

SOUTH FORK HIGH SCHOOL DEBATE AND FORENSIC Team Constitution and Contract

As a nationally competitive Debate and Forensic team, certain standards and regulations must be followed in order to ensure continued success. Each member of the team has an obligation to adhere to the stipulated guidelines. It is the responsibility of each individual member, as well as coaches, officers, parents, and school administrators to understand and uphold these provisions in order to ensure a positive learning environment where everyone is safe, responsible, and successful. The goal of the South Fork High School Debate and Forensic Team is to provide all active members an opportunity to succeed; this can only be accomplished if everyone acts in the best interests of the school and the team. The following provisions have been considered with respect of specific league bylaws to which we owe prior obligation.

Preamble

We, the students of South Fork High School, in order to promote a more positive school environment and more effective student participation, do hereby establish this Constitution of the South Fork High School Debate and Forensic Team.

Article I: Purpose and Membership

Section 1: The purpose of the South Fork Debate and Forensic Team shall be to serve the students of South Fork High School by directing beneficial student programs, promoting school spirit and loyalty, and upholding the rules established by this Constitution.

Section 2: Membership in the South Fork Debate and Forensic Team shall be open and voluntary to any South Fork High School student. However, membership in the South Fork Debate and Forensic Team is mandated for students enrolled in the South Fork High School Debate course, as participation in tournaments is a major portion of their course grade.

Section 3: Meetings of the South Fork Debate and Forensic Team shall occur at a time mutually agreed to by its officers and faculty advisor/coach as for the most convenient and effective available. Special consideration should be given to allow for maximum student participation without compromising team effectiveness.

Article II: Officers and Duties

Section 1: The South Fork Debate and Forensic Team officers shall be: President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasure, and Historian. All officers shall maintain an unweighted grade point average of at least 2.5 on a 4.0 scale. A nine-week probationary period will be allowed for an officer below this scale to raise his/her average.

A: The President shall:

1. have been an active member of the South Fork Debate and Forensic Team in the year prior to elections;
2. be, at the time of election, a varsity member of the National Forensic League;
3. preside over all meetings;
4. prepare an agenda for all meetings;
5. represent the South Fork Debate and Forensic Team with the South Fork High School administration;
6. vote only in the event of a tie at South Fork Debate and Forensic Team meetings; and
7. call special meetings as necessary to further South Fork Debate and Forensic Team interests.

B: The Vice-President shall:

1. have been an active member of the South Fork Debate and Forensic Team in the year of election;
2. be, at the time of election, a varsity member of the National Forensic League;
3. assume the duties of the President in his/her absence, in the event of a Presidential resignation, in the event of a Presidential impeachment, in the event of a South Fork High School withdrawal, or any other circumstance in which the President is unable to serve his/her duties of office;
4. undertake special projects (such as coordinating out-of-area tournaments) as requested by the President.

C: The Secretary shall:

1. have been an active member of the South Fork Debate and Forensic Team in the year of election;

2. have earned National Forensic League points at the time of election;
3. record each meeting's attendance, minutes, and floor motions;
4. be responsible for sending out all outgoing correspondence concerning the South Fork Debate and Forensic Team;
5. be proficient in data management.

D: The Treasurer shall:

1. have been an active member of the South Fork Debate and Forensic Team in the year of election;
2. have earned National Forensic League points at the time of election;
3. keep an accurate record of all South Fork Debate and Forensic Team receipts, expenditures, and overall account balance;
4. regularly schedule fundraisers;
5. report to the South Fork Debate and Forensic Team on a regular basis the availability of funds and recent financial transactions.

E: The Historian shall:

1. have been an active member of the South Fork Debate and Forensic Team in the year of election;
2. keep and maintain a complete and accurate record of all team activities, including written, photographic, and videotaped events.

Section 2: All officers shall have the authority to speak for the team as long as all remaining officers have had prior, professional notice of the function, or when the class's input would be relevant. Any officer may have the authority to speak to the team as long as all remaining officers have had prior, professional notice of the function, or the information is necessary for the betterment of the class.

