

The RHETORIC Handbook

Revised April 2026

Mission and Purpose

RHETORIC's mission (based on 1 Peter 3:15) is: "***RHETORIC intends to help parents equip through oratory, building on the work of the local Church to prepare students to defend the Faith and fulfill their callings, understanding that Godly rhetoric is not only about skill, but also rooted in the mind and heart.***"

RHETORIC Ltd. is an Indiana nonprofit corporation focusing on recreational speech and debate for Christian home educating families and has been organized exclusively for charitable, religious, and educational purposes.

Name and Its Meaning

RHETORIC, in addition to its current and classical meanings, stands for "Raising Homeschoolers Equipped Through Oratory to Reach Individuals for Christ."

In today's world, the term rhetoric is often used to generally describe the art of effective or persuasive speaking or writing. Similarly, rhetoric in the classical definition focuses on five "canons": invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery. However, classical rhetoric goes further to specifically include the use of logos (word/reason), pathos (experience/

emotion/imagination), and ethos (character) to persuade an audience. In the gospel of John, Christ is called the Logos, the incarnation of the Word/reason. ***It is He upon whom we base our rhetoric, He who informs our character, and for whom we appeal to the pathos of our audience.***

Motto

RHETORIC's motto (based on Philippians 3:14) is "***Excelsior.***" This word is pronounced [ek-SEL-si-ohr] and is Latin for "ever higher." We intend that students learn and internalize this motto, encouraging them to continually strive to better their own personal abilities, giving all glory to God.

Statements of Faith

RHETORIC upholds and expects members to agree with the ***Christian Communicators of America (CCA) Statement of Faith***, as shown in Appendix B.

In addition, RHETORIC upholds, and expects members to agree with the following ***Statement on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality***: We believe that Scripture delineates only one specific meaning for the term "marriage", that is the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union (Gen 2: 18-25). We believe that the gender terms "man" and "woman" as used

in Scripture refer to biological sex, as determined by a person's chromosomes, and identified at birth by anatomy. We believe that God intends no intimate sexual activity to occur outside of a marriage between a man and a woman (1 Cor 6:18; 7:2-5; Heb 13:4) and that any sexual activity outside the bounds of such a marriage is sinful. We further believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. (Acts 3:19-21; Rom 10:9-10; 1 Cor 6:9-11).

Finally, RHETORIC upholds, and expects members to agree with the following **Statement on Final Authority on Matters of Faith and Conduct**: The CCA Statement of Faith (at Appendix B) and the Statement on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality (included above) do not exhaust the extent of our beliefs. The Bible itself is the source of all RHETORIC religious beliefs and standards. For purposes of RHETORIC's practice, policy, and discipline, our Board of Directors is RHETORIC's final interpretive authority on the Bible's meaning and application.

Membership Requirements and Benefits

Applicants for RHETORIC membership must meet the requirements for competition in CCA tournaments for the current school year. In addition, each applicant member family must have a competing member who will be at least age 13 by January 1 of the competition year involved in RHETORIC. (Exceptions may be considered for families with younger students if/when the club is in need of increased membership.) Please note that students must be home-educated to participate in RHETORIC meetings and compete in CCA tournaments. See the current CCA definition of home education in Appendix C.

Applicants for membership must, in writing, agree with the:

- **Christian Communicators of America (CCA) Statement of Faith,**
- **RHETORIC Statement on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality, and**
- **RHETORIC Statement on Final Authority on Matters of Faith and Conduct**

as found in this RHETORIC Handbook and its appendices.

Applicants for membership must, in writing, agree to comply with all sections of this RHETORIC Handbook, including the foundational CCA documents found in the Appendices to this Handbook (and at www.ccadebate.org, if updated).

Applicants for membership must confirm, in writing, that each student has the ability to perform in an age-appropriate classroom setting, sit quietly for an hour or more, attend lengthy events (tournaments), accept critique, respond to authority, and modify behavior based on feedback. **Any special needs or concerns must be fully disclosed and discussed with the Board during the application process.**

Applicants for membership must meet RHETORIC's Volunteer Requirements for both parents (or one parent, if a single-parent household), as determined solely by the evaluation of the Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors will invite and select families for membership and is free to limit membership to keep program size manageable. In prioritizing new families for acceptance, the Board may consider whether the applicants have observed a tournament, the age of the oldest student in the family, the order in which applications are received, the desire/ability of parents in the family to fill open volunteer needs, and/or other factors.

Members will have access to all RHETORIC programs for which they qualify, agree in writing to terms, pay related fees, and meet requirements for on a continued basis.

Members do not have the right to vote on the selection of the Board of Directors. The Board may, however, request members to vote on certain issues from time to time.

Volunteer Requirements

Volunteers are charged with communicating (and not contradicting or adding to) RHETORIC's religious beliefs and standards, as well as instructing students in the application of these religious beliefs and standards to public speaking and daily life.

In order to determine willingness and ability to instruct students according to RHETORIC's religious beliefs and standards, **prior to appointment/acceptance the Board of Directors will evaluate each volunteer. This evaluation will include an in-person meeting with at least one Director and one other club member, as well as a formal background check.** Each prospective volunteer must provide Social Security number and contact information for input into an outside provider's system for this one-time background check.

In areas where the club's leadership needs cannot be met by member parent volunteers, RHETORIC may appoint non-member adult volunteers. These non-member adult volunteers will be selected solely at the discretion of the RHETORIC Board of Directors. Non-parent adult volunteers must, in writing, agree with all portions of the CCA and RHETORIC statements of faith, as well as agree to comply with all sections of this RHETORIC Handbook, including all requirements noted in the preceding two paragraphs.

Student Membership Categories

Varsity students must be at least 13 and no older than 18 by January 1 of the competition year and must not have graduated from high school. Varsity competitors may select from a diverse group of interpretive, limited preparation (including apologetics), and public address events, but are limited to competition in three speech events per tournament, two events if age 13.

Varsity students who have sufficient experience in CCA speech instruction and competition may also participate in team policy debate. Determination of sufficient experience is made by the Speech and Debate Directors, but typically involves at least one year of CCA speech with competition experience in public address and as much experience in Limited Prep as possible, including competition where eligible. Previous involvement in debate camp and flowing of debate rounds during tournaments is highly encouraged. New members with non-CCA speech experience who are entering their junior or senior year of high school may be considered for debate on a case by case basis.

