



Montana High School Association

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September 2020

**TO: MHSA MEMBER SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS
MHSA SPEECH AND DRAMA COACHES**

FROM: SCOTT WILSON, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

RE: UPCOMING 2020-2021 SEASON

The MHSA Executive Board voted to postpone the start of the speech, debate, and drama season to December 1st. The state tournament dates will remain the same, January 29-30, 2021. The goal of the MHSA and the MHSA Board is to have a competition season for speech and drama, while keeping the coaches, competitors and tournament volunteers as safe as possible. Below is the rationale for the Board decision:

- Current MHSA guidelines do not allow for multi-school regular season in-person tournaments for indoor sports or activities. The guidelines only allow for head to head competition. These same guidelines have led to the cancellation of the AIM Higher workshops scheduled this fall and winter.
- The delay of the start date will give schools a chance to plan for in-person tournaments. If in-person tournaments are allowed, there will be restrictions on the number of teams and/or competitors. Plans would have to be approved by the local county health department and the MHSA.
- The delay of the start date will give schools time to begin planning for virtual tournaments. COVID-19 cases continue to reach high levels in Montana. In order to guarantee a season, coaches should become familiar with virtual tournament platforms. Currently, I am looking at two possible platforms for the season: NSDA-Tabroom and the NFHS Network. I will be sending out platform training webinars after my meeting with the NFHS later this week.
- The delay will allow time for a new competition calendar to be created. Schools that traditionally host tournaments may not be able to host this season or may choose not to host depending on the format.
- The Board will make a decision at a later date to determine if the 2020-2021 season will be either in-person tournaments and/or virtual tournaments. This decision will be made by evaluating various COVID-19 factors during the next few weeks.
- All classifications will have the same season calendar. The shortened season will allow Classes A and B/C five (5) weeks of regular season competition, a divisional tournament and a state tournament. Class AA will be allowed six (6) weeks of regular season competition and a state tournament. Extending the season into February and March creates conflicts for hosting post season tournaments.

Out of season guidelines for practice must be followed until December 1st. The Forensics handbook will be only available electronically at this time and will be sent out the week of October 5th.

The Executive Board will make their final decision in the best interest of students and coaches from across the state.