Section 3: If at any time an officer fails to fulfill any of his or her duties, disciplinary actions may be taken upon the offending officer by submitting a complaint form to the coach.

Section 4. An officer may be removed from office for violation of team, school, district, community, state, or federal statutes or guidelines. Upon three unexcused absences from meetings in a semester, an officer can be immediately removed from office.

Section 5. If at any time there is a vacancy in an office, the elected officers may either appoint an eligible member to the office, hold an election to fill the vacancy, or waive the office and divide its duties among the officers. Appointment or election must be a majority decision.

Section 6. Officers removed from office are not allowed to seek office for the duration of the school year in which the removal takes place.

Article III: Elections

Section 1. Annual elections for South Fork Debate and Forensic Team officers will take place each spring at a time agreed upon by the South Fork High School administration and the coach.

Section 2. All campaign material will be displayed upon the day after the announcement of elections until the day following the election.

Section 3. Candidates for President and Vice President must have earned a minimum of 25 National Forensic League points and will be considered "varsity" status during the year of their holding office. They must be listed as active members and can either declare themselves for the office they choose or be nominated by another active member. To be nominated, the individual must be present at the nomination meeting. If nominated, candidates must agree to seek office in order to run for office.

Section 4. Candidates for President must have submitted an application to the team coach two weeks prior to the close of declarations and nominations. If no official application is available, a letter stating the candidate's reasons for seeking office, active participation with the team, and goals for the upcoming school year will suffice.

Section 5. Elections will take place two weeks after declarations and nominations are completed.

Section 6. Each voter shall be afforded the opportunity to vote in secrecy. Only active members shall be allowed to vote in team officer elections. Each prospective voter's eligibility will be verified prior to the election.

Section 7. Votes shall be counted by the team coach.

Section 8. A runoff shall be declared with either a tie vote or no clear majority winner. "Clear majority winner" is defined as an individual who has achieved at least 50 percent of the vote, plus one vote.

Section 9. Candidates who are unsuccessful in running for an office may declare themselves running for another office when that specific office comes up for election.

Section 10. Voters must be in good standing with the team in order to vote; any and all previous debt must be paid in full at the time of the election. They must be present at elections to cast ballots. No proxy ballots, absentee ballots or any other type of ballots are allowed.

Article IV: Membership

Section 1. All necessary papers requested by the coach and administration must be completed and returned before any team member can travel away from the school. These materials include but are not limited to, the following; medical release, permission to travel, automobile insurance information, signed contract, proof of grade eligibility, student enrollment forms, enrollment fee, and requested supplies. In the event that items requested are not assigned a due date, students will return all forms, completed, within one week of acquiring them.

Section 2. Debate is an activity that necessitates student participation in interscholastic competition; all students considered in debate will compete. First year students enrolled in debate classes are required to compete in a minimum of three tournaments per semester. Second through fourth year students are required to compete in at least four tournaments per semester. Officers must try to attend all tournaments and compete in at least four tournaments per semester. All other members, in order to be considered active team members of debate, are also required to compete in a minimum of two tournaments per 18 weeks.

Section 3. Each student is responsible for keeping informed about all team activities. These include, but are not limited to: tournaments, practices, and fundraisers. Each student is also responsible for meeting all deadlines for any information requested including parent letters and monies collected.

Section 4. All team members are expected to recruit judges for tournaments. Except in time of need, each student will be required to provide a judge at every other tournament in which he/she competes. Judges can be parents, siblings, adult friends of the family, former high school debaters, etc. Due to administrative duties at many tournaments, the coach cannot be counted as part of the judge pool. Failure to provide judges may result in students being dropped from competition, as well as subsequent fees being assessed. Our team must provide a certain number of judges per tournament in order to be eligible to compete.

Section 5. All members of the South Fork Debate and Forensic Team will pay an enrollment fee of \$20.00, which will be due prior to their first tournament competition. If they are members of the Debate Class, payment is due by the end of the second week of the semester in which they are enrolled. If payment arrangements need to be made, accommodations will be considered. These dues will help cover costs of tournament fees and research materials, as well as team fees and team expenses incurred at tournaments.

