



SWIFT

September 2026

SPEECH WORKERS OF IOWA FEATURE THEMSELVES



IHSSA + YOU

HELLO! HELLO!



What's in this issue?

- **COACHES CONVENTION**
- **MEMBERSHIP DUES**
- **RIGGLEMAN COACH AWARD**
- **JUDGE SPOTLIGHT**
- **NFHS LEARN COURSES**
- **ADMINISTRATOR AWARD**
- **CONTEST SITES**
- **RISE STUDENT ENSEMBLE**
- **THE GREEN ROOM**
- **+ MORE!**

"The philosophy of the IHSSA is built upon the belief that no form of activity is any more important than that of learning to communicate effectively."

About the IHSSA

The IHSSA philosophy is built upon the belief that no form of activity is any more important than that of learning to communicate effectively. The Iowa Interscholastic Speech Association was organized in November 1943. It was an outgrowth of a desire to expand the splendid work the Iowa High School Declamatory Association had done since 1887. Today, we are the Iowa High School Speech Association + YOU!



Stacy Hansen Executive Director

Stacy began her IHSSA journey as a student at Exira High School. She received her BA in Speech/Theatre/English Education from ISU and her MA in Directing from Chicago's College of Performing Arts at Roosevelt University. She taught at Clinton High School and then at West Des Moines Valley for a total of 30 years. In 2022, she began her role as the IHSSA Executive Director. Derek, her husband, is an orchestra director. They are joined by two children: Lincoln and Scout.

Pam Wymer Executive Assistant

Pam is a farmer's daughter from Collins, Iowa. Proud mom of son J.R. and daughter Lacia AND a very proud Grandma! Valley High School was Pam's home for 40 years where she served as the Counseling Secretary for 12 years and Assistant to the Principal for 16 years. Pam also was a ticket seller for all of the athletic events.



A Lil' Acorn

My husband , Derek (a cyclist/ teacher), assured me, “You WILL *remember* exactly what to do.”



So when I hopped on a bike this summer, my apprehension was paused. *Just a little.* It had been 10, maybe 15...OK, over 20 years since I had actually been on a real bike ride. My heart raced. My hands thick with goopy sweat. My stomach in pretzel knots.

What made this ride particularly nerve-racking? It was an e-bike! I had imagined it might “feel” like a riding a moped, a motorcycle. A horse. A chariot of fire. My previous experiences with all of those ‘creatures’ had ended up in scraped legs and a bruised ego years earlier. So yeah. I was nervous. This was new learning for me.

About halfway through the ride, that hill stood in front of us. There was no way I was going to make it up that hill without help from the e-bike’s battery. The world slowed down momentarily. I shifted from Level 1 all the way up up up to Level 3 with Derek’s encouragement.

And then something happened. My knees stopped screaming. My grip on the handle bars loosened. I found myself traveling at 20 mph up that hill! It was glorious! Magical! “I GOT THIS!” I yelled to everyone on the bike path and to the whole world! “I GOT THIS!”



As you begin your classes, your rehearsals, your auditions and your season, *remember* your students are *remembering*, too. They may walk into your classroom wondering if they still know what to do and how to pedal. They may be nervous about speaking in front of others. Everything may feel very new. They may need a little extra support to get up that hill.

And... yes, you may feel some of that nervousness, too. Trust the process. Trust what you have taught them last year. Trust yourself.

First time on an e-bike? Call me if you’d like to go on a ride. I am right beside you. IN FACT, there’s a whole FAMILY of speech coaches ready to assist and help you shift!

Here’s to a new season of learning, growing, laughing, trying, failing, trying again, and eventually finding yourself flying up that hill at 20 mph!



Welcome back! LET’S RIDE!
Stacy S. Hansen, IHSSA Executive Director

ISSA + YOU



cracking the code



COACHES CONVENTION
OCTOBER 9-10, 2026
GATEWAY HOTEL, AMES



cracking the code

The big red phone on the desk begins to ring urgently. Underneath, a jazzy, mysterious soundtrack plays. You pick up the phone. The voice on the other end says one thing, "Speech season is coming. Are you ready?" Click.

Of course you are! You climb into your Lamborghini dressed in your coolest clothes. Destination? The Gateway Hotel in Ames. The date? October 9 and 10. The mission? Join your fellow speech agents in IHSSA + YOU: Cracking the Code.

Whether you are a seasoned agent with decades of missions and countless poetry programs under your belt or a rookie just learning to navigate this tricky, box and chair-filled world, there is something for YOU. Together with your fellow speech coaches, you will crack the speech code of contest, coaching, categories, and collaboration. As you begin to plan your mission for the season ahead, IHSSA agents will share the wisdom needed to build your team into the best they can be.

Explore the "special operations" worlds of Large Group, IE's, and Debate! Special highlights will include a well-informed, thrill-seeking keynote speaker (and former IHSSA student herself), the Hall of Fame banquet featuring agents who have loved to tell the tale, and the sumptuous "Dessert Buffet Safe Room" provided by the Southeast District Agents. In addition, be prepared to follow the lead of all the latest tools and gadgets to "Crack the Code" of Short Film and the new IE category of Videocasting.

When you return from the weekend to take up your missions with Iowa's speech students, you can be confident that you will have the tools you need and the support from all fellow agents to "Crack the Code!"

