

September 8, 2013

K. Graber's CHSSA Meeting Report

(Warning—this is lengthy—I've got a lot to tell you all—sorry. If you want to skip all the drama, go to the 2nd page and start reading where it says, "**IN OTHER NEWS**")

To bring all of you up to speed on a few things:

Due to the frustration that many of us feel about CHSSA's prohibition against printable pdf downloads as "legal" interp scripts, I wrote and submitted a bylaw revision proposal that was introduced at this weekend's CHSSA meeting up in Oakland. The NFL has already moved into the 21st century and is now accepting online sourcing of scripts, subject to various restrictions which you can read on the NFL website if you are so inclined. I wrote the bylaw revision proposal this past July during a 3-day work session with IE committee up in San Jose. There are 4 names on it, but I wrote it.

There were 4 of us at that July meeting representing each area of the state: Kristin Plant from Area One (she coaches at Miramonte and is the VP in her league—she ran the judging house at West Ranch), Linda Darling from Area 2 (she's the Area 2 chair), myself from Area 3, and Gregg Osborn from Area 4 (he's the coach at Helix who hosted the 2011 tournament in San Diego and he's president of his league). We volunteered our time to meet and work on streamlining and reorganizing the IE rules as they currently appear in the state constitution, because if you have ever tried to comb through them seeking guidance, you know how confusing they are.

I suggested this committee and the July work session to the CHSSA president, Sharon Prefontaine in April, because I felt an urgent need to make the IE rules more comprehensible, especially to new and newer coaches. She agreed and approved and I worked with Linda Darling (who is also IE Committee Chair) to make it happen.

We had an intense but very productive 3 days. We did a complete overhaul of the IE rules, being very careful not to change any of the rules, but instead to clarify, eliminate poor wording and redundancies, and re-organize the content in a more logical manner. Sharon herself popped in on two of the days and worked with us a little. She seemed satisfied with our work at the time.

The document we worked on was provided to us by Sharon, and she had already extensively annotated it. We carefully tracked all our changes so as to be 100% transparent. We didn't delete a single word—instead we struck-thru words and sections. We highlighted text that we moved. And if we changed a word or phrase for clarity or to correct the grammar, we bolded those changes. We e-mailed Sharon the marked-up document for her to review on July 24th. Our expectation was that she would comment on it, we would revise it if necessary, and prepare a clean copy for the CHSSA board members to review in advance of the meeting in September.

That is not what happened. Sharon never responded to our document, and as the meeting date drew closer, Linda Darling began to inquire as to why Sharon had not sent it out for board member review. After all, it was 14 pages long and people needed time to digest it. I thought Sharon herself must be working on the clean copy since she never gave us the go ahead to produce it. Finally, on Sept. 3rd, 3 days before the meeting, she sent a document out to all the CHSSA board members. But what she sent out was our marked-up draft, with all the strike-thrus, highlighting, bolding, etc. We called it "the ugly draft." Keep in mind that this document had been sitting with Sharon since July 24th while we waited for her instructions.

We were a little shocked at this sloppy presentation of our hard work. And then Sharon delayed the discussion on this document until 3:30 Saturday, 1/2 hour before the meeting was slated to end. Several people had already left to catch their flights, and those of us remaining were tired. Anyway, it did not pass. There were a lot of abstentions due to the confusing nature of the presentation, and 8 yes votes, 8 no votes. Sharon broke the tie and voted “NO.” There was an immediate motion to remand it back to IE committee for further work.

AND my bylaw revision proposal to allow electronically sourced scripts narrowly lost as well, in a 14-12 vote. A young coach’s assistant who isn’t even a CHSSA board member (but he was there because he is the volunteer web master for CHSSA) raised the specter of copyright infringement and lawsuits: he actually said, “Remember what happened to Napster.” Several coaches spoke up and said that was ridiculous—that if you are copying text for educational purposes you are not infringing on copyrights. But he used technical jargon (saying things like, “to print something off of a Kindle you have to scrub the DRN, and that’s breaking the law”—whatever the hell that means.) I offered to amend my proposal to remove the 2 words that seemed to be causing all the alarm: “e-reader content.” But Sharon wanted the body to vote on the proposal as written. It lost by 2 votes.

So for now, CHSSA is still in the Dark Ages. I was hoping to tell you all that now you can purchase material online and download the scripts and use them, but no—not yet. For now, make sure your scripts are “legal”—that is, they are conventionally published and that you can prove it with an ISBN # and a copyright page. If you pay to have a hard copy shipped to you, keep the receipt and the envelope it arrives in. If you no longer have the receipt and proof of mailing, you may have to re-purchase the material.