Junior Varsity students must be at least 9 and no older than 12 by January 1 of the competition year. Junior Varsity competitors may prepare for two individual events per tournament season but are limited to competition in one event per tournament. Junior Varsity competitors focus on interpretive presentations and/or informative speeches. Older Junior Varsity students may practice Impromptu and other Varsity-level skills at club, as the Coaching Team deems appropriate.

Junior students must be at least 5 and no older than 8 by January 1 of the competition year. Junior competitors prepare for one individual event per tournament season. Juniors focus on interpretive presentations of stories or poetry. (Note that the Junior Coaching Team may request that very young students wait a year before entering the class, based on individual readiness and class size.)

Summer Debate Camp

All Varsity students planning to attend fall Debate instruction are required to attend a two-day Debate Camp held on a Friday and Saturday during late summer. Varsity students not planning to attend fall Debate instruction and/or any parents are welcome to attend as well. Older Junior Varsity students may attend by invitation.

The Debate Camp will inform participants on the basics of logic, stock issues, affirmative case construction, argumentation, speech and delivery, speaker responsibilities, and research. Opportunities will be provided for students to practice some of the skills learned.

Curriculum Overview

During the fall semester, RHETORIC Coaches will provide speech and debate instruction at club to prepare students for the CCA events offered. Coaches may give assignments and/or recommended progress benchmarks based on topics covered. Certain assignments will be expected to be completed by a due date, depending on the level of the student and the area(s) of club in which he is receiving instruction. Assignments and/or recommendations will be available on the Weekly Update and/or the website.

During the spring semester, students at all levels will continue to practice and polish their competition piece(s). Spring semester workload will vary in scope for Varsity students, depending on competition events selected (and whether those events necessitate continuing research).

We strongly encourage parents to incorporate RHETORIC assignments into their curriculum plan as opposed to expecting their students to add these assignments “on top” of an already full load. We encourage you to allow your students’ prepared public address speeches to replace some writing assignments in your curriculum. Also, depending on the events selected, Varsity students may choose to do more extensive research on apologetics, current events and economic issues, or national policy. Our Board encourages you to allow this work to reduce a portion of their load in research writing, theology, or government courses, as you deem appropriate. Students will also be required to memorize their speeches, so it is recommended that time be allotted in schedules for memorization purposes.

Also, please note that, while research and writing skills are necessary skills for success in speech and debate, and while participation in our club is likely to improve students’ abilities in these areas, our club does not provide comprehensive instruction in these skills. Parents should expect to utilize an appropriate writing curriculum at home. ***While club coaches provide assistance and feedback throughout the club year, parents are expected to provide initial proofreading of and feedback on their students’ speech outlines and first drafts.***

Role of Member Parent Volunteers in Club Meetings

At least one parent from each family will be asked to serve in a teaching, feedback, or support role during club nights. As specific areas of service may vary due to club needs on a particular evening, parent flexibility and understanding during club meetings is appreciated.

In addition to serving as a volunteer, one parent from each family is required to attend the Varsity Speech parent/student instruction (during fall semester club meetings), unless requested to serve/attend elsewhere by the Board. Although we use the term “Coach” to denote the lead instructors in our club, it is truly each parent who will be coaching their student at home. It is imperative that you learn along with your student so that you will be prepared to assist them during the week.

When there are times a parent is at club and is not needed for a time, we will do our best to communicate that and provide a separate area where parents may have fellowship or work/read. However, ***parents who are assisting and/or learning what is being taught in order to coach their own children must be engaged*** and not working/chatting/etc. while present in student learning areas.

Families with children too young to meet student membership requirements should plan for one parent to attend club with the older children and one parent to remain at home with the younger

children. (At times, space may allow the second parent to bring the younger children and remain with them in the nursery and/or trade off with the first parent, if desired. However, the nursery is often needed as a practice room, especially during the second semester.)

Club Notebook Policy

All students must prepare a 3-ring notebook for RHETORIC use, and **parents must ensure that all students bring their notebooks to club each week. All Coaches and parent volunteers are asked to instruct students to write down feedback or instructions they receive.** Not only will this help parents to coach at home, it will also build an important skill and responsibility level in the students.

Club Participation Policy

RHETORIC has been established to function as a family activity. It is the goal of the Directors to build a strong community of families who learn together and challenge and encourage each other, to the glory of God -- upholding our motto, Excelsior ("ever higher").

RHETORIC is a parent-run club. At least one parent from each family will be required (and both parents will be strongly encouraged) to serve on at least one speech, debate, tournament, administrative, facility, party or other team throughout the year. General duties and resources for each team/position will be provided by the Directors.

Each Varsity, Junior Varsity, and Junior student, as well as at least one parent from each member family, is required to be in attendance at all club meetings. While both parents are always welcome and appreciated, there will be certain times during the year when we will let you know that both parents are especially desired at a club meeting, if available. Attendance sign-in will occur at all meetings.

Total absences (including illness) may not exceed four per semester. Notification of absences must be submitted to the Board email address prior to the club meeting so that the Coaches can plan club activities accordingly. Although illness and emergency may require last-minute notification, ***generally the Board should be informed of planned absences no later than two weeks in advance.*** When considering planned absences for your family (vacation, etc.) ***please ensure that you keep some absences available for unexpected illness or emergency.***

If a student or a parent team (parents may alternate attendance) exceeds four absences per semester or has absences about which the Board was not properly notified, they will be put on probation. If attendance continues to be a problem, the Board may revoke family club participation. The Board reserves the right to make exceptions to this requirement on a case-by-case basis (such as serious chronic illness).

Certain planned exceptions to the club participation policy may be granted to an experienced Varsity student at the Board's discretion, after considering whether: (1) the student has received

training at the Varsity level for at least two years and is approved by the speech and/or debate director due to both proficiency and maturity, (2) the family has proven themselves faithful to RHETORIC, (3) the Board believes the parents have been equipped to take on more coaching responsibilities for their own students, and (4) the student has a legitimate conflict and an approved plan for meeting the requirements of the competition events to be attempted. Planned student exceptions to the Club Participation Policy do not exempt the student from any other requirements in this Handbook (and do not exempt the parents from the Club Participation Policy on nights the student does not attend). If a planned and approved absence is no longer needed, the change must be communicated well in advance.