IHSSA CONVENTION COMMITTEE

Robin & Darrin Crow (Cedar Valley Christian)

Wendy Buseman & Emileigh Eilderts (Hampton-Dumont-CAL)

Lindey Krug (Fort Dodge)

Marissa Kuiken (Waukee Northwest)

IHSSA 54TH ANNUAL SPEECH COACHES CONVENTION

OCTOBER 9-10, 2026

GATEWAY HOTEL, 2100 GREEN HILLS DRIVE, AMES, IA

800.367.2637/515.292.8600

WWW.GATEWAYAMES.COM

CONVENTION

REGISTRATION:

ALL CONVENTION
REGISTRATION IS
ONLINE AT

WWW.IHSSA.ORG.

LINK: WWW.IHSSA.ORG/DEFAULT.ASPX

HOTEL

REGISTRATION:

DOUBLE/KING: \$149

EXECUTIVE KING: \$149

JR. SUITE: \$149

OR CALL: 515.292.8600.

REFERENCE IHSSA CONVENTION

**DUE: SEPTEMBER 17! AFTER
SEPTEMBER 17, THESE ROOMS
WILL BE RELEASED! RESERVE
YOUR ROOM EARLY!**

**ONLINE [GATEWAY HOTEL](http://GATEWAYHOTEL)
RESERVATIONS LINK HERE**

5 YEARS OF LESS?

IF YOU ARE COACH OF 5 YEARS
OR LESS, PLEASE CHECK THE
IHSSA WEB SITE FOR A
POSSIBLE FREE CONVENTION
REGISTRATION! INFO
ALSO IN THIS ISSUE
OF SWIFT! DUE: OCT.1

WOW!

3 GRADUATE CREDIT HOURS!

YOU WILL BE ABLE TO EARN 3
GRADUATE CREDIT HOURS AT
THE CONVENTION. LOOK FOR
MORE INFO IN THIS SWIFT AND
ONLINE AT WWW.IHSSA.ORG

IHSSA + YOU

cracking the code

**COACHES CONVENTION
OCTOBER 9-10, 2026
GATEWAY HOTEL, AMES**

SCHEDULE LINK:

FRIDAY, OCT. 9

PRE-CONVENTION: 9:30 AM

TICKETED LUNCH: 11:15 AM

KEYNOTE: 12:15 PM

SESSIONS: 1:15 PM

DISTRICT MEETINGS: 4:30 PM

FORMAL HALL OF FAME

DINNER: 6:30 PM

BE SURE TO TELL GATEWAY HOTEL YOU ARE
ATTENDING THE IHSSA CONVENTION.
GATEWAY WILL HOLD ROOMS UNTIL SEPT. 17.
THEN, ALL ROOMS WILL BE OPEN TO THE
PUBLIC. RESERVE YOUR ROOMS EARLY.

COST:

\$150

LUNCH ADD ON:

\$25

HALL OF FAME
DINNER IS A TIME
TO
DRESS UP A BIT.
WE SUGGEST
BUSINESS ATTIRE

SCHEDULE LINK:

SATURDAY, OCT.10

BREAKFAST: 7:30 AM

SWIFT SESSIONS: 9:00 AM

SESSIONS: 10:00

JUDGE

CERTIFICATION CLINIC:

12:30 PM

IHSSA COACHES CONVENTION HOTEL INFORMATION

GATEWAY HOTEL

REGISTRATION

DOUBLE/KING: \$149

EXECUTIVE KING: \$149

CALL: 515.292.8600.

**REFERENCE IHSSA
CONVENTION**

**DUE: SEPTEMBER 17! AFTER
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WILL BE RELEASED! RESERVE
YOUR ROOM EARLY!**

**ONLINE GATEWAY HOTEL
RESERVATION LINK:
[GATEWAY LINK](#)**

**BE SURE TO TELL
GATEWAY HOTEL
YOU ARE
ATTENDING THE
IHSSA
CONVENTION.
GATEWAY WILL
HOLD ROOMS UNTIL
SEPT. 17**

**THEN, ALL ROOMS
WILL BE OPEN TO
THE PUBLIC.
RESERVE YOUR
ROOMS EARLY.**

IHSSA + YOU



cracking
the
code



**COACHES CONVENTION
OCTOBER 9-10, 2026
GATEWAY HOTEL, AMES**

OVERFLOW HOTELS

SPARK BY HILTON AMES: \$169

2609 UNIVERSITY BLVD
AMES, IOWA 50010 USA

HERE IS [DIRECT ONLINE LINK.](#)