Einar Johnson, who is the Area 3 member-at-large (he used to be WBFL’s president) is a lawyer and he offered to research copyright law and get back to me with suggested wording so as to avoid any liability. I am attaching the bylaw revision as I introduced it so you can see what I was trying to do.

The wheels of democracy turn slowly. I’m not giving up—I plan to re-introduce this legislation in January and hopefully it will be passed in time to be useful for States 2014. And I will continue to volunteer to help streamline the IE rules.

IN OTHER NEWS:

Debate Committee was smarter and they presented only the clean copy of their re-organized bylaws. It looked pristine and passed almost unanimously. Nermin Kamel Fraser (CHSSA VP) was upset because you could not see the changes—she wanted more time to scrutinize it, but she lost that argument. I also argued for more time. But it sailed through. If you coach debate, I suggest you consult the new and improved bylaws to make sure you are coaching your kids correctly—in fact, your debaters should read the bylaws as well. You’ll find them on the cahssa.org website under the “About” tab. Click on Constitution/Bylaws and go to Article XI, Debate Rules.

We also passed a bylaw revision in Debate, applicable to all 4 debate events: **evidence exchange is now required** if the opposing team requests it. In Parli, that evidence will be whatever the team has scribbled down on the handwritten notes they are using in the round. And that evidence better be cited in the notes or its validity may be brought to the judges’ attention and challenged. Judges are prevented from examining evidence, however. If an official challenge is raised, the judge must take the evidence and the debaters over to the protest committee.

We also passed some by-law changes in Congress. To summarize:

- Congress speakers may NOT use visual aids, which now include aids to identify the speaker. That means no name tags or name placards, no colorful symbols to make themselves stand out in the crowd, etc. Articles of clothing which are meant to attract attention in this manner might be challenged as a visual aid and the speaker will be penalized if the challenge is upheld.
- P.O.s will now get semi-finalist plaques just like all the other semi-finalists in other events.
- And if there is a NO-SHOW P.O., the P.O. who is there will get a bye—similar to the formula used in debate. Unfortunately, this by-law revision was inspired by our league, because our P.O. almost missed one of his rounds, and the congress tab room realized there was nothing in the By-laws to deal with this event.

A couple of proposals were tabled but they will come back in January so if you have strong feelings about them you need to let me know. One proposal is to **count the adult judges' ballots** along with the house members in the P. O. contest. Currently, the adult judges' ballots are only used to break ties. *I am inclined to vote YES here.*

Another proposal is to **keep speakers in the same house for all 3 prelim rounds**. Currently they are in the same house for rounds 1 and 2, then kids are moved around for round 3 to balance the power. This proposal would eliminate the round 3 shake-up. *I am inclined to vote NO here.*

This year will be the last year that Curriculum Chair Rita Pritchard produces an event DVD. She will be filming Parli at States 2014. Next year her committee will focus on developing lessons to align with the new Common Core Standards.

By the way, the 2014 host for States is Enoch HS in Modesto. We hear that it is a beautiful campus and large enough to accommodate the tournament. BUT it is a 2-hour drive from any of the closest airports: Sacramento, San Jose or Oakland. And the hotels will not be super close to the high school, so you will definitely need cars and drivers. There may be some changes to the state schedule this year as well—I'll give you more details when I get them in January.

A word of caution: I cannot name names, but a protest has been raised against one of the state champions from the April tournament. The allegation is that the script that the speaker used is illegal. The constitution allows protests up to December 31st of the competition year, and if this protest is upheld, the consequences could be devastating. The champion will be stripped of his title, denied his scholarship money, and his name scrubbed from the CHSSA records. The league may be penalized as well, if the protest committee feels the league was negligent in allowing this script to go forward. Their penalty will be to lose a qualifier in that event for the coming year.

These are harsh penalties, and I hope the committee does not assess them to the full extent. The illegal script may well have been unintentional. I would hope that unless the investigation reveals a deliberate effort to skirt the rules, that the offending speaker, coach and league just get a stern warning. But the person filing the protest says intent is beside the point, and that rules are rules. I bring all this up because I want you to understand why I am such a "Taskmaster" when it comes to scripts. The last thing in the world that I want is for one of our league kids or coaches to be humiliated in such a fashion, or for our league to lose one of our hard-earned qualifying slots.

Kathy