Satellite family status may be granted at the Board's discretion, after considering whether: (1) the family has proven themselves faithful to RHETORIC, (2) the Board believes the parents have been equipped to take on more coaching responsibilities for their own students, (3) the family moves a distance from RHETORIC's regular meeting place which makes weeknight attendance unreasonable, and (4) the family is able to commit to the club's Summer Debate Camp (if applicable) and the club's Tournament Participation Policy. Satellite family status is subject to all club rules and fees detailed in this Handbook, with the exception of the "Role of Member Parent Volunteers in Club Meetings" section and the preceding paragraphs of this section. While club night attendance is not required for a satellite family, it is allowed periodically with advance notice. Coaches may choose to provide remote opportunities for students from the satellite family but are not in any way obligated to do so.

Tournament Participation Policy

All Varsity students competing in Debate must participate in the Debate Round Robin (practice tournament) and compete at a minimum of two tournaments. All Varsity students competing in Speech must participate in the Speech Round Robin (Practice Tournament) and compete at a minimum of one tournament. All Varsity Speech-only students must prepare a public address and/or interpretation and may also participate in limited preparation events, excepting unusual circumstances approved in advance by the Speech Director. ***All Junior Varsity students must participate in the Speech Round Robin (Practice Tournament) and compete at a minimum of one tournament. All Juniors must participate in the Speech Round Robin*** and may choose whether or not to compete at tournament(s).

Both parents from each member family are required to assist with the club Round Robin(s) (Practice Tournament). The Speech Round Robin (Practice Tournament) is required for both parents of each family with a Speech competitor and is typically held on a Monday evening in January with as early as a **6:00 start time** and an extended end time. The Debate Round Robin (required for at least one parent of each family with a Debate competitor) is typically held on a Saturday in January and lasts until early evening.

In addition, both parents from each member family are required to assist with the Indiana tournament hosted by RHETORIC, held in April in recent years. However, tournament dates and locations are NOT fixed from year to year and are determined annually in coordination with the entire league and announced in November. Regardless of the date of the

RHETORIC-hosted tournament, all RHETORIC parents are required to participate. Please plan well in advance to ensure your ability to request absence from work or other commitment. **Both parents are expected to be present for the entire day and evening on both Friday and Saturday of the RHETORIC-hosted tournament, regardless of the involvement of their students.**

For non-RHETORIC-hosted tournaments, one parent per two debate competitors and/or one parent per speech competitor must judge for the entirety of the tournament, with a maximum of two parent judges per family. At tournament registration, individual tournament rules will indicate whether one parent may serve as both a debate judge and an IE judge. In lieu of a parent, the family may provide an alternate adult to judge for the entirety of the tournament (or for the portion of time the parent will be absent). Note that the rules do allow a debate-only student to attend *without* a parent as the second debater under his/her debate partner's parent judge. **Any exceptions to parent judge requirements are at the discretion of the tournament director from the hosting club and may vary based on judge pool needs of the particular tournament, distance traveling, extra service offered by attending parent, etc.**

Including the RHETORIC-hosted tournament, RHETORIC will be invited to a total of four tournaments during the competition year, typically one per month in February, March, April, and May at locations throughout the Midwest. It is strongly encouraged that all RHETORIC families consider attending more than the required tournaments. Significant growth often occurs at additional tournaments undertaken within the same season. In addition, please note that experience has shown that participating in fewer than three tournaments during the first year of Debate can limit a student's ability to fully grasp policy debate techniques even after significant preparation efforts.

Prayerful consideration should be exercised in the selection of tournament(s) and event(s) for registration. **Tournament registration is a serious commitment** for both students and parents and demands even more from the hosting club and tournament director in terms of planning and logistics. **Withdrawal from or changing of tournament events once registration has closed is not acceptable except under emergency situations or other extreme situations approved by the tournament director.**

Club Night Schedule Expectations

Please plan to arrive no later than 6:20 pm, hang up coats, sign in, and be seated for opening prayer. **Prayer will begin promptly at 6:25 pm**, after which students and parents will immediately proceed to their various instruction or practice rooms.

Club instruction and activities will dismiss promptly at 8:30 pm. We strongly encourage (but do not require) **families to stay after club weekly for 15-30 minutes of informal fellowship** in the Fellowship Hall. It is our desire that all parents and students use at least some of this time to get to know someone new, building and strengthening our community. **All families are asked to exit the building by 9:00 pm.**

Health Policy

Members should not attend club meetings or functions within 24 hours of experiencing the following symptoms:

- Fever
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Nasal discharge that is not clear (especially in younger children)
- Any condition that is questionable, unless advised by your physician that it is not or is no longer contagious

Allergies (food or otherwise) are the responsibility of the member student and/or parent. Please ensure that a parent is present during any club meal or snack time if you are unsure about your child's safety in eating any food that may be offered.

Dress Code

In an effort to accustom our students to choosing and wearing appropriate business attire, as well as to underscore the type of behavior expected during club meetings, RHETORIC members are required to adhere to a "business casual" dress code during club meetings. Please ensure that your attire would be suitable to wear to work and adhere to the following:

- Boys: Dress pants, khakis (no cargo pants), or dark denim pants (dress jeans), with a collared shirt or sweater (no writing). Cleanly shaven or with neatly groomed facial hair. Closed-toed, leather-type shoes. No athletic/tennis shoes, including Vans or Converse. No slides, including Birkenstocks.
- Girls: Dress pants, skirts or dresses that touch the kneecap, khakis (no cargo pants), or dark denim pants (dress jeans). Leggings may be worn only under skirts or dresses that touch the kneecap. Modestly cut and modestly fitted shirt, blouse, and/or sweater (no writing). No midriff or undergarments visible. No flip-flops, athletic/tennis shoes, including Vans or Converse. No slides, including Birkenstocks. Moderate jewelry and hairstyles.
- Both: Clothing or hairstyle that does not present the individual as the opposite gender. Hair neatly groomed and not covering the eyes. Hats appropriate to business attire may be worn but are to be removed once the meeting starts (at prayer) and may not be put back on until after the meeting is over and students are dismissed.