BEST WESTERN: \$129/KINGS, \$139/QUEENS

515-296-2500

**SPEAK WITH ON-DUTY AGENT. TELL THEM YOU
ARE NEED A ROOM IN THE IHSSA SPEECH BLOCK.**

**DUE: SEPTEMBER 17! AFTER SEPT. 17, THESE
ROOMS WILL BE RELEASED! RESERVE YOUR
ROOM EARLY!**

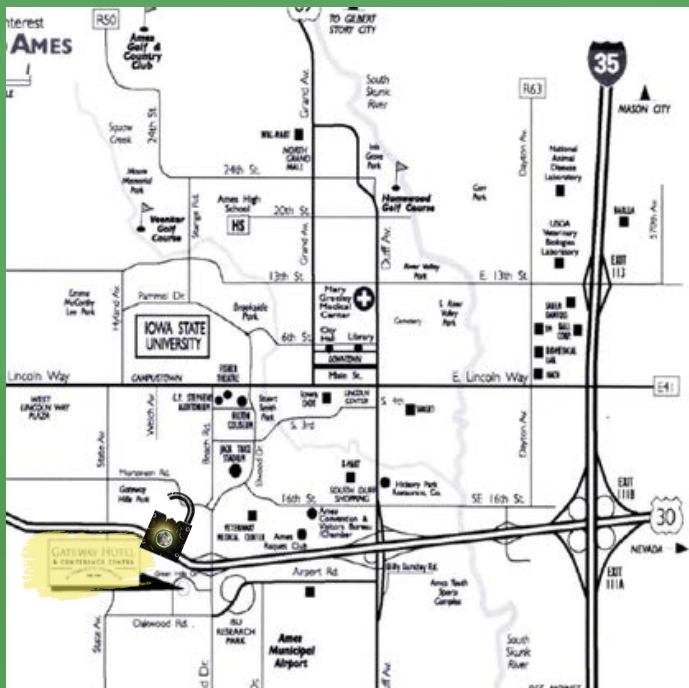
2026 IHSSA COACHES CONVENTION

IHSSA + YOU: CRACKING THE CODE

Friday, October 9 & Saturday, October 10



	NORTH	CENTRAL	SOUTH	OTHER	NOTES
FRIDAY 9:30 AM	CONTEST MANAGERS MEETING		NOVICE COACHES FORUM ★ 9:30 - 11:00 Kimberly Cavalier, Molly Christensen, Christina Moyer, Noah Tiegs	CONVENTION REGISTRATION LOBBY 9:00 - 12:15 GALLERY LOBBY	EXPERIENCED COACHES FORUM HARVEST ROOM 9:30 - 11:00 Dirk Waller
10:00 - 11:30	BREAKOUT IE CONTEST MANAGERS	BREAKOUT LG CONTEST MANAGERS			COACHES CONVENTION FOR UNI CREDIT LOBBY 11:00 Marilyn Shaw
12:15 - 1:20		KEYNOTE ADDRESS ANGIE TOOMSEN ★		MINI SESSIONS	FRIDAY'S LUNCH: ★ MUST BE PRE-REGISTERED*** Lunch in the Garden Room 11:15 - 12:00 TICKETED LUNCH REGISTER ONLINE
1:30 - 2:30	CHARACTERIZATION Nicole Goodman, Ben Hirdler, ★ Reagan Hirdler	LIT PRO/POE/ PROSE Trisha Koenig, Robin Kudej	KEYNOTE TOPIC Angie Toomsen	1.SHORT FILM Matthew Colling 2. CREATIVE MINDSET Kevin Hosbond	
2:30 - 3:20	STUDENT LEADERSHIP Rylee Gehlsen, Cynthia Koster, Laurel Olsen	LG GROUP EVENTS Emily Klaumann, ★ Brienne Magill	VIDEOCASTING Molly Holkesvik, Ryan Runyon	1. SPONT SPEAKING Kenton Engels 2. DEBATE Jeremy Fitzpatrick	
3:30 - 4:20	JUDGE FEEDBACK FOR STUDENTS Vince Hrasky, ★ Laura Travagiakis	TECH ADVICE Abby Avis	VISUAL AIDS Tara Rechkemmer	1. IMPROVISATION AJ Bleskacek 2. 8 th GRADE Kevin Seney	
4:30 - 5:15	SE	NE	NW	SW	HALL OF FAME Meeting
		DISTRICT MEETINGS ★		Harvest Rm	
6:30 - 7:00		HALL OF FAME RECEPTION Gallery Lobby ★		FRIDAY NIGHT IS A TIME TO DRESS UP and CELEBRATE.	
7:00 - 9:00		HALL OF FAME BANQUET Garden Ballroom ★		We suggest BUSINESS DRESS.	
9:00 - ???		DESSERT/COFFEE Meadows Room ★			
SATURDAY 7:30 AM		BREAKFAST BUFFET, DOOR PRIZES, & MESSAGE Garden Ballroom ★			SWIFT PRESENTERS Sarah Bode Linda Brandt Mary Fasse-Shaw Jacob Gute Teresa Lawler Lyra McKnight Logan Pratt Layne Sheetz Shawn Starr Marcine Tracy Gabe Twedt Pam Wymer
9:10 - 9:55		SWIFT: Speech Workers of Iowa Feature Themselves Experienced, Intermediate, Novice Tracks ★			
10:20 - 11:10	USING AI FOR THE REAL REASONS Emma Bedard, Jacque Seidl	ONE ACT PLAY Kate Engelkes, Melissa Kaufman, Michael McNurlen	BALANCING YOUR JOBS ★ Kyle Weber		
11:15 - 12:05	BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL CULTURE Greg Ernzen, Debbie & Matt DeVore	WRITING YOUR OWN MATERIALS Kim Keller, Grant Freeman	ALL IE EVENTS Carrie Buddenhagen, Austin Pauling ★		
12:10 PM		MORE DOORPRIZES! Gallery Lobby ★		ALL CONVENTION CHECK OUT 9:55 - 10:15	
12:30 - 2:30	JUDGE CERTIFICATION ★				



DIRECTIONS to the GATEWAY HOTEL:

Take HWY 30 into Ames.
Exit at 146 or Elwood Drive.
Head south on Elwood Drive.
Turn right (or west) on Green Hills Drive.
You can see the GATEWAY from the HWY.



FREE CONVENTION REGISTRATION DRAWING for 5 YEARS or LESS IHSSA Novice COACHES

4 free registrations will be given away to IHSSA coaches who have been coaching 5 years or less!

1 free registration will be given away to a new coach in EACH of the IHSSA districts. Winners will be announced at the breakfast on Saturday morning of the Convention. YOU must be present at breakfast to win! To submit your name (and this is so EASY!):

Write a 50 word or LESS paper on why you feel going to the IHSSA Coaches Convention would help you this coming year.

