



FORENSICS	VALENTINES	MACARONI & CHEESE	SPEAKING	ACTING
INTERPRETATION	WINTER	FREE LUNCH	STUDENTS	EAU CLAIRE
AWARDS	FRIENDS	LIVE & NOT VIRTUAL	FUN	ENTHUSIASM

Dear Coach,

We are excited to invite you and your students to celebrate Valentine's Day by participating in the nineteenth annual *Steve Sparks Memorial Forensics Tournament* at Eau Claire North High School on Saturday, February 14, 2026. This tournament is both WFCAs and WISDAA friendly, and students may double or triple enter. The Valentine's theme reflects our love for our students, the activity of forensics, and all our dear friends involved and especially for the memory of Steve Sparks.

The tournament will have 3 rounds plus a final round. There will be awards for all finalists and sweepstakes awards for the top teams. We also offer the following additional awards:

Best Double-Entry: Top 3 (based on prelim totals)

Best Novice Entry: Top 3 (based on prelim totals – best category if double entered)

FREE LUNCH! Continuing this year: Lunch will be included in the registration fees. We are bringing back the macaroni and cheese and other food for all students, judges, coaches, and bus drivers.

ENTRY FEE WAIVER AVAILABLE We want as many participants as possible. If your budget this year does not have any provisions for invitational tournaments, just let us know and we will waive the entry fees. Schools will still be required to provide 1 judge per 5 entries or pay the hired judge fee.

The entry fee will be \$10 per individual entry and \$14 per group. Please bring one judge for every 5 entries with a maximum of 5 affiliated (non-clean) judges per school. Hired judges will be available for \$120.

Registration will be through <https://www.speechwire.com/c-info.php?tournid=20930>

For our planning, we would like your initial registration entered in SpeechWire by Sunday, February 8. However, you can revise your entries on SpeechWire through Wednesday Feb. 11 5:00 PM. Checks are payable to: *North High School*.

Feel free to contact us if you have questions.

Cole Pankratz
cpankratz@ecasd.us

Scott Peterson
608-345-4556
scott.forensics@gmail.com

Lydia Jensen
Bethany Thibou

Special notes for 2026

Radio Announcing: Competitors may bring their own devices for Radio preparation, and they may use the devices in the performance room for reading the script. Paper copies of the source packet will also be available.

Extemporaneous Speaking and Radio Announcing Internet use: Competitors in Extemporaneous Speaking and Radio Announcing may utilize the internet during their preparation for research but not for communicating with people or accessing pre-written speeches or outlines.

Online ballots: All judges will be required to bring a Wi-Fi enabled portable device for receiving the judging schedule, writing critiques, and submitting ranks.

Registration limitations:

- Unlimited number of entries are allowed in each category.
- Double or triple entries *are* allowed (students may compete in multiple events).
- Please use SpeechWire's tools to designate which of your judges are *clean* (have no school or team affiliation other than you hiring them to judge) versus *dirty* (coaches or others close to your team). This will give us more options for scheduling judges. Each school may bring a MAXIMUM of 5* dirty judges; schools with more than 25 entries will be required to fulfill their judging quota by bringing clean judges or hiring clean judges from us. If you have extra *clean* judges, you may contact us and we may hire them.

Remember:

- For our planning, we would like to have your initial registration (rough estimate) entered in SpeechWire by Sunday, February 8. However, you can revise your entries on SpeechWire through Wednesday Feb 11 at 5:00 PM
- For the Best Novice Award, indicate which of your students are in their first year competing at the high school level.

Important:

Please keep your SpeechWire entries updated as soon as you know about changes so that we can best plan for the tournament rooms and judging needs. One student drop might mean an entire section and judge slot can be eliminated.

Tournament day drops MUST be called in on Saturday morning before your team departs for North. If you have valuable information about which students are missing that morning, we need to know prior to your arrival so that the schedules can be adjusted to balance round sizes and make the tournament run smoothly. REPORT ANY KNOWN CHANGES to 608 345-4556.

Finally, if your team has specific restrictions or needs, please let us know and we can work best to accommodate. We want the best tournament experience possible for all in attendance.

Tournament Guidelines / Category Rules

We welcome WFCAs and WISDAAs schools, and students may perform for the category rules for which they have prepared. To facilitate the slight differences in rules we have a basic overall philosophy: rules from either organization will be honored. If an element of a performance is allowed in either WFCAs or WISDAAs, it will be allowed at this tournament.

The blended rules are available here:

https://www2.wfcaforensics.org/images/pdf/WFCA-WISDAA_Blended_Category_Rules_2025-26.pdf

Demonstration Speaking / Expository Speaking / Informative Speaking

WFCAs and WISDAAs have recently made changes regarding these categories, and the rules are similar. These are the guidelines for our tournament:

- **Demonstration Speaking** is no longer a category, but speeches of that style may be performed in the revised Informative Speaking.
- **Expository Speaking** has been added as a category, with a 5 minute time limit and no visual aids permitted. Notes are permitted and unrestricted.
- **Informative Speaking** has been changed from 6 minutes to 10 minutes, visual aids may be used or worn, and the Criteria for Evaluation subpoints were rewritten. Notes are permitted and unrestricted. Optionally, an entry may have two presenters. This will count as a single entry (not a group category) for registration fees.

Some other examples of blending the rules include:

1. Group Interpretive Reading and Play Acting will have 12 minute time limits.
2. One 4x6 note card will be permitted in Oratory. For other categories that allow notes, they will have no specific limits, formats, or dimensions.
3. There will be no separate Public Address event, but students in Public Address can be entered in Oratory, and the judges will be alerted to this.
4. Chairs, etc. MAY be used in Solo and Group Interp. Optional speaker's / reader's stand may be used in the categories involving scripts or notes.

*For the WFCAs rules, go to <https://wfcaforensics.org>

*For the WISDAAs rules, go to <https://wisdaa.org>

Tournament Schedule for February 14

The North High School main parking lot and entry doors are on the north side of the building facing Piedmont Road. Look for the giant husky dog on the roof.

Time	Event
5:00 / as soon as possible	Report drops or changes to Scott Peterson 608-345-4556
7:45 - 8:15	Registration in Foyer under Husky
8:30	General Meeting in Auditorium for all judges Radio and Extemp draw in The Forum room 605
9:00	Round One
10:15	Round Two
11:30	Round Three
After a brief break for lunch, the approximate times are:	
1:15	Posting of Results in Commons
1:30	Final Rounds
3:00	Awards in the Auditorium

A word about Steve Sparks . . .

Steve was our assistant coach and an alumnus of the North High School Forensics program. Steve died unexpectedly on August 2, 2007, due to a pulmonary embolism at the age of 26. He had been planning to attend law school.

He came in every day, Monday through Friday, for seven months out of the year to coach for us. For three years, he was a volunteer – we paid him almost nothing. He was the gentle giant who ran our Radio and Extemp draw. He also judged for us and traveled with us on all of our trips.

It is in honor of our dear friend, mentor, coach, and colleague that we have decided to name our tournament the Steve Sparks Memorial Forensics Tournament. If you knew Steve at all, then you know what we have lost and you understand how lost we are without him.