This dress code is comparable with that of other CCA clubs in our area. We ask that parents adhere to the dress code for club meetings, as well.

In addition, CCA has established a professional dress code required for tournaments (found in Appendix A). We refer to this as "tournament attire" -- please note that it differs from RHETORIC business casual in several ways, including skirt length. This dress code is in effect for the entire time a student is on-site at a tournament. ***RHETORIC will periodically require tournament***

attire for debate practice rounds, round robins, and practice tournaments beginning in January.

“Casual nights” will also be scheduled regularly during club meetings (approximately monthly), although modesty will still be expected. (Please do not wear excessively tight clothing, shorts shorter than the fingertips, spaghetti straps, low-cut shirts, etc. If skirt length falls above the knee, please wear leggings or shorts underneath. Leggings cannot be worn as pants.)

Facility Use Policy

Meetings will be held at First Baptist Church, 680 N Indiana Street, Mooresville, IN 46158. This church has graciously allowed us to use their facilities. We are not affiliated with the church, so please do not call the church with questions about RHETORIC meetings, tournaments, or other activities. Please direct any questions or concerns regarding the facility to RHETORIC’s Administrative Board.

It is our responsibility and intention to leave the facility as we found it (or better). All RHETORIC members are required to treat the facility with the utmost of care and respect. RHETORIC’s Facility Team will be in charge of setting up and returning all facility items to their original state after all activities held at the church. Older students are encouraged to assist with the facility clean-up.

Please respect the facility by keeping all food items in the designated snack area. Liquids other than water are not to be brought into the classrooms.

In the event that any damage occurs to the facility or items within the facility, it **MUST** be reported to RHETORIC’s Administrative Board before leaving the facility. Families are responsible to pay for repairs of damage caused (even inadvertently) by their family member.

RHETORIC members are to enter and exit the facility through the double doors under the carport and are to remain in the areas of the facility assigned to our use. Under no circumstances are students to enter other areas of the facility. ***During the optional 30-minute informal fellowship time following scheduled club activities, ALL students and parents will be required to remain in the Fellowship Hall or in the immediately adjacent hallway, within view – NOT in classrooms or other areas of the church.***

It is RHETORIC’s goal to do our best to have at least two supervisory adults (or three, if two of them are a husband and wife) present in each classroom with students. Please assist us in meeting this goal if an assigned adult needs to step out or is unable to attend.

Conduct and Conflict Resolution Policy

Students are expected to follow all requirements of the RHETORIC Handbook (including the

CCA Code of Conduct in Appendix A). As noted in Appendix A, CCA requires that language be wholesome and Christ-honoring, and that participants treat one another with respect. Based on Board interpretation of this rule, as well as the desire for club meetings to be a welcoming place for all involved, RHETORIC also requires that romantic or flirtatious conversation or behaviors between unmarried individuals not occur at club functions.

The Board has established the following discipline process (based on Matthew 18:15-16) for violations of any of the above-noted requirements:

1. Coach addresses issue with student during evening of occurrence, or upon realization of a pattern of minor negative behavior.
2. Coach addresses issue with parent at second offense (or first significant offense) and documents discussion.
3. If repeated, Coach and one Director address issue with parent and document discussion.
4. If not resolved, full Board determines how to address the situation and documents discussion and resolution.

It is our hope that most discipline will be encouraging and well received by the students. It is not our intention for Coaches to share with the Board small issues that are simply resolved with a student or parent. If, however, the above four-step process has been followed and resolution has not been reached, the Board may terminate membership of any individual or family.

Beyond the scope of discipline issues, ***parents and students are requested to promptly follow Matthew 18 principles regarding any areas of conflict or concern regarding club.*** It is our desire that RHETORIC be a community where concerns are dealt with honestly and in a loving manner, that we may be of one mind.

Board of Directors

Four to six Directors lead RHETORIC and serve as officers of the corporation. Their roles are all equal, and their terms of office are perpetual until resignation or removal. The current Directors will select additional Directors as needed. Spouses of the Directors serve as Board Advisors.

Administrative Directors and the Fiduciary Director run the “business” of the club, while Speech and Debate Directors set instructional goals for their respective areas and provide high-level guidance and mentoring of their Coaching Teams (the Directors are not the primary Coaches/instructors). ***Questions and concerns not directly involving a speaking activity (or personal issue with a Coach) should always be brought to an Administrative Director.***

The Board will assign certain responsibilities to other non-Directors, as necessary.

Financial and Legal Concerns

Financial records are maintained by the Fiduciary Director (the statutory agent for the corporation). Financial statements are available to members and donors upon request.

RHETORIC is structured as a nonprofit organization following the guidelines under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. As such, donations to RHETORIC may be tax-deductible. (Consult your tax advisor.) Regular membership fees are not tax-deductible. Members may feel free to provide information to interested parties about donating to our club but must communicate that such donations cannot be directed toward a particular student or group of students.

We will not as an organization attempt to influence legislation or endorse any candidates for political office. Any such activities that may take place involving our members are not to be part of club meetings or club communications. Although a student's individual speech in a recreational competition setting does not equate to intervention in any political campaign, compliance with 501(c)(3) statutes will be fully ensured by requiring that students' speeches not favor or oppose a specific candidate or group of candidates for office.

Membership Fees

RHETORIC charges a per-family fee of up to \$200 per year. This fee covers liability insurance, website costs, legal and financial costs, awards, general teaching supplies, and miscellaneous expenses. The first portion of the family fee is due and payable with family application due by a date set by the Board, typically no later than June 1. This deposit will be refunded if initial application is not approved. The balance (evaluated annually, based on how many families are accepted for club membership) will be due and payable by September 15.

In accordance with RHETORIC's Volunteer Requirements, RHETORIC requires all new parent applicants (as well as all returning parent applicants who joined RHETORIC prior to this requirement) to undergo a formal background check. ***The cost of background checks will be the responsibility of each member family*** (estimated at \$15 per parent).

New students will need to purchase a forensic notebook in order to participate in an interpretative event. The notebooks required by the league cost approximately \$5-10 each, due and payable by December 1.