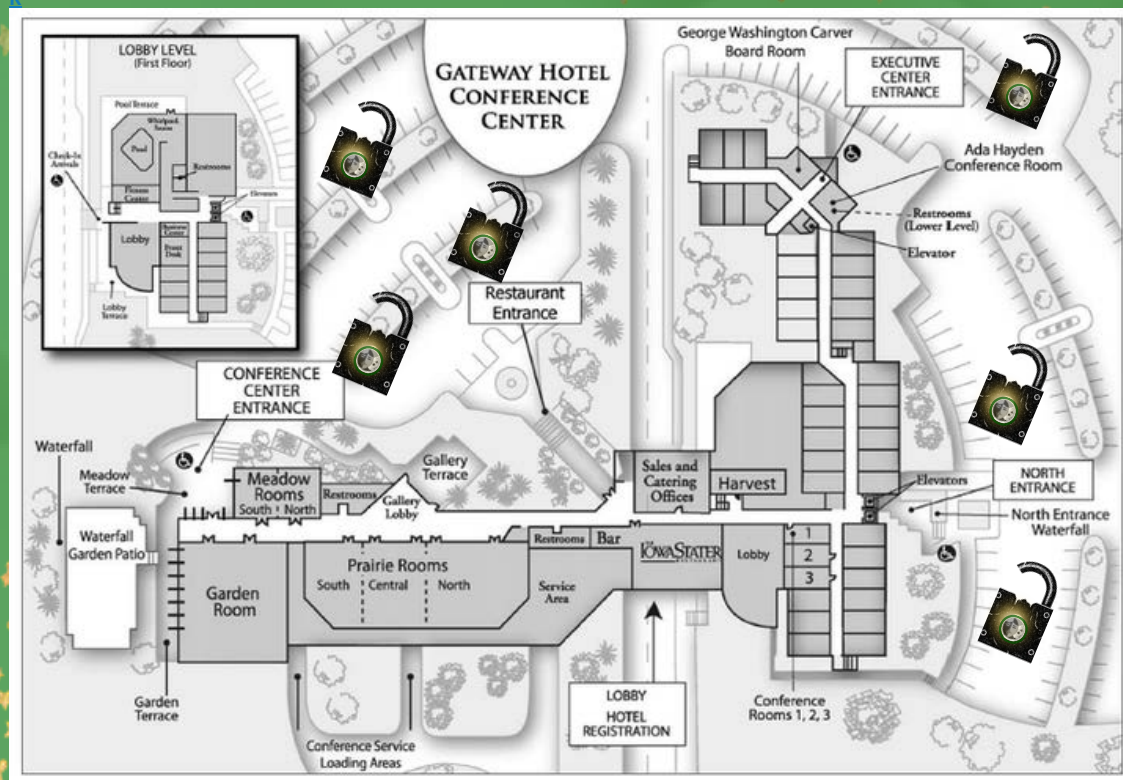
Please send via email to the State Office. If your name is chosen, we will either refund your registration fee to the school (if they paid the registration) or refund the registration fee to you (if you paid) for the Convention fee or apply to Convention 2027.

Due DATE: October 1!

Send to: Stacy@ihssa.org

BREAK A LEG!

**FREE
CONVENTION
REGISTRATION
DRAWING!**



PARKING

is
FREE all
around the
hotel. Park in
the NORTH lot
for hotel or the
WEST lot for
Convention.



**Richard Riggleman
Young Speech Coach
AWARD**

The Richard Riggleman Speech Coach Award was established to recognize young IHSSA Speech Coaches. The award consists of 1,000 per year, renewable for two consecutive years, for a total of \$3,000.

The recipient must be a second/third year teacher as of the start of the 2026-2027 school year and active in IHSSA activities. The award will be presented at the annual IHSSA Speech Coaches Convention. *Those interested may contact the IHSSA State Office for an application.*

[Here is the RICHARD RIGGLEMEN APPLICATION LINK.](#)

The profile of the recipient should reflect the following disciplines: (1) must be in a 2nd/3rd year residence of teaching at an Iowa School participating in the IHSSA; (2) show a commitment to coaching speech, large group events, individual events, and/or debate; (3) demonstrate excellence in the coaching of speech; (4) have past experience competing in high school or college speech; and (5) present a scholastic record with an emphasis in speech courses. DUE: Wednesday, September 24.

The Riggleman Award is the first of its kind that has been established with the IHSSA. Mr. Riggleman was an active IHSSA coach for over 30 years as a judge, State Debate Tournament manager, and manager for numerous State and District contests. Richard Riggleman was inducted into the IHSSA Hall of Fame in 1994.

The IHSSA is extremely grateful to Mr. Riggleman for his generous and continued support of the Iowa High School Speech Association.

**APPLY
TODAY!**

**IHSSA Fine Arts
Administrator
AWARD**

This award will be given to one Administrator at the Fall Convention. The award was developed by the IHSSA Executive Committee to recognize those administrators in Iowa who go above and beyond the call of duty for IHSSA.

To receive this award an administrator must be nominated by their IHSSA coach. This nomination should be in letter form no longer than 2 pages and not less than 1. In the letter, each coach should state the reasons why this administrator should be recognized as the IHSSA Fine Arts Administrator of the year.

This person can be any administrator in your district. For example, Supt., Principal, AD, Assistant Principal, etc. They also must be an active administrator at this time. Be sure to include details such as their position in your school district and examples of their work to make the IHSSA better in your school district.

Deadline for application is Tuesday, September 23. Letters of recommendation can be sent at this time to the IHSSA State Office.

Please indicate on the outside of the envelope that it is a nomination for IHSSA Fine Arts Administrator of the year. Be sure to honor those who have made your life better through their support!

**APPLY
TODAY!**

SUMMER JUDGES/COACHES WORKSHOP



THANK YOU, JUDGE CERTIFICATION COMMITTEE +!

