

February 4, 2013

To: Kelly O'Donnell, Sarah Updegraff, Mr. Jurens, and NHHS School Board  
Re: Individual Speech Assistant Coach

I have coached individual speech for 16 years at NHHS. In that time, it has been my honor to coach and supervise many talented students. Many of these students participated not only at the district and state level but went on to be honored at the All-State Festival.

Individual speech allows students to select and participate in any of 13 different categories. In my time at NHHS, I have been pleased to see the interest in individual speech competition grow, and as a result, the number of participants. The greatest number of participants I had in any one year, previous to 2009, was 13.

The number of participating students for the 2011 individual speech season stood at a record number of 26 students. Last year's 2012 season was again successful, with 26 entries. This year stands at a record 32 entries! I am thrilled with the opportunity to work with many talented and enthusiastic students, but I am also realistic.

Coaching individual speech is very different from coaching a group event. Each student has their own selection, and each student demands individual floor time, critique and feedback, as well as assistance in selecting appropriate materials for each category. During each practice, on average, each student receives a minimum of 15 minutes of direct instruction. Providing this for 32 entries would require more than 7 hours of practice each day.

Practices for individual speech can not begin in full capacity until after large group state contest, allowing only three weeks of practice time before our district contest. Many of the students are also involved in athletics, dance, and cheerleading. Given the number of students involved, scheduling practices while encouraging participation in a variety of extracurricular activities can be quite challenging. Because of the limited amount of time to prepare for contest, it is not in the best interest of those involved to limit their practice time to twice a week, simply due to the number of participants. However, practicing each of 32 entries on a daily basis becomes overwhelmingly time-consuming for only one coach.

You respected my rationale for an assistant speech coach during the 2012 season, and it was very beneficial to our students, as we were thrilled to have five students selected for All-State participation. I am requesting an assistant coach for the 2013 season. This would again allow for the most effective and productive use of student and coaching time.

Sincerely,

  
Penny Perkins

Individual speech coach