Section 6. Due to the high costs of away tournament competitions (i.e. entry fees, travel costs, hotel, etc.) it is the responsibility of all team members to help raise necessary funds. (See II. Fundraising)

Section 7. Team members must maintain a 2.0 grade point average in order to participate in team activities and tournaments.

Section 8. All students must attend scheduled school practices. Check the daily announcements to see when practices are, but more importantly you must stop by the debate room to make sure that you are not missing anything. Students need to prioritize debate, but extenuating circumstances do arise. If you cannot attend a practice you should bring a written note from your parent/guardian as soon as possible, or should notify the team coach in advance (if this option exists).

Section 9. If a student is absent from school they will not be allowed to attend practices, with the exception of students who are on school related field trips. If you are absent from school you are still required to follow all procedures for a missed practice (See Forensic Team Policy, I).

Section 10. Members who are in good standing with the Chapter and are active as of March 1 of their senior year will be eligible to have National Forensic League Honor Cords provided for them by the team at no additional cost for commencement ceremonies. Seniors who are either not in good standing or are inactive as of this date can purchase National Forensic League Honor Cords at the cost dictated by the NFL, plus any additional fees deemed acceptable by the team.

Article V: Fundraising

Section 1. Funds will be used to subsidize travel and tournament costs, purchase necessary materials for the team, and pay any costs that may be incurred throughout the year.

Section 2. Fundraising requirements will be by quarter. All students in debate are expected to participate in all fundraisers and are expected to raise a minimum of \$50.00 per quarter (\$200.00 per school year). The South Fork Debate and Forensic Team will host fundraisers, but each student is responsible for making sure that they have reached the required amount.

Section 3. Individual monies will be credited to the team member at a 50/50 split (half goes toward the team, half as a personal "credit line" for that student). These "credit line" funds can be used for individual debate-related expenses, such as tournament fees, travel costs, National Forensic League graduation honor cords, debate

handbooks, summer debate camps, etc. Students cannot receive fundraising credit in excess of expenses incurred for South Fork Debate and Forensic Team related functions.

Section 4. Eligibility for travel and tournament competition depends upon, in addition to other requirements, participation in fundraising activities and fulfillment of fundraising requirements. Students who do not participate in fundraisers will not be allowed to participate in tournaments.

Section 5. Fulfillment of fundraising obligations is required in order to participate in team officer elections at the end of the year. This is to ensure that members for these positions have shown their dedication and commitment to the success of the team.

Article VI: General Tournament Guidelines

Section 1. Every student competing in or observing a tournament will be expected to be on his or her best behavior at all times. Appropriate behavior on planes, buses, at airports, hotels, tournaments, etc. must be displayed. Each student is representing his/her school and team; therefore, negative or derogatory comments about judges, other schools, other students or coaches, loud outbursts or “scenes,” insolent and immature attitudes, arguments with tournament officials, judges, coaches, or fellow students, will not be tolerated.

Section 2. Any action that violates policies, rules, or laws established by South Fork High School, the Martin County School District, or any local, state or federal laws, will result in appropriate consequences, which may include suspension from the team. If there is a problem or concern, it is expected that you speak with the coach.

Section 3. Tournaments will be coordinated and planned by the officers, under the advisement of the coach.

Section 4. Proper attire must be worn at each tournament competition. No jeans or excessive jewelry should be worn. Nothing should detract from your speech or performance. Maintain a *professional* competitive image at all times.

- a. Boys will wear a suit or slacks, dress shirt, tie, and jacket while competing. Dress shoes and socks must be worn at all times. Hair should be neat and natural looking.
- b. Girls should wear dresses, professional pantsuits, or a skirt and blouse. Conservative pumps or flats should be worn with stockings. Hair should be conservative and styled in an off-the-face manner. Be sure that skirts are appropriate and not too short! Make sure that blouses are not skin-tight. These may be the style in the casual world, but are not appropriate in the professional world.