**KESLEY DINKLA (ACGC), VINCE HRASKY (Tri-County),
LISA PHYFE (Waverly-Shell Rock), SHAWN STARR (Woodbury Cental**



**CARRIE TINKHAM
CR Washington**



**THANK YOU to all who attended the Summer
Judges/Coaches Workshop on August 15!
All 115 + of YOU! Engaging and Educational!**

**An ABUNDANCE of THANKS to our presenters!
YOU ROCKED! HONK! HONK!**

Craig Ihnen: [JUDGING Choral Reading LINK](#)

Molly Holkesvik: [JUDGING Videocasting LINK](#)

Liesl Roorda/Dirk Waller: [Going from GOOD to GREAT! LINK](#)

**Materials are also available on the
ihssa.org website at the [JUDGES LINK](#).**

JUNE ANNUAL MEETING



Thank you to the Executive Committee, District Officers, Judge Certification Committee as well as designated committee reps that make up the IHSSA Advisory Council. This year's June meeting was held at the King's Pointe Lodge in Storm Lake. District Officers and reps shared reports. In addition, the season contest summary was discussed. District Officers also voted unanimously to include Videocasting into the IE Series.

8TH

Eighth-Grade Student Participation in IHSSA

Effective for the 2026-2027 season, the IHSSA 9th grade membership will now become the 8th/9th grade membership. The IHSSA will follow the applicable sections of HF2591 for interscholastic IGHSAU/IHSAA athletics. Participation in IHSSA for eighth-graders is based upon local school district decisions.

Here is the [IHSSA FAQ's LINK.](#)



the green room

IHSSA



a room for IHSSA coaches
to
relax
reflect
recharge

**TUESDAY, September 8
4:00 – 5:00 PM via ZOOM**

Check the website for LOGIN information.

IHSSA + YOU



IHSSA DATES FOR 2026-2027

AUGUST 15, 2026 - JUDGES / COACHES WORKSHOP, VIRTUAL

**OCTOBER 9/10, 2026 - IHSSA COACHES CONVENTION
GATEWAY HOTEL, AMES**

**JANUARY 8/9, 2027 - STATE DEBATE TOURNAMENT,
DMACC, ANKENY**

JANUARY 23, 2027 - DISTRICT LARGE GROUP CONTEST

FEBRUARY 6, 2027 - STATE LARGE GROUP CONTEST

**FEBRUARY 19, 2027 - ALL-STATE FESTIVAL LARGE GROUP
THIS IS NEW! FRIDAY! IOWA STATE CENTER, AMES**

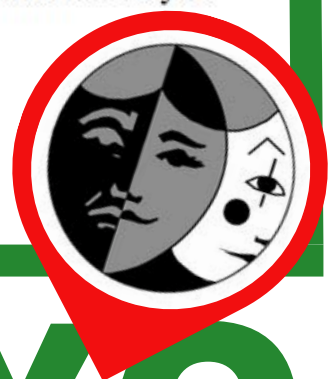
FEBRUARY 27, 2027 - DISTRICT INDIVIDUAL EVENTS

MARCH 13, 2027 - STATE INDIVIDUAL EVENTS

**APRIL 5, 2027 - ALL-STATE FESTIVAL INDIVIDUAL EVENTS,
UNI, CEDAR FALLS**

Get these dates to your students, parents, and administration so you
can plan for these dates next year!

Approved by the Unified Board
IGHSAU, IHSAA, IHSMA, IHSSA



CONTEST!

CONTEST NOTES



Make sure you have the most complete Constitution pages. Constitution and By-Laws Revisions have been updated for the 2025-2027 cycle. Please make sure you have the most up-to-date Constitution. The entire Constitution is ONLINE. Please download and print a [CONSTITUTION](#). Please make sure you are up-to-date on your Constitution and rules. The [RULE CHANGES](#) are also listed on the website.

SUBMIT

Membership Dues Paid?

Have you paid your 26-27 Membership Dues? Membership forms were sent from IHSSA Office mid August. These are due NOVEMBER 15, 2026: [MEMBERSHIP FORM LINK](#)

USERNAMES

The usernames/passwords for on-line forms are the same as last year. If you need a refresh, call the State Office. Keep it handy; you'll be using it several times.

ACT Conflicts

There IS a conflict with ACT testing. ACT tests are February 27. This is the same date as DISTRICT INDIVIDUAL. NO SPECIAL REQUESTS will be accepted for ACT CONFLICTS. PLAN ahead!

POLICY DEBATE

Topics are posted at the following link:
www.speechanddebate.org/topics

MENTORING

PROGRAM

1st year Coach?
NEED extra Support?
Please call IHSSA
OFFICE!
WE GOT YOU!

NEW

COACHES

Contact PAM in
State Office for IMPORTANT
INFO! PAM@ihssa.org
She's got YOU!

REMINDER

When making payments please put on the check what event that check is for. This will assist Pam AND it will help YOUR bookkeeper and their work.

IHSSA Hall of Fame Scholarships

The 2026 IHSSA Hall of Fame Scholarships were awarded in June. All students were involved in many aspects of IHSSA participating in Large Group, Individual Events, and Debate as well as demonstrating community service. All four individuals were selected from many entries across the state after lengthy deliberations by the Hall of Fame Selection Committee. The Hall of Fame members would like to thank everyone who participated in this year's scholarship process. All applicants are applauded for their fine work in the IHSSA Family.



