Westside Speech & Debate Team Handbook
Top Ten Reasons to Join!!!

1. Become part of a nationally recognized student organization – great for college applications!

2. Learn to communicate ideas effectively.

3. Develop effective writing skills demanded by today’s world.

4. Travel to interesting places to compete.

5. Meet other people with similar interests from all around the country.

6. Share your ideas in an open and friendly environment.

7. Student driven….Kool aid is always available.

8. Develop leadership skills to help Mr. Martin find the keys.

9. Participate in events that run the gamut from debate, student congress, to theatre even when you sub for Martha in poetry without a little black binder.

10. It’s an unforgettable fun experience!
General Description
The Westside Forensics Team offers students an opportunity to practice and compete in debate, speech, and interpretative events.

The Westside Forensics Team is an affiliate member school with the National Forensics League (NFL). Students who distinguish themselves in forensics competition are eligible to join NFL. Membership in NFL provides many opportunities: sound speech training, recognition for forensic achievement, membership that is recognized by colleges and universities, and the right to wear NFL insignia.

The Forensics Team will also compete in Texas Forensics Association (TFA), the NCFL, and University Interscholastic League (UIL) tournaments. Students will attend invitational tournaments throughout the year leading up to the district and state meets.

Team Membership Requirements
All students are welcome to join the Forensics Team and participate in tournaments and practices. No audition is required. Once a student has represented Westside at three tournaments he/she is considered a full member of the team. Members may list “debate team” as an activity on applications and may list Mr. Martin as a reference.

Membership in the National Forensics League is based on a student’s win/loss record and ranking in each round of an event, not the number of tournaments attended. Once a student has attained membership with NFL, that honor may be listed on résumés and applications.

Team Officers for 2007 - 2008:

President – MS/HS Tournament Director, Corporate Funding, Service Projects, Recruiting – GRACE CHEN

Vice-Presidents – Assistant MS/HS Tournament Director, Public Relations/Community Involvement – MIKE YATES and SABRINA RENA

Secretary – NFL Point Recording, Ballot Files, Tournament Entry Forms – XAVIER ENSLEY
Social Chair – Banquet, Summer “Get-to-know-you”, Social Activities
– JAZSMIN DOUGLAS

Historians – Records tournament results, events, photography - LIUNA FEKRAVAR

Donut Distributor - LUIS REYNA

Requirements to run for an office for the next school year will be determined by the sponsor, Mr. Martin and/or the officers of the current school year.

Practice/Team Meetings
Because the majority of team members are in a debate class, there is no “official” team practice each week. However, those individuals who need extra help and those members who are not in a debate class will be working with Mr. Martin before or after school on an appointment basis. Before any student will be allowed to represent Westside High School in competition, he/she MUST present their material to Mr. Martin or an approved coach, either in class or before/after school. Doing this the morning of the tournament doesn’t count! If a student has not completed this task, then he/she will not be allowed to compete, and will be responsible for drop fees.

Eligibility/Grades
Forensics is an extracurricular activity and the UIL “no pass – no play” eligibility rules will apply. Because competition is central to the team’s learning and success, it is essential that all students maintain academic eligibility while on the Forensics Team.

If a student fails one or more courses on a report card, he or she will be placed on probation. While on probation, students are not considered “members in good standing” for the purpose of team honors or awards. Students who have been on probation for six weeks or longer may be asked to leave the team.

A student who is technically eligible according to UIL rules, but who is failing one or more AP level courses will be allowed to compete at one tournament while on probation. For the remainder of the season this student must be passing all classes in order to compete.

2007-2008 Schedule
This tentative schedule has been selected to offer the entire team a challenging and rewarding level of competition. No student may attend other tournaments unless officially sponsored by the Westside Forensics Team. Students are advised to keep up with their personal calendars and schedules in order to plan time for attending the required number of tournaments. Every effort will be made to stay with the schedule for this year; however, changes can and will be made due to conflicts that may arise.
***As of this printing, here are the tournaments we will attend this year.

