

MMSL league rules and regulations version 1.0, adopted 2018

1. General

a. Eligibility

- i. Any Massachusetts middle school school that is a member in good standing with the Massachusetts Secondary School Administrators Association or Association of Independent Schools in New England (AISNE) may join as a member of the Massachusetts Middle School Speech League (the League) and participate in any of the League events upon complying with all terms and conditions established by the Board of Directors.
- ii. Out of state schools may compete as guests in individual tournaments at the invitation of the tournament director in consultation with the Board of Directors.
- iii. Home-schooled students may compete in League events provided that they are sponsored by an organization, with a data card on file with the League identifying a responsible adult.
- iv. Students may participate in League events provided that they have been approved by the principal and coach of the individual member school. However, no student may participate who does not meet the requirements established by the Administrators Association for middle-level athletic contests.
- v. League tournaments are open to students in grades 6, 7, and 8. Students in grade 5 may attend league tournaments only at the explicit invitation of tournament directors.

b. League Funds

- i. The League shall maintain accounts and spend them to advance the mission of the League, in the interests of all students in the League.
- ii. Expenditures must be approved or spending power delegated, in advance of any spending, by vote of the Board of Directors.
- iii. The Treasurer shall maintain a full and accurate accounting of all funds spent and received, and shall deliver an itemized financial report annually to the Board of Directors.
- iv. The League shall not be responsible for expenses incurred by members of the Board of Directors in attending league meetings (in person or by telephone or electronic means) except to the extent required by law.

c. League Dues

- i. The Board of Directors shall determine the amount of dues to be assessed each season. League dues are due and payable on November 1 of the current school year or at the first tournament attended, whichever comes first.
- ii. Dues are assessed per school for any team which includes students from more than one school. Such teams may apply in writing to the league for a waiver, which would be effective immediately upon approval.

d. League Communications

- i. The Clerk shall maintain the League contact database and facilitate league communications where needed. Official League communications shall be by email, and the Clerk shall be responsible for distributing rule changes, notifications of Board decisions, and meeting minutes in a timely manner via the email database. Tournament directors who wish to distribute tournament invitations and other communications through the League database and need assistance must make their request to the Clerk at least one week before the communication is to be issued.
 - e. Adult Contact with Minors
 - i. Adults present at League sanctioned tournaments must comply with all Massachusetts laws and regulations governing contact with minors. It is the responsibility of every member school to ascertain that all adults that they bring to League sanctioned tournaments meet current state requirements.
 - f. The Board of Directors is empowered to vote on all decisions regarding league operations and policies. The Board may refer questions involving conduct of League competitions and other business to the membership of the League for guidance. In matters put to the League membership for a vote, all member schools that are current on their League dues per Rule 1 (c) are eligible to vote. Each eligible member school is entitled to one vote.
2. Tournaments and Entries
 - a. Rules of Professionalism and Personal Conduct
 - i. All students shall abide by the League code of conduct at all League functions. Any student found in violation of the code of conduct by any tournament official, judge, or chaperone may be disqualified from competition at the discretion of the tournament director.
 - ii. The League code of conduct is as follows:
 1. Students shall listen attentively to all speakers during rounds of competition. No texting or other use of electronic devices, eating, drinking (other than water), sleeping, or disruptive behavior is permitted during rounds.
 2. In accordance with Massachusetts Education General Law 71:2A, smoking is not allowed anywhere on school property. Consuming any illegal substance is prohibited.
 3. Students shall stay quiet in rooms adjacent to competition and in school hallways.
 4. Students shall not enter a room during another student's performance. In the event that a student wishes to enter the room while a round is in progress, the student shall ensure that they wait for the current performance to conclude before entering the room.
 5. Students shall not watch performances through windows or doorways.