MARIAH MOSER

MFL MarMac: NE District
Coach Cheri Moser

Pictured with HoF Member Susan Cantine-Maxson

KAITLYNN BELDIN
West Lyon: NW District
Coach Miranda Goodchild
Pictured with HoF Members BJ & Julie Schuller



SARAI SANCHEZ

Mount Pleasant: SE District
Coaches Jessi Rich and Jackye Bowlin

Pictured with HoF Member David Wendt



NATALIE HUENEMANN

Norwalk: SW District
Coaches Tim Clay and Rachel Burrow
Pictured with HoF Member Marty Bangston





NFHS: FREE Courses!

The National Federation of State High School Associations provided FREE learning opportunities. You are strongly encouraged to educate yourself regarding COPYRIGHT COMPLIANCE and THEATRE SAFETY. These online courses are FREE and are provided as a courtesy by the [NFHS Learning Center](#).

[COPYRIGHT COMPLIANCE](#)
[COURSE Link](#)

[THEATRE SAFETY COURSE](#)
[Link](#)



FREE!

Contest Sites 27

Local School Assignments for LG: Released in **DECEMBER**

Local School Assignments for IE: Released in **JANUARY**

NORTHWEST

LARGE GROUP DISTRICT

Denison
Sibley Ocheyedan
Spencer

LARGE GROUP STATE

Fort Dodge

INDIVIDUAL EVENTS DISTRICT

Coon Rapids-Bayard
Sioux Central
West Lyon

INDIVIDUAL STATE CONTEST

Sheldon

NORTHEAST

LARGE GROUP DISTRICT

Decorah
Denver
Mason City

LARGE GROUP STATE

Dubuque Senior

INDIVIDUAL EVENTS DISTRICT

Janesville
Hampton-Dumont-CAL
MFL MarMac

INDIVIDUAL STATE CONTEST

Starmont

SOUTHWEST

LARGE GROUP DISTRICT

Ankeny
Des Moines Hoover
Harlan
Riverside

LARGE GROUP STATE

Waukee

INDIVIDUAL EVENTS DISTRICT

Clarke
Gilbert
Shenandoah
Waukee Northwest

INDIVIDUAL STATE CONTEST

Ames

SOUTHEAST

LARGE GROUP DISTRICT

Centerville
Daville
Grinnell-Newbrug
Monticello

LARGE GROUP STATE

Cedar Rapids Washington

INDIVIDUAL EVENTS DISTRICT

Anamosa
Mount Pleasant
North Scott
Pella Christian

INDIVIDUAL STATE CONTEST

Cedar Rapids Xavier

STATE DEBATE:
ANKENY DMACC CAMPUS

LG.GROUP ALL STATE FESTIVAL:
IOWA STATE

IE ALL STATE FESTIVAL:
UNI

JUDGING CERTIFICATION SITES

NORTHWEST

Wednesday, September 2
Emmetsburg High School, 7:00 PM

Wednesday, September 9
OABCIG High School, 6:30 PM

Wednesday, September 23
Northwestern College, Theatre, 6:30 PM

Wednesday, September 30
Fort Dodge High School, 7:00 PM

Wednesday, October 7
West Lyon High School, 7:00 PM

NORTHEAST

Tuesday, September 8
Mason City High School, 6:00 PM

Wednesday, September 16
Decorah High School, 6:30 PM

Wednesday, September 23
Waverly Shell-Rock High School, 6:30 PM

Wednesday, September 30
UNI, Lang Hall, Room 308, 3:00 PM

Wednesday, October 7
Turkey Valley High School, 6:00 PM

SOUTHWEST

Saturday, September 12
Bondurant-Farrar High School, 10:00 AM

Saturday, September 19
Shenandoah High School, 10:00 AM

Saturday, October 26
Harlan High School, 10:00 AM

Saturday, October 3
Waukeez High School, 10:00 AM

SOUTHEAST

Wednesday, September 2
Grinnell-Newburg High School, 6:00 PM

Tuesday, September 15
Mount Pleasant High School, 6:00 PM

Wednesday, September 9
CR Xavier High School, 6:30 PM

Saturday, October 3
CR Washington High School 9:00 AM

VIRTUAL

Wednesday, October 28, 7:00 PM
Intermediate and Experienced Judges Only
Email Stacy@ihssa.org for link by Oct. 23

CONVENTION

Saturday, October 10
Gateway Hotel, Ames, 12:30 PM

IHSSA JUDGES + YOU!

Judge Certification sessions last for 1 1/2 hour. Please arrive 10 minutes EARLY! If you are unable to attend a session please contact stacy@ihssa.org. If you are a certified judge a letter will be sent to you with more info about certification. Please bring \$10 certification fee for the year and a writing utensil. ONLINE PAYMENT Is now available at [THIS BOUND LINK](#). Or use the QR code. Here is the [BOUND HELP ME GUIDE LINK](#).



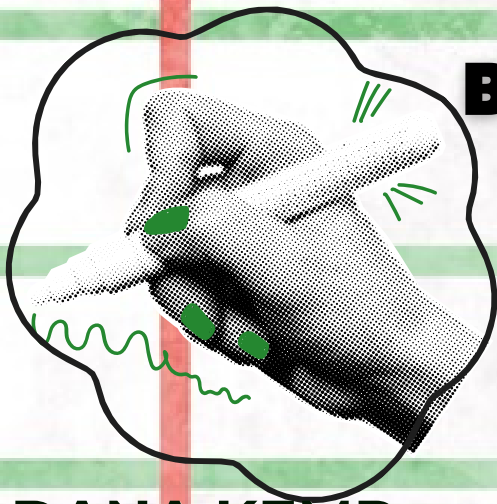
[SUBSCRIBE TO OUR YOUTUBE CHANNEL: IHSSA + YOU!](#)



NEED A MENTOR? BE A MENTOR?