**Fall 2007**

Katy Taylor HS
Memorial HS
**HOST: UIL Fall Tourny**
University of Houston or Elsik HS
Alief Hastings HS
Lamar Consolidated
**HOST: WHS TFA Invitational**
Cinco Ranch HS
Scarborough
Cy Ridge or Bay City
Spring Woods
Richard King (Corpus Christi)

September 21-22
September 28 – 29
**October 5 - 6**
October 12-13
October 19 - 20
October 26 - 27
**November 2 - 3**
November 9 – 10
November 16 – 17
Nov. 30 – Dec. 1
December 7 – 8
December 14 - 15

**Spring 2008**

Westfield
Katy or Foster
**HOST: WHS Middle School Tournament!!!!**
Eisnehower
Alief Taylor HS
Lamar
HARVARD

January 4- 5
January 11 - 12
**January 18 - 19**
January 25 - 26
February 1 - 2
February 8 -9
February 13 - 17

UIL District
UIL Regional
UIL State
TFA State
NFL National Qualifying Congress
NFL National Qualifying Tournament
CFL Qualifying
NFL Nats in Las Vegas
CFL Nats in Wisconsin

TBA
TBA
TBA
Feb/March(TBA)
April (TBA)
April (TBA)
April (TBA)
Summer
Memorial Day Weekend

***This schedule is subject to change as the competition year progresses and more is known about the levels of competition etc. We will, however, stick as close to this as possible.***
**Required Tournaments**

Students enrolled in the Debate I class are required to attend a minimum of three tournaments a semester. Students enrolled in the Debate II, III class are required to attend a minimum of four tournaments a semester. Students unable to meet this minimum should consider participation in forensics as a club activity and drop the class.

Students who wish to compete only occasionally may join the team without enrolling in the class. However, because LD and CX debate require so much research and preparation any students interested in these events are strongly encouraged to take the class.

**Tournament Sign Up**

Students are responsible for signing themselves up for competition. All sign up information, including deadlines and schedules, will be posted in Mr. Martin’s room, E232. Sign up will be taken in order if the number of entries is limited.

Once the sign up deadline has passed, it may be impossible to add additional competitors or events.

By signing up for a tournament, each student has made a commitment to the team that must be honored. Students who do not honor their commitments will have to pay drop fees to the host school, plus three times the WHS entry fee per event. Students also may be asked to leave the team.

**Drop Fees**

Schools hosting tournaments charge fees to penalize schools who drop competitors at the last minute. Competitors are “dropped” when they fail to compete in an event for which they were registered.

The fees equal three times the original registration fees (a minimum of $30.00 per event). The Westside Wolves Forensics team WILL NOT PAY the drop fees for students who do not compete at the tournaments for which they have signed up. Students are responsible for their own drop fees and must pay them to the team before attending another tournament.

When the hosting school allows drops before a given date without penalty, students will be allowed to drop before this date without penalty.

**Transportation**

In order to maintain order and secure safe transportation for all students, the Westside Wolves Forensics team will travel by school bus or van whenever possible. Due to financial constraints, we will not be able to take a bus if fewer than 15 students compete. If we do not take a school bus or a school van, and
a rental van is not affordable or available, arrangements will be made to travel in private cars and all parents and students will be notified in advance. All students must travel with the team and are not allowed to make their own transportation arrangements.

**Tournament Dress Requirements**

**During Competition**
Because one aspect of a speaker’s credibility is based on his or her appearance, it is important for students to dress appropriately for competition. Often students involved in debate and speaking events will wear business suits or similar attire. Those who compete in acting events are a little less formal, but gentlemen wear slacks and dress shirts while ladies wear dresses or skirts. **Please make sure that all garments are ironed!!!!!**

All members of the Westside Wolves Forensics team are expected to dress in proper attire for competition. This means guys must wear dress pants or pressed khakis and a button down shirt. Ties and shaving that morning are both strongly recommended. Girls must wear a dress, skirt, or slacks. Blouses must be professional and tasteful. Dress shoes are recommended for everyone. No flip flops!!!

The following are unacceptable and will not be permitted:
- Shorts, jeans, denim pants, sweatpants, warm-up suits
- T-shirts, halter tops, tank tops (unless worn under a jacket).
- Flip-flops, shower shoes, sandals, athletic shoes.
- Clothing which is tight or revealing.

Questions regarding appropriate clothing should be addressed at least one week prior to competition. Any team member not meeting the dress requirements will not be allowed to board the bus/van and will be sent back to class or home. This student will also be responsible for drop fees.

**At Competition, but not competing**
Once eliminated from competition, students may change into casual clothes that meet the Westside High School dress code standards. When the team has purchased a t-shirt or polo shirt, this needs to be worn with pants or shorts.