Only checks will be accepted, payable to RHETORIC Ltd. Once membership has been granted, fees are not refundable, even in cases of membership termination.

All tournament registrations and fees will be the responsibility of each individual RHETORIC member family. These fees vary and will be payable to the individual tournaments upon family registration in the spring. In the past, the tournament fee for a Varsity student has been \$35 for Debate (if applicable), plus \$30 for the student's first Speech event, plus \$5 for each additional Speech event. The tournament fee for a Junior Varsity student has been \$30. The tournament fee for a Junior student has been \$30.

Families also are responsible for hotel costs for non-local tournaments, but group rates often apply. (Occasionally, host housing with members of a local club can be made available for families who have financial need.)

Communication Policy

Member families must have and utilize regular Internet access, as much RHETORIC communication takes place online. Member students and parents will be held responsible for information provided by email and posted on the RHETORIC website. **The club's primary form of communication (outside of club meetings) is the "Weekly Update" email. At least one parent from each family is required to read this email by Sunday of each week and communicate any applicable information to the rest of the family.**

However, please be aware that our key communication occurs verbally at club meetings. Member families are responsible for seeking out information missed due to absence from club.

While the Board may provide periodic parent meetings during club time to solicit feedback and answer questions that may arise, **parents are encouraged to promptly bring any concerns to an Administrative Board member during club nights or via the club email address.** Note that if parents express specific concern about a Coach or other club member to an Administrative Director, they will be encouraged to address their concern directly with that individual (along with a Director, if desired). If they do not feel comfortable with this approach, the Administrative Director will ask their permission to take the issue to the Board.

Many times, an Administrative Director will be able to respond quickly to inquiries sent to the club email address. In any case, the Board intends to respond within a week or notify involved parties when the Board will meet to discuss. **Please respect our Administrative Directors' family and homeschooling time by not contacting them by personal email or phone on club business,** unless there is a true emergency.

In specific areas where Coaches have INSTRUCTED parents or students to correspond directly with them, please use email only, unless otherwise instructed for a particular situation. Although RHETORIC's Coaches love to serve students and families, please avoid asking them to give more time than they have graciously offered to make available. "Just a little time" for each student in the club adds up to a LOT of time!

New families are each given a mentor family to assist them with the many questions that arise when new to club. ***New families should direct questions and concerns to their mentor family first.***

Photography Policy

Parent volunteers and non-member adult volunteers give their express permission for the compensation-free use of their and/or their minor children's photograph(s), brief video clips, and first names for public promotion of the club and/or league. These images may be used in print or online publications, presentations, or websites. However, last names of individuals will not be attached to the photographs or video clips unless express written permission for a particular use is obtained.

Weather Policy

The Directors will determine whether a RHETORIC meeting is to be canceled due to inclement weather no later than two hours prior to meeting time. Notification will be made to all member families via email and on the website. Please check email or the website before coming to club if the weather appears uncertain. For your family's safety, please also rely on your own judgment of the conditions in your area.

Contact Information

RHETORIC website: rhetoricclub.org

RHETORIC email account: board@rhetoricclub.org (contacts the Administrative Directors, who forward on to other Directors as needed)

RHETORIC photo sharing: rhetoric.shutterfly.com

Individual members: Personal information regarding member families will be available on the password-protected section of the RHETORIC website. Please keep your family's contact information current. Members may NOT share their password to the RHETORIC website (or any information contained in the password-protected section of the website) with anyone outside of RHETORIC.

Appendix A: CCA Code of Conduct

For Members of Christian Communicators of America (CCA), and those attending CCA tournaments:

The Standard

1. The conduct of the leaders, parents, coaches, and participants who attend a CCA event or who associate themselves with CCA will be guided by Biblical principles.
2. Everyone associated with a CCA event will be treated with, and will treat others with, respect before, during, and after rounds, regardless of the outcome.
3. Language will be wholesome, and Christ honoring. No crude or vulgar language or conduct will be tolerated.
4. In order to show respect for the activity, opponents, and judges, professional business attire is required for all CCA participants. All clothing shall be modest.

- For men, this means modestly cut business suits or blazers with modestly-fitted slacks, shirt, tie, and dress shoes. (Suit jacket is optional for Jr and JV boys.) Professional grooming for men includes being clean shaven or having neatly groomed beards and/or mustaches.

- For ladies, this means modestly cut and modestly fitted pant or skirt suit (the hem line should fall below the knee), no form fitted shirts or exposed midriffs, and professional close-toed shoes. For Individual Events, dresses are permitted (the hem line should fall below the knee). Professional grooming for ladies includes hair, jewelry, and makeup.

Parents, coaches, participants, and siblings at competition events are expected to dress appropriately. Participants no longer competing will stay in competition attire through the award ceremony. The Tournament Director shall have final authority as to whether or not these standards have been met.

5. Cheating, plagiarism, and deception will not be tolerated.
6. Physical violence or abuse will not be tolerated.
7. CCA events are not appropriate venues for physical displays of affection between unmarried couples.
8. Facilities used during CCA events will be treated with respect and care. Any damage to facilities, regardless of the magnitude of the damage, will be reported to CCA leadership.

9. Students, parents, and coaches will acknowledge the authority of the judge in competition and will accept the judge's decision as final and correct.

10. Parents will make every effort to have at least one parent present at all CCA events when the child is competing.

11. Parents and participants agree to submit to the authority of the CCA leadership during CCA events and with respect to CCA-related issues.

12. Parents will be the first line of enforcement of this code of conduct as it relates to their children. All people associated with CCA are expected to ensure that this code is honored.

Handling Offenses

In the event that an offense occurs, Matthew 18:15-17 will be the guiding Scripture. Please follow these steps: start privately, then, if necessary, involve one or two witnesses, and finally, if it becomes necessary to go before the group, the CCA board will be involved. Since gossip is also a sin, refrain from discussing any offenses with anyone not involved. Actions that stray from Biblical principles will be reported to CCA leadership for resolution.

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Appendix B: CCA Statement of Faith

We believe the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, to be the inspired, inerrant and infallible Word of God, and the final authority for faith and life. (2 Timothy 3:16)

We believe that there is one God, eternally existent, in one essence, yet three co-equal persons, the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 4:4-6, Matthew 28:19, John 14:9-11, John 15:26).