[MENTEE/MENTOR SIGN UP Link!](#) The IHSSA together with the IOWA ARTS ALLIANCE wants to connect new IHSSA teachers/coaches with experienced teachers/coaches. If you are in NEED of a MENTOR, please complete. If you can be a MENTOR, please complete.

For those individuals enlisting in the program that are also full-time speech/drama/debate/language arts teachers, **opportunities exist for a small stipend \$-\$--both for the MENTEE as well as the MENTOR.**



Behind the Comment Sheet: IHSSA JUDGE SPOTLIGHT

The IHSSA Judge Certification Committee meets throughout the year to assist in policies for certification procedures. They also aid in judge evaluations and plan workshops as well as clinics. The JC Committee would like to offer special recognition to these superior judges!

DANA KEMP

A supportive judge can stay with a student long after the contest is over. **DANA KEMP** knows this because she experienced it herself. Speech gave Dana a place to express herself, take risks, and grow, and she remembers the judges who encouraged and supported her along the way. Those experiences shaped the kind of judge she strives to be today: someone who creates a safe, encouraging space where students can be themselves.

Dana participated in speech all four years of high school, competing in Group Improv, One Act, and Reader's Theatre. She also participated in Individual Events for three years, competing in Prose/Poetry and Literary Program.

Now, as she celebrates 10 years as an IHSSA judge, Dana especially values the moments when she can see a student's "light bulb" go off during oral comments. She hopes each interaction leaves students feeling encouraged, supported, and a little more confident than when they walked into the room.

Her philosophy is simple: "Take a breath. It's okay to be nervous. Do the absolute best you can." Dana wants students to know that although she is there as a judge, she is also there to help them improve, discover their strengths, and perhaps find something they truly love.

Outside of IHSSA, Dana enjoys time with her husband, family, and friends, reading and collecting books, playing cards and board games, watching movies and TV, and creating small cross-stitch projects for the people she loves.



ZOIE KOOIKER

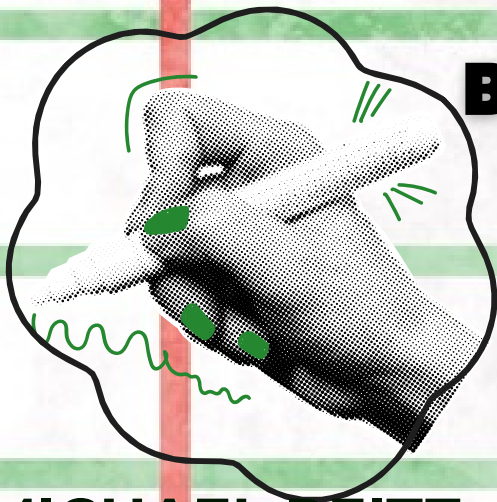
For **ZOIE KOOIKER**, the IHSSA has always been about one thing: the students. As a former speech student, she knows firsthand the confidence, creativity, vulnerability, and sense of belonging that speech can provide. During her time competing, Zoie participated in Large Group events including Choral Reading, Reader's Theatre, and Ensemble Acting, as well as Individual Events in Literary Program and Public Address.

Today, Zoie has come full circle as an IHSSA judge, and she considers it a privilege to give back to an organization that made such a profound impact on her life. She especially enjoys judging District contests, where she has the opportunity to connect with students, offer real-time feedback, encourage their ideas, and remind them to be proud of the work they have created.

While she may be there to critique performances, Zoie sees herself as something more: a student's biggest cheerleader. She is continually inspired by the courage students show when they step in front of an audience and allow themselves to be seen. For Zoie, the goal is not simply a polished performance. Instead, it is helping students feel safe, confident, authentic, and proud.

Zoie is a Catering Manager and Event Coordinator at the Gateway Hotel, where she coordinates weddings, corporate events, and the IHSSA Coaches Convention. She and her husband, a National Guard member and Ankeny police officer, are parents to their two-year-old daughter, Maya—who attended Judge Certification at just five months old!





Behind the Comment Sheet: IHSSA JUDGE SPOTLIGHT

The IHSSA Judge Certification Committee meets throughout the year to assist in policies for certification procedures. They also aid in judge evaluations and plan workshops as well as clinics. The JC Committee would like to offer special recognition to these superior judges!

MICHAEL PEITZ

What keeps IHSSA Hall of Fame member **MICHAEL PEITZ** coming back? The students! Year after year, contest after contest, he is impressed by the preparation, talent, and strength of the performances he sees. For Michael, that level of commitment is inspiring and it reinforces why his role as a judge matters.

Michael's goal goes beyond evaluating a performance. He wants to provide feedback that helps students strengthen their skills and become confident, effective communicators. He recognizes that most students will not go on to be performers, but every one of them will need to communicate in their careers, their communities, and their everyday lives. The skills developed through speech and theatre have lasting value he knows for sure.

When students are nervous, Michael encourages them not to let that feeling become the focus. Instead, he challenges them to concentrate on their message, tell their story, and bring their selection to life with honesty and presence. That authenticity, he believes, is what makes an audience (and a judge) take notice. Michael's advice to both coaches and students reflects his belief in excellence: "Keep expecting the best from your students. Don't settle for easy results. Excellence is a habit."

Now enjoying retirement, Michael spends his time directing theatre when opportunities arise, traveling, and continuing to enjoy the experiences that keep him connected to the performing arts. Through the IHSSA, Michael remains committed to helping students discover just how powerful their voices can be.



SAM PRELL

SAM PRELL sees IHSSA contests as more than competition. He views them as opportunities to reconnect with a community. Seeing supportive parents, enthusiastic students, and excited coaches reminds Sam that our communities are filled with people who are far more connected, complex, and wonderful than we sometimes realize.