Section 5. Grade Eligibility Forms should be completed and submitted to the coach to ensure that each student maintains the minimum 2.0 grade point average necessary to be eligible for competition. (This is a school board policy to be eligible for participation in any extracurricular activity.) A 2.0 GPA must be attained during the nine weeks prior to be an active member of the South Fork Debate and Forensic Team. Students must also remain in the upper two-thirds of their grade level in order to be eligible for National Forensic League membership and participation. If improvement has been made and GPA is increased, the appropriate form as well as a note from the guidance counselor attesting to this improvement must be provided and will be given consideration.

Section 6. Each tournament is organized differently and student participation will be considered according to the individual competition. Whenever possible, all students interested, provided all eligibility requirements have been met, will be encouraged to participate. If entry positions for specific events are limited, they will be awarded with consideration to the following:

- a. Seniority of the student (number of years in debate, not grade level).
- b. Participation in fundraising activities, after school practices, and local competitions.
- c. National Forensic League points earned (career and yearly).
- d. Behavior and attitude in class, in school, and at tournaments.
- e. Maintenance of 2.0 grade point average/upper 2/3 of class.
- f. When necessary, an audition will be required to finalize some events.

Section 7. Some tournaments have special circumstances and not every student interested will be able to compete. Since we are a competitive team, there are times that limited position in specific events will be awarded based on merit and recent competitive record, provided that fundraising, GPA, and other requirements are met. These decisions will be made at the discretion of the coaches.

Section 8. Every competitor must be prepared in order to compete in all scheduled rounds of a tournament that he or she has registered to attend. If it is deemed that the individual is not ready or has not met all eligibility requirements, then he or she may be dropped from competition. Credit will not be given for a tournament from which a student is dropped, and a drop fee must be paid.

Section 9. If a student is unable to attend a tournament for which he or she is registered, the coach must be notified as soon as possible. Emergencies arise so it is understood that it is sometimes necessary to withdraw from competition. In this case, a note from a parent or guardian is necessary explaining the reason for the student's

absence from the tournament. If no prior notice is given and a student does not check in by the specified time, the student will be dropped from competition, a drop fee must be paid by the student, and the student will be suspended from one subsequent tournament.

Section 10. Students that compete in any qualifying tournament must be certain they will attend the district, state, or national tournament if he/she qualifies. If ability to attend tournament is uncertain, the student should not compete in the qualifying tournament.

Section 11. When deemed necessary by South Fork Debate and Forensic Team officers and/or the coach, non-refundable deposits will be required in advance to participate in a tournament.

Section 12. All tournament fees owed for a specific tournament shall be paid in full as of the date of the tournament or as of a prearranged date, whichever is first.

Article VII. Traveling

Section 1. Always remember that being on an away tournament is a privilege, not a right given to every member of the team.

Section 2. It is the responsibility of each student to be sure that all necessary forms are completed and given to the coach by the set deadline, that his or her parents or guardians are notified of departure and arrival times, and that all information providing location of the team and itinerary information of the tournament is given to the student's parents or guardian. Each student is responsible for arranging for parents or guardians to drop them off and pick them up at designated times. Prior arrangements for drop off and pick up of students is the responsibility of the student and his or her parent(s)/guardian(s) since we often return from trips late at night and want to ensure safety of all students, chaperones, and coaches.

Section 3. If a tournament requires automobile transportation it is the policy of our team, our school, and our school board that only parents or teachers drive. Each parent that will be transporting students must complete all necessary insurance, permission, and liability release forms. **Students may not drive to any tournament.**

Section 4. A Martin County School District school bus will be the method of transportation to almost every local and in-state tournament. If bus transportation is provided, every student must ride the bus without exception. If a student does not ride the bus they will be dropped immediately, will be required to pay all drop fees incurred, and will not be allowed to compete in the tournament. Parent judges may ask for permission to drive their own vehicles, but prior notification is extremely important.

Section 5. All students will be assigned to hotel rooms. Any concerns about room assignments should be discussed with both the team officers and the coach.

Section 6. All students must adhere to any curfew imposed by the coach or other supervising adult(s). Violation of curfew will result in suspension of travel privileges and a written referral to the administration upon return to school. This includes violation of curfew by being in hotel common areas, other hotel rooms, or anywhere other than the assigned room.

