

MIDDLE SCHOOL LEVEL INDIVIDUAL EVENTS

The Michigan Interscholastic Forensic Association sponsors two tournaments for middle level schools, either middle schools or junior high schools. A Fall Middle Level Individual Events Tournament is held usually in December and a Spring Middle Level Individual Events Tournament is offered in March or April. At least three rounds of competition are held in each of the events. In addition, certain preliminary regional non-state tournaments in individual events may be conducted during each semester. The rules and regulations for the middle level division of MIFA are established by a middle level Advisory Council with the final approval of these specifications given by the Forensic Council.

ELIGIBILITY

Any junior high/middle school student at a MIFA member school in grades 6-8 is eligible to participate. If 9th graders are in a Middle Level school, they are also eligible to participate. The contestant must be a full-time student at the school. If ninth graders have participated or are participating in any MIFA speech activities involving competition with students in grades 10-12, these students are ineligible to participate in the middle level program.

EVENTS

The Middle Level Individual Events Tournament includes twelve speech activities. Dramatic interpretation, duo interpretation, multiple interpretation, poetry interpretation, prose interpretation, and storytelling involve oral interpretation, while public address encompasses extemporaneous speaking, impromptu speaking, informative speaking, oratory, declamation and sales speaking. At the discretion of the tournament director, one sixth grade only event in public address and one sixth grade only event in oral interpretation may be added at each tournament; original interpretation may be added at the spring tournament only. Descriptions of ten of these events are contained in Speech Activities [Speech Activities, Specific Individual Events: see events listed previously]. A description of declamation and the middle level impromptu speaking event, which has different rules and regulations from the senior high impromptu speaking event, follows.

DECLAMATION

Oratorical Declamation involves a student delivering a non-original oration written by another person.

Material – The speech must have been presented as a public address and published in print. Original oratory speeches used in forensics competition are not allowed. The original speaker's words may not be altered for this presentation with the exception that editing for time is permitted. A student may not reuse material presented at any competition from a previous academic year. The presentation should include an introduction that provides the title of the speech and the B and should include relevant information about the situation in which the speech was originally delivered. This event is an exercise in interpretation, not mimicry, so the contestant should avoid trying to reproduce the delivery style of the original speaker. Each speech is presented as a memorized selection without the use of physical objects, script, or costume.

Timing – The time limit for declamation in middle level events is four minutes to seven minutes.

Contestant Evaluation:

The speaker should develop the ability to convey another speaker's message in a sincere, honest, and realistic style. The mechanics of speech must be observed faithfully: poise, quality of voice, effectiveness and ease of gesture, emphasis, variety, and enunciation. In addition, the speaker should be judged on the ability to convey meaning to the audience. The speaker must be able to interest the listeners and to hold their attention. No particular style should be demanded of the speaker; rather, the contestant should be free to select and to develop a personal style and be judged according to the degree of perfection attained and the effectiveness in influencing the listeners. While the specifics of the speech and any style of delivery which the speaker adopts should be judged in light of the purpose of the speech, artificiality is to be discredited. This event is an interpretation, not an impersonation. The speaker should attempt to bring originality to the presentation and avoid mimicking the delivery style of the original or any other speaker.

MIDDLE LEVEL IMPROMPTU SPEAKING

A student will draw three topics immediately before the presentation. The contestant will speak on one of the three topics. The MIFA State Office develops topics for the middle level impromptu speaking contest. There are at least eight topics per round. Each is written from a central theme such as general news or community and school issues as a reference.

The topics are phrased as questions, which the contestant will answer in his or her presentation. Each judge is given a sealed envelope, usually as a part of the judge packet, which contains a master list of the topics and several separate slips of paper. Each slip of paper contains one question with a number, which is also found on the master list.

The judge opens the envelope in the presence of the contestants. The master list of topics is removed and the judge checks the envelope to make certain each topic is on an independent slip of paper. The topics are then returned to the envelope.

The contestants draw for speaking order. Following the sequence determined by the draw for speaking order, a contestant will select three topics from the envelope. One topic will be retained, while two of the three topics will be returned to the envelope for other contestants to select. The contestant will speak on the single topic, which he or she retains. No two contestants can speak on the same subject, so it is important that the contestant keep the slip of paper with his or her topic.

A contestant may devise an outline on a note card(s) or a sheet(s) of paper prior to his or her presentation. The only materials a contestant is allowed to use in the preparation time are writing implements, blank note cards, and/or blank paper. The contestant is unable to use or make reference to prepared notes, documents, publications, or printed material of any nature.

No more than one minute should expire between the time a contestant draws the three topics and the beginning of the presentation. The timing of the actual speech begins with the first word of the presentation.

The suggested time limit for Junior High/Middle School impromptu speaking is two minutes to four minutes. Presentations, which do not conform to the suggested time parameters, may be penalized at the discretion of the judge. Penalties are not mandatory.