We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 16:16, Mark 8:27-29, Luke 9:18-20), His virgin birth (Luke 1:29-35), His sinless life (1 John 3:5), His miracles (Acts 2:22, John 3:2), His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood (Romans 3:25, 1 Timothy 2:5-6, 1 Peter 1:18-19), His bodily resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:3-5), His ascension (Luke 24:50-53, Acts 1:9-11), and His personal return in power and glory (Acts 1:11, John 14:2-3).

We believe in the bodily resurrection of all men; the saved to eternal life, and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment (John 5:28-29, John 5:24).

We believe that all men are sinful by nature, and that salvation is the gift of God given to man by grace and received by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 3:22-24).

We believe that we should live in such a manner as to not bring reproach upon our Savior and Lord (Matthew 5:16, Philippians 1:27).

We believe it is our obligation as believers to witness by life and word to the truths of the Gospel and proclaim these truths to all mankind (Matthew 28:19-20).

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Appendix C: CCA Mission and Vision

Christian Communicators of America (CCA) has established a mission statement with two primary purposes in mind: first, to explain to those outside the organization the purpose of CCA; and secondly, to continually remind everyone within the organization of that purpose. The second purpose is the more important of the two: historically, all kinds of organizations have strayed from the intended purpose envisioned by their founders. Additionally, the mission statement of CCA guides the current leadership team and is expected to do so for leaders of this organization in the future. It also establishes mutual expectations between the organization and the constituents that interact with CCA.

To understand CCA and its role, the mission statement must be understood. It is as follows:

“The mission of Christian Communicators of America (CCA) is to assist parents who are home educating their children with the development of communication and critical thinking skills, equipping these children to be faithful servants of the Lord Jesus Christ by preparing them to give a defense of their faith to everyone who asks for a reason for the hope that is within them, and to do so with grace, seasoned with salt.”

The following concepts are incorporated into this mission statement:

Parents: While CCA provides a forum for the development of students, the primary constituents that CCA seeks to serve are the parents. CCA believes that it is the parents’ responsibility to educate and to develop character in their children. CCA does not usurp or assume this parental responsibility. CCA exists to help in this regard and expects parental involvement in all CCA events.

Home Education: CCA serves the home education community. While the skills acquired through participation in CCA events are no doubt desirable to students being educated in other learning environments, CCA activities are for home-educated students. For the purposes of participation in CCA, home education is defined as an education where, by affirmation of the parent or guardian, the student is receiving an education in which the parents or legal guardians determine the scope and sequence of academic instruction, provide academic instruction, and determine additional sources of academic instruction.

Communication Skills: Competitive speech and debate events can enhance communication skills. Such skills are critical in today's world, especially in business and civic affairs. More importantly, the Bible clearly teaches that the sovereign God of this universe has in His wisdom chosen people to communicate His message to the world. While CCA expects that many of the competitors in the program will use these skills to excel in a wide array of endeavors, the chief purpose behind this training is to use these skills to advance the Kingdom of God.

Critical Thinking Skills: It is not enough to simply be an eloquent and effective speaker: the message delivered by the skilled orator is more important than the method and style of delivery. History is replete with examples of individuals with outstanding oratory skills, but who had misguided and incorrect messages. Through speech and debate competition, critical thinking skills can be taught, developed, practiced and refined.

Faithful Servants: A skilled, but unfaithful individual adds little value to any endeavor. A skilled, faithful, but arrogant and boastful individual likewise adds little value. Proverbs warns repeatedly about God's displeasure with the proud. Acquiring and perfecting skills can, in some, lead to a lack of humility and the loss of a servant-like attitude. While core technical skills are developed, CCA will simultaneously seek to instill in the students a desire for the attitude of a faithful servant.

Lord Jesus Christ: CCA is a distinctively Christian organization, adhering to the Biblical teaching that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God, the God-man who lived, died, and rose again, and who lives today. "At the name of Jesus every knee will bow...and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Philippians 2:10-11).

Defense of Their Faith: Believers, in I Peter 3:15, are admonished to "...always be ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you..." The Christian should always be prepared to provide such an answer, and yet, do so "...with gentleness and respect." Competitive events and a desire to win may conflict with the goals of gentleness and respectfulness. CCA will encourage students to develop these attitudes along with their oratory skills.

Grace and Salt: Paul issues a similar challenge in Colossians 4:5-6. Believers are to "...make the most of every opportunity." Their conversation is to always be "full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone." CCA will strive to prepare students to make the most of every opportunity and to do so in a gracious manner in order to bring glory to God.

In addition to its mission statement, CCA has established the following vision statement:

"To accomplish this mission CCA will provide opportunities for the above stated home educated children to participate in competitive speech and debate tournaments where an emphasis will be placed on excellence in speech, critical thinking from a Biblical worldview, and Christ-like character development. Students will be encouraged to recognize and develop their God-given gifts, to

work as unto the Lord, to acknowledge God's sovereignty in all events, and to give God the glory in all that is done.”

Several aspects of the vision statement are common with the mission statement and require no further amplification. Below, phrases unique to the vision statement are explained:

Excellence in Speech: Colossians 3:23 challenges the Christian as follows: “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart...” Aside from the competitive aspects which encourage excellence for those motivated by such, CCA will seek to instill in the students a desire to obtain excellence in all that is done.

Critical Thinking from a Biblical Worldview: It is not enough to be a good communicator—the message itself is critical. A Christian’s message and life must be consistent with Biblical thought. In Deuteronomy 8:3, Moses reminded his people that God had sought to teach them that man is to live “...on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.” Integrating the principles of Scripture into everyday thinking in the 21st century is not an easy task. While CCA expects that Bible training will be conducted primarily by the family and local church, in tournaments, students will have the opportunity to exercise and refine these critical thinking skills.

Christ-like Character Development: At CCA tournaments, Christ-like character is emphasized. This may take many forms, including: 1) showing respect toward other competitors, parents, judges, and siblings; 2) dealing honestly and forthrightly with evidence; 3) showing humility; and 4) being thankful, regardless of the outcome of the round, that is, to “give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” (I Thessalonians 5:7). Christ-like character development is held by CCA as a higher goal than the development of speech and debate skills. In I Samuel 16:7, God Himself reminded Samuel that He has different standards: “Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” CCA is concerned with the student’s heart.