Section 7. If any student is found staying in a room other than the one assigned, he or she will be suspended from travel indefinitely and receive a written referral upon return to school. All students involved (including other students in the room aware of the situation) will receive referrals, will have parents notified, and will be suspended from travel with the team indefinitely. This risks our team privilege to travel and will not be tolerated.

Section 8. Students may not visit rooms of any student of the opposite gender.

Section 9. Students are responsible for all fees charged by the hotel to their room. Whenever possible, pay-per-view and long distance telephone access will be suspended during our stay at the hotel. Long distance calls can be made from the coach's room or the hotel pay phone using a calling card, by calling collect, or by cellular phone. Any destruction of hotel property will be charged to the individual team member responsible for the damage. Behavior of this kind may result in suspension from further team travel.

Section 10. While away from school, any adult (including coaches, chaperones, judges, officials, or other supervising adults) will be treated with the utmost respect. No arguments with adults will be tolerated, and proper language must be used at all times. Also, respect should be shown to fellow competitors regardless of their behavior. If a team member feels competing schools or competitors are acting in an offensive or unsportsmanlike manner, the coach should be notified immediately so that the situation may be addressed. Appropriate and respectful competitive behavior should be maintained throughout the tournament, during competition, at the hotel, at the tournament site, and during and after the awards ceremony. Unnecessary talking as well as using derogatory comments is considered disrespectful and will not be tolerated.

Section 11. If a team member leaves the group, he or she must never go off alone (always go with a buddy) and must attain the coach's permission. Students may not leave the tournament site, the rest of the team, or the hotel

without informing the coach and receiving permission. Violation of this will result in suspension of traveling privileges and written referral upon return to school.

Section 12. Having a parent chaperone at the tournament is to ensure the safety of the entire group. No student is permitted to leave the tournament site with his/her parent unless given permission by the coach.

Article VIII. Amendments

Section 1. Amendments must be submitted in writing by an active member at a team meeting a minimum of ten (10) days before an action affected by a proposed amendment takes place.

Section 2. No amendment may be voted upon until at least seven (7) days have passed since its submission.

Section 3. Amendments must be posted inside the Debate Coach's classroom/office within 24 hours of submission for student notification.

Section 4. A one-third vote of approval by active team members is required to open a discussion on an amendment.

Section 5. A two-thirds vote of approval by active team members is required for passage of an amendment.

Section 6. Amendments will take effect immediately after approval.

Section 7. All amendments may either be kept as such or written into the Constitution.

ARTICLE IX: Acceptation of Constitution

Section 1. All officers must sign this Constitution upon its acceptance.

Section 2. This Constitution requires the signatures of all elected officers to be accepted.

Section 3. This Constitution shall nullify any and all previous Constitutions.

THIS CONSTITUTION WAS VOTED ON AND APPROVED BY THE OFFICERS OF THE SOUTH FORK HIGH SCHOOL DEBATE AND FORENSIC TEAM ON THIS DAY, APRIL 16, 2002.

JOSEPH ROMANO, PRESIDENT

MATTHEW ESCUE, VICE-PRESIDENT

JESSILYN THIBOULT, TREASURER

MEGAN MAGEE, SECRETARY

PAUL L. GABA, SFHS DEBATE COACH

All rules and guidelines are imposed in order to ensure the safety of each student, the ability of our team to travel, and the most positive learning experience possible at each tournament and team-related activity. It is the responsibility of each student and parent to read and follow the above guidelines. Infractions of these rules will be taken seriously and consequences will be enforced without exception. All guidelines must be adhered to for the success of the South Fork High School Debate and Forensic Team to continue!

(Please sign and return this contract, which will be kept on file, attesting that both team members and parents have read carefully and completely the Debate and Forensic Team Constitution and Contract and agree to abide by all guidelines included.)

I have read the South Fork High School Debate and Forensic Team Constitution and Contract and I understand, support, and agree to abide by all guidelines and standards included in this document without exception.

Student Signature

Date

Student Name (print neatly)

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

South Fork Debate and Forensic Team Coach

Date