



Positive Ways to Prevent Problems at the District Meet

Plan Effectively

- ▶ **Attend the District Planning Meeting**
- ▶ **Your attendance is essential for your school's voice to be heard.**
- ▶ **If a meeting hasn't been called, communicate to your administration.**
- ▶ **Follow the agendas provided by UIL. They are posted online.**
- ▶ **Look over the agenda before the meeting is held.**
- ▶ **Don't skip items. Openly discuss all issues including hosting, the Academic Conflict Pattern, securing judges, running each contest, deadlines to be met.**
- ▶ **This is the time to bring concerns to light.**
- ▶ **Be sure to have the proper contacts for each school before leaving the meeting**

Communicate Effectively

▶ JUDGES

- ▶ Who is responsible for securing them?
- ▶ What criteria does the District expect for the judges?
(background, experience level, # of tournaments judged)
- ▶ What will judges be paid?
- ▶ Will there be panels in prelims and finals or only finals?
- ▶ What is the deadline for hiring the judges? When will updates be reported?
- ▶ When will other schools be notified of who the judges are?
- ▶ What training will be required of the judges?

Communicate Effectively

▶ TIMEKEEPERS

- ▶ Timekeeping issues at the Meet are one of the biggest problems that tends to cause controversy. Time is critical!
- ▶ Who will keep time in the rounds?
- ▶ Will the District secure adults to serve as timekeepers or will judges have to serve also as timekeepers? Judges should not be asked to do 2 jobs at one time.
- ▶ Who will train them and when will the training occur?
- ▶ Who will be responsible for providing timecards? Stopwatches?

Determine Procedures

- ▶ **Decide at Debate planning meeting if brackets will be broken.**
- ▶ **Do NOT wait until the District tournament to decide this important issue.**
- ▶ **Will the Tab Room be open or closed?**
- ▶ **How and where will Verification be handled?**
- ▶ **Who will secure the awards?**

Prior to the Meet

▶ Resources:

- ▶ Contest Handbooks, Section “How to Run the Contest”
- ▶ Contest Directors should review these instructions well before the meet is held.
- ▶ **AS SOON AS DISTRICT MEET MATERIALS ARRIVE, open them and inventory!**
- ▶ Don't wait until the day of the meet and hope nothing is missing!
- ▶ Don't forget to locate your Extemp topics in advance. They are digital, emailed closer to meet date, so they will remain current. Allow time to print and prepare.
- ▶ District Speech Packets have additional aids for checking documentation in Interp and running the draw in Extemp. Make certain your contest officials receive those well in advance of the meet so they can review.

During the Meet

- ▶ Do not skip holding verification.
- ▶ Communicate publicly about where and when it will take place.
- ▶ Conduct verification properly.
- ▶ Provide the necessary data, master ballots so coaches can verify.
- ▶ Allow any school representative to attend, including the contestant.
- ▶ Explain to any new coaches what to look for or they won't understand what to verify.
- ▶ Handle DQs discreetly. (notify coach in private in advance)

Common Problems: Extemp

- ▶ **Adults in charge who do not read and follow the instructions in the Draw Room. No excuse for not knowing the UIL rules!**
- ▶ **Waiting until the day of the meet to look for speaking topics. Topics come separate from other materials (closer to meet date) via email.**
- ▶ **Special memo to Extemp Draw Director in the meet materials. Important instructional paragraph is required to be read aloud to contestants.**
- ▶ **Rules allow speakers to draw FIVE topics. Only allowed three.**
- ▶ **Speaking in the wrong room.**
- ▶ **Timekeeper Reports are supplied by UIL. This is where “finishing their sentence” can be recorded if the students goes over 7 minutes.**
- ▶ **Examine the “Myths” section in the Extemp Handbook. Helpful in clarifying how to rule on common issues.**

Common Problems in Interp

- ▶ **Checking Documentation.** Recommend it be checked in advance of the meet so problems can be corrected and students get to perform.
- ▶ **Competitors forget to bring sufficient copies for the Contest Director AND the panels of judges.** Send an email reminder out prior to the day of the meet.
- ▶ **Competitors reading the wrong category.** (results in a DQ)
- ▶ **Competitors go overtime.** It is their responsibility to stay within the 7 minute time limit. They have a pre-prepared performance.

Common Problems in Debate

- ▶ **No shows without notification**
- ▶ **When you choose not to run the contest through SpeechWire, you run the risk of entering ballots incorrectly.**
- ▶ **This year, very experienced Contest Directors entered results wrong which resulted in the wrong contestants advancing. Adult mistake that penalized students.**
- ▶ **Learn SpeechWire – it's here to stay, and e-ballots are too. UIL is phasing out paper ballots.**
- ▶ **When pairing, UIL does not endorse power-protect.**
- ▶ **Remember to place all the way through 6th place. Districts sometimes forget to report 5th and 6th place.**

Common Problems with Judges

- ▶ **Conflict of Interest with a school or competitor that was not disclosed prior to being hired or before the tournament.**
- ▶ **Judges do NOT disqualify competitors. Judges may raise a concern with the Contest Director, but should a disqualification need to occur, that is the role of the Contest Director.**
- ▶ **Two judges begin the round without the 3rd judge on the panel being present in the room.**
- ▶ **Judge timing a debate and giving one debater additional time.**

Common Mistakes by Officials

- ▶ **Not using SpeechWire or TalkTab to calculate multiple judging ranks; manually tabbing incorrectly**
- ▶ **Rushing to make a ruling; not taking the time to ask for details in order to get the full picture; only getting one side of the story; it's important to conduct a thorough investigation even when it takes time – especially when the possibility of disqualifying a student is involved**
- ▶ **Telling students rules for another organization rather than UIL**
- ▶ **Extemp draw director called out inconsistent times; one speaker only received 20 minutes prep**
- ▶ **Verification skipped or incorrectly conducted**



Careful Planning & Execution Make the District Meet a Success!

- ▶ **Take your role seriously. Prepare adequately.**
- ▶ **Make it your goal to run the meet fair and equitably.**
- ▶ **Students deserve the best meet possible. This may be their only experience so strive to make it positive.**
- ▶ **No meet is without issues. If difficulties arise, do your best to solve the problem according to UIL procedures as well as ethically.**
- ▶ **Don't allow bias toward or against any district school impact rulings that must be made.**
- ▶ **State Directors are always on call to assist.**



Jana Riggins, State Director Speech, Debate, Congress

- ▶ Questions or Concerns or Ideas on how to make UIL District Meets better?
- ▶ Contact me at jriggins@uiltexas.org
- ▶ *Thank you for attending this session and thank you for all you do at your school to provide great UIL experiences for your students!*