6. Students are encouraged to voice any problems with judges, other competitors, or rooms to personnel in the Tabulation Room (hereafter referred to as Tab or the Tab room) or a tournament official.
 7. Students shall respect the property and facilities of the host school. All requests by the tournament host and other officials concerning the use of the building and the grounds shall be followed. The tournament host is requested to clearly identify areas where competitors are allowed.
 8. Students shall listen attentively throughout the Award Ceremony, applauding each student receiving an award.
 9. No one shall communicate with competitors while they are competing in a round, with the exception of judges, official time keepers designated by a judge or tournament official, and tournament officials.
 10. Audio and visual recording in rounds at League sanctioned tournaments are forbidden without the explicit permission of the tournament director and the Board of Directors.
- iii. The Board of Directors may create an ombudsman committee at each tournament in order to handle complaints of violations of Rule 2 (a), "Rules of Professionalism and Personal Conduct" on a case-by-case basis. This committee shall include the tournament director as well as at least two members of the Board of Directors not personally involved in an issue before the committee. If there are not two non-involved Directors available, then other non-involved representatives may be used in their place. No member school shall have more than one representative on the committee. The committee may enact a range of consequences up to and including disqualification for any party found guilty of a violation, and may enact any remedy it deems fair and equitable to address harms suffered by an injured party. Committee decisions are by simple majority. All committee decisions are final.
- b. Sanctioning
 - i. All sanctioned tournaments must invite all member schools and must follow the League Rules and Regulations in conducting the tournament.
 - ii. The Board of Directors shall meet to determine the calendar of sanctioned tournaments:
 1. The calendar shall be determined no later than September of the current school year of competition. The Board may determine the calendar at the annual meeting in the spring of the preceding school year.
 2. The Board of Directors in consultation with the tournament director shall determine the tournament format, including whether the tournament is open to novice competitors only (as defined by rule 2 (c)) or all competitors, whether double entry is allowed, whether a final round is offered, and any additions to the normal schedule.
 - iii. Rounds of competition:

1. All tournaments shall offer three preliminary rounds of competition.
 - a. Each section shall be judged by a single judge.
 - i. Parents and high school students are eligible to judge.
 - ii. No previous speech experience is required to judge.
 - iii. Experienced middle school students are eligible to judge at any novice tournament.
 - iv. Sections should not contain any student affiliated with the same school as the judge unless absolutely necessary.
 - v. No judge shall judge the same student twice in the same event at the same tournament.
 - vi. Any conflicts of interest (e.g. judge is the parent or close friend of a student in the section) shall be brought to the attention of Tab staff so that a replacement judge may be selected.
 - vii. Novice tournaments may use two judges per section if the judge pool is large enough, at the discretion of the tournament director.
 - b. Students shall be given an ordinal rank within each section in each round, with '1' indicating the student judged to be the best, and a whole point score between 80 and 100 inclusive indicating the overall quality of the performance, with a '100' indicating a performance judged to be superlative.
 - c. There shall not be ties in rank or in quality score within each section in each round. Quality scores shall descend in agreement with ordinal rank—a student with a lower ordinal rank shall not have a higher quality score.
 - d. Any student deemed to have exceeded the allotted time plus grace period for an event shall not be ranked first in their section.
 - i. Judges may, at their discretion, give additional consideration of the time violation in their ranking.
 - ii. Judges must keep accurate time in order for a time violation to be assessed.
 - iii. Judges should use discretion to account for errors in time signals, audience laughter, or disruptions beyond the student's control.
 - e. Any student competing in a section to which they were not assigned shall not be scored within that section and shall receive last place and a quality score of 80 in the room in which the student should have competed. Rank scores for other

students in the section in which the student did compete shall be adjusted accordingly.