Sam's connection to the IHSSA began as a student. Having personally experienced how much encouragement from coaches and judges could mean, Sam wanted to return that gift to today's students by passing along the same love of performance and support that helped carry him through high school. Sam embraced the opportunity to try everything. He was a Public Speaking All-Stater and has the memorable distinction of being disqualified from Radio News one year!

Today, Sam wants students to know that simply showing up matters. "We are SO excited and HAPPY to see you!" Sam believes a student's presence alone is enough to bring a smile to a judge's face.

Away from IHSSA, Sam stays busy with a house full of pets, traveling around the country, attending music festivals and live concerts, and enjoying cosplay. Sam even has several superhero suits used for birthdays and charity events. Above all, Sam is grateful to be part of the IHSSA community and deeply appreciative of every student, coach, parent, and fellow judge who makes it special.





**CONGRATULATIONS to the
2026.27 **RISE** members!**

River Haenfler, SE, Grinnell-Newburg

Wren Harris, SE, Mid-Prairie

David King, SE, South Tama

Alex Leitru, NW, Hinton

James Lockie, NE, Waverly-Shell Rock

Reed Masters, NE, Hampton-Dumont-CAL

Saiya Noborikawa, SE, Clear Creek Amana

Aja'Leigh Oseguera-Mills, NE, Waterloo West

Lazaro Rivera Acosta, NW, Denison-Schleswig

Caity Todd, NW, OABCIG

Megan Underwood, SW, ACGC

Hitch VanDeventer, SW, WDM Valley

Ian Williams, SW, DM Hoover

RISE (Rise IHSSA Student Ensemble) is a student group acting as a voice of Iowa's student participants.

RISE

**Support provided by the
IOWA FARM BUREAU.**





RIVER



WREN



DAVID



ALEX



JAMES



REED



AJA'LEIGH



SAIYA



LAZARO



CAITY



MEGAN



HITCH



IAN



IOWA ALLIANCE FOR ARTS EDUCATION

Dear Iowa Fine Arts Educators,

On behalf of the Iowa Alliance for Arts Education Executive Board, Advisory Board, and our burgeoning membership, we invite you to become a member today! Membership in the Alliance increased by over 40% last school year, and its work in advocacy, mentorship, and professional development for all fine arts educators in Iowa continues to expand.

By joining the Iowa Alliance for Arts Education (IAAE), you're not just adding your name to a list; you're stepping into a statewide network of passionate educators who believe that the arts matter in every school, for every student.

Your Alliance membership will help fund:

* Tools and information to advocate for fine arts education at local, grassroots levels. * A professional lobbyist at the Iowa Statehouse to fight for well-supported and rich arts programs in our schools. * A biennial Leadership Institute, Fine Arts Education Summit, and an annual Fall Symposium for beginning fine arts teachers *The "Model of Excellence Mentorship Program." The Alliance, with the organizational help of seven Iowa Fine Arts Associations, funds hundreds of mentoring visits to first and second-year teachers, and annual scholarships * Assistance in navigating fine arts education policies and programs for all fine arts teachers with the cooperation of the Iowa Department of Education.* A voice in the room. The Alliance meets regularly with the Iowa Department of Education, the Iowa Arts Council, Iowa's professional arts organizations, Arts Midwest, the Creative States Coalition, Americans for the Arts, and public officials and legislators.

As you renew your professional memberships this school year, please add [Joining the IAAE](#) to the list.
Membership is just \$35/year.

Thank you for all that you do to keep the arts alive in your classroom. Let's work together to keep them strong across Iowa.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Leon Kuehner".

Leon Kuehner
IAAE Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jayson Gerth".

Jayson Gerth IAAE
Executive Board Chair



Poetry Out Loud Iowa

Bringing poetry to life for high school students for more than 20 years

Poetry Out Loud is a national arts education program that inspires students in grades 9–12 to engage with poetry through memorization and recitation. Each year, thousands of students across the country participate, beginning in classrooms and schools before advancing through regional and state competitions. Iowa's state champion earns the opportunity to represent the state at the National Finals in Washington, D.C.

WHY PARTICIPATE?

Poetry Out Loud helps students:

- ▶ Develop confidence in public speaking
- ▶ Build communication skills
- ▶ Improve reading comprehension and literary analysis
- ▶ Strengthen memorization and critical thinking skills
- ▶ Experience poetry in an engaging, interactive way

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

The program is open to Iowa students in grades 9–12 attending public, private, charter, tribal, or home schools. Eligible community organizations, libraries, and after-school programs may also participate.

HOW IT WORKS

Students select and memorize poems from the Poetry Out Loud anthology before participating in a contest at the classroom, school, or local level. Winners of these contests advance to the Iowa State Finals.

FREE RESOURCES

Participating schools receive access to:

- ▶ A curated online poetry anthology
- ▶ Teacher resources and program guidance
- ▶ Registration support throughout the year

LEARN MORE

Scan the QR code for registration, resources, important dates, and more:



QUESTIONS?

Leslie Finer
UI Office of Community Engagement (319)335-1618 | leslie-finer@uiowa.edu

NOTHING OUTPERFORMS INCLUSION!

While we all want our students to succeed today, what's also valuable is ensuring that inclusion is always center stage. When a diverse group of students share one common pursuit, they develop compassion and empathy for their teammates and competitors.

**That's the best possible
outcome in performing
arts—because every team
and every student wins!**

**PLAY.
PERFORM.
COMPETE.
TOGETHER.**



PlayPerformCompeteTogether.com