Recognition and Development of God-given Gifts: The competitors must first recognize that their gifts, whether great or small, are God-given. This recognition places them on a path of humility and service that God can use. The competitive environment can actually encourage the opposite effect: 1) those who win tournaments can easily become proud and boastful, arrogant and puffed up; and 2) those who do not win can become discouraged and disgruntled, complaining and bitter. CCA believes it is possible in tournaments to minister to both groups, and to encourage the students to recognize and develop their own unique God-given gifts. Further, CCA encourages older and more experienced competitors to help younger students in a servant-like manner, using their gifting to help others.

Work as Unto the Lord: Colossians 3:23, previously mentioned in the context of excellence, also instructs believers to do everything “...as working for the Lord, not for men.” When performing tasks as unto the Lord, God-given talents and abilities are used as intended by the Creator. While Scripture is filled with admonitions against prideful attitudes, perhaps none is more vivid than Proverbs 6:16 where one of the seven detestable items includes “haughty eyes”. At CCA tournaments, the competitors will always be encouraged to look upward.

Acknowledgement of God's Sovereignty: Another life lesson that must be learned is that God's omniscient sovereignty applies to all the events of man and nature. In winning and in losing, competitors at CCA tournaments are encouraged to recognize God's sovereignty: in the record, in the comments of the judges, and in the feedback from coaches and parents. As recorded in Genesis 50:20, Joseph was able to look back at his life, and even the actions of his brothers, and declare to them that "...God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." Competitors are encouraged to see God's hand in the outcome of events as did Joseph.

Giving God the Glory: After the first two commandments, as recorded in Exodus 20:5, God declares "...for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God..." This is, of course, fully consistent with His displeasure with the proud and boastful: He will not be usurped. The arrogant directs praise to himself; the servant directs glory to God. Tournaments that distribute awards to the winners create a situation wherein God can be robbed of His glory. Scripture also teaches, however, that there is a season for everything: a time to laugh, and a time to mourn (Ecclesiastes 3:1). Winning a tournament is a joyous time, one for celebration. The goal is to exhibit the proper attitude, not to suppress either the joyful celebration or to ignore a disappointment. Students, particularly those talented individuals who find themselves frequently being recognized, must learn to live out James 4:20 "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up." At CCA tournaments, competitors and parents are all encouraged to proclaim, "To God be the glory, great things He has done."

The principles incorporated in the Mission and Vision Statement guide CCA in deciding the nature of the competition to be offered, how tournaments are to be run, and how to interact with students, parents and judges. Parents who share these values and who are striving to develop them in their children are welcomed and encouraged to become a part of CCA and to participate in CCA events.

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Appendix D: CCA Speech and Debate Program

There are a variety of competitive speech and debate programs in which young people may participate. While the programs may have some similarities, there are often philosophical differences. Such differences need not be the cause for disputes, rivalries, or factions among programs. Rather, constituents should examine the various program offerings, to determine which will best accomplish the purposes sought by the participants. This document explains what is done in the Christian Communicators of America (CCA) program, and why it is done, so that reasoned people are able to make informed decisions.

To understand the CCA program, one needs to understand the CCA Mission and Vision document. If that document has not yet been reviewed, the reader is encouraged to review it before reading any further.

A Christian Focus: The CCA Speech and Debate Program is marked with an obvious, overt, and unabashed Christian focus based upon a conservative interpretation of the Holy Bible. The CCA Statement of Faith explains CCA beliefs. As a result, CCA tournaments are marked, in part, by:

- Devotional presentations with challenging messages from God's Word
- Prayer
- Singing of Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs
- Fellowship of parents and competitors
- Ongoing challenges to encourage godly living
- A focus on Christian character (amplified below)
- Distinctively Christian Individual Event categories (amplified below)
- An emphasis on a Biblical worldview in all events (amplified below)

"Christian" is not simply the first part of CCA's name; it is the embodiment of why CCA exists.

Christian Character: CCA recognizes that competitive events can foster negative consequences: undesirable attitudes can be created, and unfriendly rivalries can be established. Yet, the same competitive events can be used to encourage excellence and to drive competitors to mutually higher levels of performance. CCA also recognizes that the acquisition of argumentation skills, like many other skills, can be used for good as well as for harm. Along with the potential negatives, there are tremendous opportunities for great gain; i.e., confidence can be developed, critical thinking skills can be refined, discernment can be exercised, and the competitor can learn how to respond to wins and losses in a godly manner. Deep friendships have been established between competitors. For these reasons, CCA has established a program that places godly character as the most important trait to be developed in young people.

Few Christians would disagree with the goal of character development; yet, the topic prompts an honest question: "How does CCA seek to achieve the goal of Christian character development?" It begins with a Code of Conduct, signed by the parents and students, which is enforced by CCA. It continues with a Ballot wherein an "ethics" violation over-rides the win-loss aspect of the round. (A student who exhibits poor character-related behavior will not be rewarded with a tournament win.) It continues with CCA leaders, parents, and coaches who pray for and with the competitors. And it includes the hard conversations with violators, encouraging them to recognize areas for improvement.

CCA recognizes that all believers are "works in progress" and is quick to point out that no one has "arrived". Yet, Christians can, as instructed in Hebrews 10:24 "...spur one another on toward love and good deeds."

Distinctively Christian Individual Event: Each year, CCA selects an event with an overt, specifically Christian focus, such as Impromptu Apologetics. The goal is simple: to offer an event that will encourage competitors to acquire knowledge that will be directly assisting them to

“...be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks (them) to give the reason for the hope that (they) have.” (I Peter 3:15).

Competitors will typically find it advantageous to memorize Scripture for this event, something that will stay with them for years. Examining the works of Christian writers helps the students solidify their own beliefs. Experience has shown that family discussions often center on the topics of this event, prompting natural discussion of spiritual issues, as is consistent with the pattern outlined in Deuteronomy 6:7. These discussions have often been life-changing opportunities for participants. Further, observers at these events have been blessed and challenged by the contents of the presentations.

Biblical Worldview: This topic is discussed in the Mission and Vision document, but it is also discussed here in order to show how Biblical Worldview is emphasized in the CCA program.