- f. The overall rank of each student at the conclusion of the preliminary round shall be by total of the student's individual round ordinal ranks summed over the three rounds of competition.
 - i. Ties in overall rank shall be broken by the reciprocals of the ordinal ranks summed over the three rounds of competition.
 - ii. Ties in overall and reciprocal ranks shall be broken by the quality scores summed over the three rounds of competition.
2. Tournaments may offer a final round of competition to determine the final rank of the top students in each category of competition.
 - a. The Board of Directors in consultation with the tournament director shall determine when the schedule is set whether each tournament will offer a final round.
 - b. Any category of competition with at least three sections shall have a final round if a final round is scheduled in the tournament. Events with fewer competitors may have a final round at the discretion of the tournament director.
 - c. Each final round section shall be judged by three judges.
 - i. Each judge shall arrive at their final ranking independently, without consulting with any other judge or spectator.
 - ii. Sections should not contain any student affiliated with the same school as any judge unless absolutely necessary.
 - iii. No more than one judge from a single school shall be included in the judge panel for a section.
 - d. The top eight students from the preliminary rounds as determined by rule 2 (b) (iii) (1) (f) (plus any ties in overall ranks, reciprocal ranks, and quality scores) shall compete in the final round.
 - i. In the event that a tie in overall and reciprocal ranks would result in nine students competing in the final round (two-way tie for eighth, three-way tie for seventh, etc.), then the top nine students shall compete in the final round.
 - e. Students shall be given an ordinal rank, with '1' indicating the student judged to be the best.

2. Double entry shall not be available at tournaments prior to January 1 of the current school year of competition.
3. Students shall not enter more than once in the same event.
4. If a bonus round of one or more special events is offered, the tournament director shall set the rules for entries in the bonus round.

e. Protests

- i. Any judge, coach, or tournament official may file a protest with the tournament director if anyone believes a League rule has been violated. The tournament director shall adjudicate the protest according to the rules set by the tournament in the invitation, the League Rules and Regulations, and the League Bylaws.
- ii. No rank or decision of any judge may be protested. Only procedural and rules issues may come under protest.
- iii. Tournament results become final and no further protests shall be considered at the start of the award ceremony.
- iv. The tournament director shall prepare a report of the protest and decision and submit the report to the Board of Directors for inclusion in the protest log.
- v. Protest Log:
 1. The Clerk shall maintain the protest log.
 2. The protest log shall record the grounds given for each protest, the decision reached, the reasoning behind the decision, and any additional information necessary to support the decision.
 3. No personal information regarding any student involved in the protest shall be recorded.
 4. The protest log shall be available upon request for review by any member of the Board of Directors, coach, judge, or student.

f. Supervision

- i. No student will be allowed to participate in a League tournament without the presence of a supervising agent from the student's school, or an alternative adult appointed by the student's school. The League will not assume responsibility for any student attending a tournament.
- ii. The League does not assume responsibility for any damages to property from vandalism or misconduct by participants at League tournaments.

g. Weather

- i. In the event of concerns about inclement weather, the tournament director and the Board of Directors shall confer to determine whether the tournament will be postponed. A final decision shall be made at least two days in advance of the originally scheduled start of the tournament.

3. Events

a. General provisions

- i. Use of cuttings:

1. It is the intent of the League that interpretation cuttings reflect the intent of the author.
 2. Lines spoken by one character shall not be given to another.
 3. Gender of characters shall not be changed by changing gender references from “he” to “she,” “him” to “her”, etc. Male/female relationships must be respected—a relationship between a man and a woman shall not be changed into a relationship between two women or two men, for example.
 4. Material shall not be added to the piece, with the exception of required introductory material.
 5. If a cutting is challenged at a tournament, the author’s intent will be considered most seriously in rendering a decision about the legality of a piece.
 6. Students found to be in violation of this rule shall be disqualified.
- ii. Use of material in multiple academic years:
1. Students shall not draw from the same source material in subsequent school years.
 2. This includes different selections from the same work, but does not include different pieces collected in an anthology of otherwise unrelated work, even if by the same author.
 3. Students found to be in violation of this rule shall be disqualified.
- iii. Use of the same material in multiple events:
1. Students may use the same material in different events at different tournaments.
 2. Students shall not use the same material in two different events at the same tournament.
 3. Students found to be in violation of this rule shall be disqualified from both events.
- iv. Use of original work:
1. Students in events where they are expected to write or author an original work shall not use the same speech, or substantial sections of the same speech, in subsequent school years.
 2. Students must use their own work, and shall not copy the same speech, or substantial sections of the same speech, from another author.
 3. Students found to be in violation of this rule shall be disqualified.
- v. Use of published sources:
1. It is the intent of the League that all materials presented in interpretation events will be available to all members of the League.
 2. All coaches or supervising adults shall be able to produce a reference to a readily-available original source. The source shall be readily available to the public to purchase or view. An internet URL pointing to public-

accessible content on a widely-available website is acceptable (e.g. YouTube), as is an ISBN, ISSN, or IFFN.