BASIS OF DECISION

Concept of the Impromptu Speech: The purpose of this event is to allow the verbalization of individual opinions on topics of common knowledge. The emphasis is on the establishment of a personal position on the topic. Organization is important.

Adherence to the Topic: The speaker should endeavor to answer the question. Examples and illustrations from any area of knowledge may be used to highlight the theme of the presentation.

Action and Platform Conduct: The student composes the speech as it is delivered. A brief outline of the presentation may be made in the time period between the selection of the topic and the presentation of the speech, however, an outline is not mandatory. If a student wishes to speak without the use of notes, it may be done. The speaker should give the impression of genuineness without affectation in attitude, manner or appearance. There should be communicative audience contact.

Ballots used for each event generally follow the precise criteria itemized for each event under the heading, "Basis of Decision." For this particular division, some exceptions to the general rules and regulations in Speech Activities will be made.

TIMING

The suggested time limit for most events at the middle school level is distinct from high school events. Most middle school events have time parameters of four to seven minutes, including dramatic interpretation, poetry interpretation, prose interpretation, and storytelling in oral interpretation, while in public address events four to seven minutes are the time guidelines for informative speaking, oratory, declamation and sales speaking. The suggested time limit at middle school tournaments for duo interpretation is five to eight minutes, while multiple interpretation has time parameters of eight to twelve minutes. The suggested time limit for middle school extemporaneous speaking is three to six minutes.

Timing starts when the contestant begins the performance. Performance is defined as any spoken word, humming, singing, sound effect, physical movement, or pantomime initiated by the performer(s).

GENERAL TOURNAMENT PROCEDURES

In general, the procedures for the middle level tournaments follow the specifications in the prior section of this publication. Exceptions and clarifications unique to this school classification follow.

NUMBER OF ENTRANTS. No more than four students per school are allowed to enter each individual event. In addition, four duos and two multiple interpretation groups (3-8 students) per school can be entered. Because of the potential number of entrants per school per event, it is possible that students from the same school may be in the same sections of particular events.

Additions of contestants after the expiration of the registration deadline are unacceptable. Also, contestants are unable to alter event designations after the expiration of the registration deadline.

CONTEST MATERIAL. Students must use different readings or a different speech each semester. A contestant may use the same reading or speech at invitational and state level tournaments during a particular semester; however, if the contestant continues to participate in the same event in a subsequent semester, the contestant must use new material or a new speech. The one exception to the specification will be speeches and/or selections used at the Michigan Speech Coaches Incorporated spring tournament of the prior year, which may be presented again without sanction during the first semester of the current academic year. A student can not use

material that he or she presented at a middle school tournament when the individual participates in high school interscholastic speech activities.

No visuals are allowed in oratory in middle level tournaments. In storytelling there will be no rotation of selections between children's literature for any age and myths, legends, or folk and regional tales. At a middle level tournament, any material for children may be acceptable, including contemporary literature, myths, folk tales, or legends.

CRITIQUES. In all competitions, judges are to write critiques. These are to be returned to the tabulation room with the ballot at the end of each round.

FEES. The registration fee per school for each tournament is established annually by the Forensic Council. Additional fees per individual contestant are established as well. School withdrawals and cancellations within three (3) days of the date of the contest are subject to payment of the appropriate tournament fees [Speech Activities, Individual Events: General Tournament Procedures (Fees), for senior high specifications]. In addition, a drop fee for contestant will be assessed for withdrawals or cancellations within 24 hours of the scheduled time for the opening of registration. On the day of the tournament, the drop fee will be doubled.

If a school fails to adequately maintain a home room that it has been assigned for a tournament, a fee to clean the room will be assessed to the school. The condition of a home room will be reviewed prior to the conclusion of the awards assembly and notification will be given to the school of the assessment.

JUDGES. Each school is expected to provide one judge per each six contestants or portion thereof. Multiple interpretation entries count as two contestants. Thus, if a school has seven contestants, it is expected to provide two (2) judges. All judges must be high school graduates with knowledge of the various events or high school seniors with at least two years of contest experience in high school individual events. Judging assignments at state level tournaments will correspond, as nearly as possible, with the judge competence forms. At invitational tournaments, judge assignments may be random.

A school may hire judges to meet the per contestant ratio. Judging administrative fees are established by Forensic Council.

AWARDS. Trophies for first through sixth place in each event will be presented. Plaques may be awarded to up to six additional contestants (unless there are ties) who would qualify for an elimination round on the basis of judge scores at the tournament. An award (such as a medal) may be distributed at awards to recognize additional contestants, allowing for 24 total entries to receive recognition (plus all ties), in each event with more than 50 entries. Only one trophy, plaque, or medal will be awarded for a multiple interpretation group.

At the discretion of the tournament director additional awards may be provided. Notification of the presentation of any additional awards will be made in the tournament invitation. Participation certificates will be made available online for schools to print and distribute to their contestants, if they choose.