting held in early October. At some point before the North Catholic tournament, a third meeting may be held. Other meetings are scheduled on an "as needed" basis. Members are asked to be present at all meetings.

Information is passed along to students and parents through PA announcements, a biweekly newsletter to students and a bi-monthly newsletter to parents. Students and parents are expected to share all this information with each other.

- B. Debate practices are scheduled by the coach, and usually occur on a regular basis, the same day of each week.

Individual event practices are scheduled at the convenience of the student and the coach. In order to set up a practice, the student should sign up on the practice board in the rear of Room 116. Students should practice at least once a week throughout the season, and once or twice a week before any tournament.

### IV. **Tournaments**

- A. For the most part, the tournament season runs from October through February. National and state qualifiers take place at the end of February and throughout March; the state tournament is scheduled for the end of March; Catholic nationals take place over the Memorial Day weekend; National Forensic League nationals occur the third week in June.

- B. Sign-ups for tournaments are posted in the front of Room 116. Students must sign up at least one week before a tournament (some deadlines require even earlier registration). Once a student has signed up, judges and transportation are arranged so a student is responsible for the registration fee for that tournament.

- C. Generally, all students are expected to participate in all

tournaments. The exception to this would be the overnight tournaments when students are invited by the coach to participate. For state and national qualifiers, students are assigned participation slots based on their participation and performance throughout the year. These slots are also somewhat controlled by league rules. For the sake of team performance, participation in all qualifiers is mandated for all members, unless otherwise advised by the coach.

- D. When participating in tournaments, members are required to wear clothing that is professional and business-like. Men should always wear ties; women should always wear skirts or dresses. Travel attire may be casual, provided that there is sufficient time to change into other clothes at the tournament site.
- E. All rules in the student handbook apply to behavior at forensic functions. It should also be noted that the coach, or the designated chaperon, has the right to establish any particular rules that are needed for a given tournament, such as curfews and time away from the tournament site.

V. **The North Catholic invitational tournament**

- A. All members of the North Catholic forensic program are required to assist in the preparation for, and administration of, the North Catholic tournament, usually scheduled for the third Saturday in December. This is a major fundraiser for the team, and helps to defray the costs of all tournaments for all individuals.
- B. Generally, members of the forensic team are needed to set up schedules, compile forms, and arrange classrooms before the tournament. On the day of the competition, members are needed to assist area coaches in the tab room, to work in the cafeteria, and to assist with clean up.
- C. Forensic families are asked to assist by providing baked goods or other such items for the cafeteria, and by working at the tournament as tab room help, cafeteria help, or as judges.

VI. **Team awards**

- A. In addition to individual awards that members win at competitions, and in addition to the levels of achievement that the National Forensic League offers, members of the North Catholic forensic team are presented with awards at the annual forensic night, usually held during the third week of May. These awards do vary from year to year, and have included categories as varied as "participation," "student coach," and "spirit," but

they are intended to honor individuals who have worked for the team throughout the year.

- B. The North Catholic forensic team also recognizes individuals at the school-sponsored "Arts and Activities Night." These are generally individuals whose forensic achievements are of interest to the entire North Catholic community.
- C. Students who earn more than 250 NFL points are eligible to wear honors cords at graduation if at least 100 of their points have been earned during their senior year.

#### VII. **Conclusion**

Any items not specifically mentioned or referred to here are handled on an individual basis in accordance with school policy. Questions or comments are welcomed, particularly in regards to future revision.

*Revised October 2008*