3. Students found to be in violation of this rule shall be disqualified.
- vi. Accuracy of citations and representation of published material:
 1. Students in events where citations of evidence are expected are responsible for the accuracy of their citations based on that material.
 2. Students shall cite facts and analysis from source material accurately and in keeping with the author's intent.
 3. Students shall have copies of all sources cited in competition (cited text with any necessary context is acceptable), with full source citations, at the tournament.
 4. Students found to be in violation of this rule shall be disqualified.
- vii. Material genre:
 1. Students shall use source material from the appropriate genre for each event, as listed in the rules for the event.
 2. Verse dramas shall not be allowed in Free Verse / Poetry.
 3. With the exception of verse dramas, which are not allowed in Free Verse / Poetry, material which crosses genre boundaries may be performed as either genre, subject to limitations in rule 3 (a) (iii) on use of the same material in multiple events.
 4. Students found to be in violation of this rule shall be disqualified.
- viii. Use of props, costumes, and visual aids:
 1. Students competing in events which forbid the use of props, costumes, or visual aids who nonetheless use these in competition shall be disqualified.
 2. Students competing in events which require the use of props or visual aids who nonetheless do not use these in competition shall be disqualified.
 3. Props or visual aids shall not pose a danger to the competitor, other students, judges, or other spectators.
- ix. Use of manuscript:
 1. Students competing in events which require the use of a manuscript who nonetheless do not use a manuscript in competition shall be disqualified.
 2. A tablet device may be used as a manuscript in place of a paper manuscript.
- x. Rules enforcement:
 1. All rule infractions listed in these rules, event descriptions, or tournament invitations shall be penalized by the judge or judges in their rankings at their own discretion, unless a different penalty (e.g. disqualification) has been explicitly laid out in these rules, event descriptions, or the tournament's invitation.

2. Protests of rules violations requiring disqualification shall be made according to rule 2 (e).

b. Sanctioned events

- i. The following events shall be offered at all sanctioned tournaments: Children's Literature, Declamation, Demonstration, Dramatic Performance, Duo Interpretation, Interpretation of Free Verse / Poetry, Impromptu, Original Oratory, Interpretation of Prose, and Storytelling.

- ii. Children's Literature:

1. A story appropriate for children delivered by a single student from a readily accessible, required text using no props or costumes. Students should strive to bring the material to life using voice, facial expressions, body and gestures. Students are required to provide brief introductory remarks at some point, which must at least identify the title and author of the work.
2. Time limit: 7 minutes with a 30-second grace period. Judges should offer to provide visual time signals.

- iii. Declamation:

1. An event in which the student delivers a readily accessible spoken speech, from text or memory, which was originally written and given as a public address by another speaker. The student should effectively convey the message of the original speaker in a sincere and realistic style—imitation is not the goal. The presentation must include an introduction (author, place, and date of delivery) and any other relevant information about the author, oration or its historical significance at some point.
2. Time limit: 7 minutes with a 30-second grace period. Judges should offer to provide visual time signals.

- iv. Demonstration:

1. The speaker will demonstrate something to the audience, which may include background and/or clarifying information. The presentation, on any topic, may be humorous or serious in nature, but the speaker should strive to provide an organized, step-by-step demonstration in a natural and realistic way. The speaker must refer to an object(s) or visual aid(s) during the presentation. No materials dangerous to the health or safety of the participant or the audience may be used (i.e. dangerous chemicals, live animals, laser pointers). Materials are not to be passed around the room to audience members or to the judge(s) before or during the demonstration. These materials must be transportable by the individual student only. The student may deliver the demonstration from memory or from notes.
2. Time limit: 7 minutes with a 30-second grace period. Judges should offer to provide visual time signals.