**Tournament Conduct**
All students on the forensics team are expected to conduct themselves in a mature and respectful manner. Of course, all of the elements listed in the Westside High School and the HISD Student Code of Conduct apply to forensic team members while attending a speech and debate tournament. In addition, team members must follow the rules of the schools we visit.

A few specific rules of conduct for tournaments include:
- Students may not leave campus unless accompanied by a sponsor.
- Competitors must remain within the tournament area of campus (do not wander off or explore – especially outside the building).
- No public display of affection. Anything beyond handholding is not appropriate.
- Team members must check in with coaches and team members throughout the day. No one should be “missing” for any period of time.

Inappropriate conduct or violation of any of these rules may result in immediate suspension from the forensics team and transfer from the debate class. Further disciplinary action at Westside High School may also be taken.

**Cellular Phones/Pages**

Although team members are subject to the policies of Westside High School and HISD while on the Westside High School campus, forensic team members are allowed to have cell phones and pagers at speech tournaments. All devices must be turned off during rounds of competition, but they may be used in the cafeteria and on the bus/van.

**Leaving Tournaments Early**

There will be times when a majority of students have been eliminated from competition before the final rounds. However, these eliminated team members have an obligation to support other team members still competing. Students who have been eliminated from competition should also observe those students who have advanced to finals in order to improve their own performance. In other words, students are not “done” when they are eliminated from competition.

On rare occasion it may be appropriate for one or more students to leave the tournament prior to the awards ceremony. This decision will be made by Mr. Martin at the tournament and should not be something students rely on when making other plans. If a student knows he or she may need to leave early, permission must be given by Mr. Martin prior to signing up for that tournament.

Should Mr. Martin allow a student to leave, he or she may only leave if a parent or guardian personally checks him or her out with a Westside High School coach or sponsor. Leaving a tournament without permission may result in suspension from the team for the remainder of the school year, as well as disciplinary action at Westside High School.

**Honor Code**

The Westside Wolves Forensics team proudly believes it is far better to lose with honor than win without it. In order to maintain team integrity and a stellar image in the forensics community, all team members are required to uphold a strict code of honor. This code prohibits the following:
- plagiarism/failure to accurately cite borrowed ideas or words
- fabrication of sources or evidence
- re-using material or speeches used in prior years
- purposefully losing through poor performance or conceding a round
- violation of event rules

**Judges**

Judging speech and debate is subjective; there is no right or wrong decision. There will be times when a judge’s decision seems to go against the opinions of all the other people who observe a round; however, the judge’s decisions are always final.

No team member may approach a judge after a round and question a decision. Team members are also required to keep their complaints regarding judges, other coaches, and other competitors private until we are on the bus/van. We will continue to meet these same people throughout the year and negative comments overheard at one tournament may hurt us later.

**Tournament Etiquette**

These are guidelines that should be followed at every tournament.

- Students should never enter the tab room or coaches’ lounge
- Limit noise made in the hallways
- Never complain aloud (until we have left the tournament)
- Politely respond to judges, but don’t over do it
- Do not argue with Ms. Elliott or sponsors (we can discuss issues at a later time)
- Bring all problems, questions, or concerns to officers or coaches promptly

**Student Activity Fees**

Forensics competition is costly. We pay an average of $15.00 per event for each student to compete at a single tournament. In addition, our transportation costs for a weekend often exceed $1,000.00. Westside High School might pay for some of these costs, but each student is required to pay an activity fee to help defer costs.

**For the 2007-2008 season, each student must pay a $100.00 activity fee, which is due by September 30, 2007.** (I will not prevent a child from participating because of non payment. However, any students who can not or do not pay this fee will be asked to double up on their fund raising activities to make up for the fee. This money is crucial to our ability to survive financially so it has to be worked out with Mr. Martin.)

Students who are unable to pay the entire activity fee should contact Ms. Elliott and arrangements will be made to allow every interested student to compete.
**Fund Raising**
Our major fundraisers will be the HISD UIL tournament in October, the TFA Qualifier in November, and the Westside Wolves Forensics Middle School Tournament, in January. All team members are required to help with this tournament. Please be prepared to stay after school until at least 5:00 each day the week before the tournament.

In addition, the team may also conduct a candy sale and other fundraisers as needed. All team members are expected to participate in these projects. Students who do not wish to participate in a fundraiser have the option of contributing an amount equal to the profits expected in place of participation.

**Honor Chords**
Students who achieve a certain degree with the National Forensic League (500 points) may wear the ruby and silver entwined honor chords of the NFL at graduation.