In Individual Event (IE) categories such as Interpretive and Public Address, the selection of the pieces for memorization and presentation are to be consistent with Biblical truth. Quality literature is replete with examples wherein a wholesome, uplifting, and God-honoring message is presented. Unfortunately, literature also includes messages that are in conflict with Biblical thought. Competitors must learn that they are responsible for examining the message they are to present to see if it is consistent with their beliefs. Selections are not required to specifically present a Biblical message; however, messages inconsistent with this standard are to be avoided.

Limited Preparation events such as Impromptu and Extemporaneous often require the competitor to evaluate an issue and to present an opinion or a perspective. The goal is to evaluate the issue from a Biblical worldview, seeking to discern what Biblical principles would apply. Christian judges can be helpful in encouraging such thinking. CCA recognizes that the primary venue for such training is in the home; and therefore, comments from judges and coaches should be evaluated within the home.

CCA utilizes a mixture of judges, including: 1) community judges that may or may not hold similar worldviews to the competitors; and 2) godly, mature Christians who are able to evaluate the messages presented, and who can offer guidance regarding the appropriateness of the content of the material.

Consistent Judge Training: Speech and debate tournaments are competitive events evaluated by individuals called judges. Such tournaments are conducted under a set of prescribed rules enforced by the Tournament Director. Tournaments do not necessarily duplicate the communication situations encountered by most people on a day-to-day basis. Debate, for example, is not an activity wherein truth is determined or the perfect policy is discovered. Rather, debate is a construct that has been developed for training the mind in the art of argumentation.

Standards have been established and are expected to be followed by everyone involved in a tournament, including the judge. CCA strives to ensure that judges are consistently trained so

that they know the standards and judge accordingly. If a team breaks the rules, the judge should not award that behavior with a win. It is unfair to the rule-abiding team; and it sends the wrong message: “everything is OK as long as you don’t get caught”. This message, while consistent with much of today’s post-modern worldview, is an anathema to the Biblical worldview. CCA welcomes “community” judges but prioritizes the use of “trained” judges.

Individual Events Offerings: CCA leadership offers various Individual Events that are expected to assist the competitors in the development of specific skills. The goal of these events is learning. Too often, competitors enter into and compete in events where their personal strengths are exercised. Not surprisingly, they typically excel in such events. When they enter the same event for the second and third year, they continue to exercise such skills, but the learning may be limited. Each year CCA selects events from different genres, each of which is expected to develop new skills. Events are rotated from year-to-year to encourage competitors to participate in new events, in order to learn new skills.

Family-friendly: Participation in CCA speech and debate tournaments is a significant family commitment, involving commitments of time and financial resources. CCA is committed to tournaments with a maximum length of two days; thus enabling entire families to participate in the events. For many home-educating families, the father is the primary breadwinner, and the mother is the primary educator. CCA believes it is not desirable for tournaments to be “family dividing” events, separating moms, dads, and siblings. Therefore, a two-day tournament schedule makes a commitment more practical for many families; and more importantly, it keeps fathers involved with the education of their children.

CCA has established a “junior” division, allowing siblings from the age of five years old to compete in their own speech events. The program is safe, unthreatening, and fun for the youngsters, enabling them to compete just like their big brothers and sisters. In addition to the opportunity to learn, families are kept together in a healthy way.

Traditional Debate Criteria: Traditional debate requires the winning team to win (or “carry”) four “stock issues”. Much discipline is required to debate: arguments can only be raised at certain points; and when an argument is dropped, the opponent wins on that particular issue. Arguments are to be supported by evidence, not simply the debater’s opinion, no matter how eloquently and persuasively the point is presented.

At CCA tournaments, the traditional criteria of carrying all four stock issues will be the primary basis for determination of the win, except when there is an ethics violation. Judges are trained to make their decisions on these criteria and on the content of the round, not the eloquence of the speakers alone. Assertions without evidence are to be rejected by judges as mere claims. Non-conformance with the protocol of debate procedures is unacceptable, and CCA has implemented policies to minimize these practices.

CCA desires that students compete within a defined “arena”, that is, within a set of agreed upon boundaries. Although there are other legitimate forms of debate, certain forms have been disallowed by CCA—not because they are necessarily wrong or harmful, but because they are

outside the prescribed “arena”. For example, critics and counter plans are specifically disallowed. Acceptable case structures are also specifically defined. In defining the boundaries, competition is enhanced and learning is encouraged.

A Balanced Program: Participation in speech and debate competition can be a time-consuming venture. Successful debaters, in particular, may spend untold hours doing research, developing their case, and critiquing other cases. Superficially, this may seem like the home educating parent’s dream--self-motivated students spending hours upon hours in the pursuit of knowledge. However, balance in life is important, and a student’s schedule should include time for other activities deemed important by the family, including local church involvement, physical activities, other academic subjects, social time, community service, and family life.

CCA has specifically limited the length of the competitive season to one semester. This permits families to concentrate on other issues in an undistracted manner for the remainder of the year. CCA also offers a limited number of IE categories in order to control the commitment of time necessary for participation. Finally, the scope of the debate resolution has been deliberately limited so that the competitor is only required to research a limited number of potential negative cases. CCA believes these constraints will permit the development of the desired skills and will, concurrently, allow the student to participate in other worthwhile ventures.

Evidence Books Disallowed: In some debate programs, it is possible to purchase cataloged evidence, which addresses the resolution and that has facts supporting various positions. CCA believes that learning how to acquire such data is an important skill that is best learned by researching firsthand. Accordingly, CCA does not allow the use of evidence books. It requires the competitors to be responsible for the quality and accuracy of any and all evidence presented in a debate round.

Purchased Affirmative Cases Disallowed: In a manner similar to the evidence books, some programs allow affirmative cases written by others to be available for purchase. CCA believes that the construction of an affirmative case is an important activity that should be the work of the competitor. Purchased cases are prohibited.

There are other “marks” of the CCA program that are not included here, but this list is provided to identify the key characteristics for which this program is known. CCA is striving to help parents as they raise another generation of God-loving and God-fearing men and women who will make it their life’s aim to bring glory to God. Parents who desire their children to participate in this type of program are encouraged to join CCA.

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