- v. Dramatic Performance:
 - 1. A readily accessible story line from a single play, prose, movie or TV script (monologue or multi-character) delivered by a single student, from text or memory, using no props or costumes. Students should embody character(s) in stance, gesture, movement, facial expressions and vocal quality; striving for believable portrayals. Students are required to provide brief introductory remarks at some point, which at the least must identify the title and author of the work.
 - 2. Time limit: 7 minutes with a 30-second grace period. Judges should offer to provide visual time signals.
- vi. Duo Interpretation:
 - 1. A story line from a readily accessible single play, prose, movie or TV script, which challenges two performers (each portraying one or more characters) to create a dynamic story and setting using no props or costumes, from text or memory. Duo is about balance. Each performer should effectively utilize voice, facial expressions, body, gestures, and movement to create a dynamic interaction between partners. As a unit, the two performers will vocally and physically respond to each other's verbal and non-verbal cues without eye contact or physical contact (except during the introduction). Both students are required to provide brief introductory remarks at some point, which at the least must identify the title and author of the work.
 - 2. Time limit: 7 minutes with a 30-second grace period. Judges should offer to provide visual time signals.
- vii. Interpretation of Free Verse / Poetry:
 - 1. A readily accessible selection of poetry or song lyrics; rhyming or not, delivered by a single performer from a required text (either from a single poem or a collection of poems, frequently referred to as a program). Poems combined in a program should be unified by some central element (e.g. author, subject, style or form). Poems or programs may feature rhyme, blank or free verse. Students should strive to bring the material to life using voice, facial expressions, body and gestures. Students are required to provide brief introductory remarks at some point, which must at least identify the title(s) and author of the work(s).
 - 2. Time limit: 7 minutes with a 30-second grace period. Judges should offer to provide visual time signals.
- viii. Impromptu:
 - 1. A student will pull three prompts at random, select one and have seven minutes in which to prepare and present a short, well-organized talk inspired by the chosen "jump start." Students MUST adhere to chosen prompt. The speech should have a logical beginning, middle and end. Students may speak with or without the assistance of a 3x5 index card.

Used prompts should be discarded, the other two should be returned to the envelope for the next speakers.

2. Total preparation and presentation time limit: 7 minutes with a 30-second grace period. Judges should provide verbal time signals during the preparation time and visual time signals once the speaker begins speaking.

ix. Original Oratory:

1. An original, persuasive speech on any topic of concern to the student, delivered from text or memory. The speech may be humorous or serious in nature, but the speaker should strive to identify a specific problem or concern and provide possible strategies and/or solutions in a natural and realistic way. The speaker should be held accountable for substantiating and supporting main positions with a variety of effective supporting material from qualified sources. There should be a clear structure that helps the listener follow the speech's flow and appreciate the use of supporting material. There is a maximum of 150 directly quoted words.
2. Time limit: 7 minutes with a 30-second grace period. Judges should offer to provide visual time signals.

x. Interpretation of Prose:

1. An excerpt from a readily accessible novel, short story, letter, diary or essay; fiction or non-fiction, delivered by a single student from a required text using no props or costumes. Students should strive to bring the material to life in a natural and realistic way using voice, facial expressions, body and gestures. Students are required to provide brief introductory remarks at some point, which at the least must identify the title and author of the work.
2. Time limit: 7 minutes with a 30-second grace period. Judges should offer to provide visual time signals.

xi. Storytelling:

1. Students use a single, readily accessible story, anecdote, tale, myth or legend that must be retold from text or memory without costumes or props. Students will use their own words to convey the story's plot, however the retelling must be true to the original content. Movement is allowed, and one chair may be used, or the speaker may choose to stand. Students should strive to bring the material to life using voice, facial expression, body, movement and gesture. The student is required to provide brief introductory remarks at some point, which at the least must identify the title and author of the work.
2. Time limit: 7 minutes with a 30-second grace period. Judges should offer to provide visual time signals.