**Letter Jackets**
To letter in forensics, students must demonstrate dedication and achievement in the field of competitive speech and debate. Each student must meet one of the following in order to receive a letter jacket:

- earn 300 points on record with the National Forensic League;
- demonstrate dedication to the team by meeting all of the following:
  - working diligently both Friday and Saturday (all day) at our middle school and/or high school tournament; AND
  - remaining a member in good standing for four semesters; AND
  - compete in a minimum of 8 tournaments during the current school year; AND
  - represent Westside High School at either UIL District or NFL Congress, or NFL District. (*must be selected to fill one of the limited entry spots*)

**Trophies**
All trophies, medals, plaques, and other awards won at tournaments are property of Westside High School. At the end of the school year, trophies won at invitational tournaments will be awarded to students. The only trophies that will not be returned to their winners are those trophies won at UIL, TFA, or NFL state or national tournaments; these trophies will be permanently on display at school. Students who have reached this level of achievement may wish to have a copy of the trophy created and the team will be sure that it takes care of that for anyone who wishes to do that.
Out of Town Tournaments

Selection of Students
The number of students who can compete in out of town tournaments is limited. Students will be selected to represent our team according to the following criteria:
- achievement and ability demonstrated that season;
- conduct and reliability;
- seniors first, followed by those who have been with the team the longest.

Cost
Because out of town travel includes the additional costs of hotel, food, and possible air fare, each student will be expected to pay a portion of the cost. Although costs will vary, students should be expected to pay the following:
- all food expenses (we will eat as inexpensively as possible);
- $25.00-$35.00 per night for a hotel;
- $25.00-$50.00 for transportation.

Transportation
Our transportation outside of the Houston area will be based on cost, safety, and convenience. We may be forced to use a private car, rental van, school bus or van, or airplane. Details will be available for each trip.

Hotels
Students will stay four to a room while at hotels. The phones, pay-per-view, snack bar, and other extras will be turned off or deemed unavailable for the duration of our stay. Students will be allowed to use payphones or the phone in the coach’s room to contact family.

Traveling Rules
Curfews and lights-out will be enforced. Students may not leave the hotel after curfew and all students must be in their own rooms with no guests at lights-out. Students will remain in their rooms from lights-out until the morning wake-up call. Students are free to socialize when not competing and the same standards of conduct apply as if we were competing in our local area. No student may go anywhere alone and team members are encouraged to remain in groups of three or more. If students of the opposite sex choose to hang out at the hotel together, at least three people must be present.

Any violation of team rules will result in suspension from the team and parents are expected to arrange for immediate transportation home. Further disciplinary action at Westside High School may also be taken.
Violations of Team Rules/Consequences
Violations of team rules may result in some or all of the following:
- loss of grade or assignment credit;
- team probation/suspension from future tournaments;
- removal from debate class;
- complete removal from the team.

Parent, student, and/or teacher conferences will be requested if team rules are violated.

Contact Numbers
For general questions or issues, Mr. Martin can be reached by phone at school – 281-920-8000 x 6032, by cell phone at 832-646-1800, or via e-mail at cmarti15@houstonisd.org.

On tournament weekends, please call Mr. Martin’s cell phone – 832-646-1800. Parents, please call if there is an emergency only – not just to find out how your student is doing.
Acknowledgement

Please return this acknowledgement to Mr. Martin as soon as possible. Students **WILL NOT TRAVEL** until this form has been completed and returned to school.

I have read and understood the policies of the Westside Wolves Forensics team. I agree to follow the policies of the team and do my best to uphold the honor code and represent Westside High School with dignity.

I understand that students may be removed from both the team and the class for failure to follow these guidelines.

This handbook shall serve as a warning. No additional warnings are necessary before a student may be removed from both the class and the team for the following:

- defiance or failure to follow specific instructions given at a tournament;
- inappropriate conduct at a tournament;
- violation of the honor code and/or cheating.

______________________________
Parent Signature

______________________________
Student Signature

Please also provide the following information:

Home Phone Number: ________________________________

Mother’s Day Time Phone: ________________________________

Father’s Day Time Phone: ________________________________

Additional Parent Phone/Cell Phone: ________________________________

Student’s Home Phone (if separate line): ________________________________

Student’s Cell Phone: ________________________________

Home Mailing Address:

Emergency Contact (if parent is unreachable):

Additional Information: (medical concerns, custody issues, etc. USE BACK):

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