NATIONAL GENERAL RULES AND REGULATIONS

NOTE: General rules and regulations apply to all national competitive events and are in addition to each event's specific guidelines. Guidelines are subject to change. Please refer to the EdRising Membership Portal for the latest version.
Failure to follow the stated guidelines will result in disqualification of student competing.

All students wishing to compete at the Educators Rising National Conference must complete 3 required steps:

1. **Be an Active level paid national member** of Educators Rising for the current school year. State-level membership must be paid, if applicable. Click here to join.
2. **Complete the online application** and upload all required materials in their final form by the stated deadline on the National Competition page located in the Student Resources section in the EdRising Membership Portal. **This is NOT done automatically if you competed at a state or regional conference**.
3. **Register to attend** the Educators Rising National Conference.

Eligibility

- Students must be a paid Active-level student member of Educators Rising no later than **February 1st** of the year in which they are competing. **Check or credit card payment must be received in the National Office by February 15th to be considered an Active-level member.**
- Students may only compete in one competitive event.
- **For contests:** Teacher leaders may enter up to two entries (individual or dual) per school in each event per division.
    - Dual means two students participating.
    - For dual entries consisting of students of varying grade levels, the entry will be placed in the division for the grade level of the most senior member.
- **For competitions:** Teacher leaders may enter up to two entries per school in each individual event per division and one team for team events per division. Competitions/contests that are marked as individual or dual will be considered individual events for this purpose.
    - All team events must have at least two students (and no more than four) per school to qualify.
    - For teams consisting of students of varying grade levels, the team will be placed in the division for the grade level of the most senior member.
- If a competitor is from a state that holds state competitions/contests, they must first qualify in that given event at their state conference before competing in that event at the Educators Rising National Conference. Contact your state/regional coordinator to see if your state offers competitive events. Visit our state program page on the Educators Rising national website to contact your state/regional coordinator.
- For states that offer state-level competitive events, the top ten places in each competition for each division offered by the state will be eligible to compete at the Educators Rising National Conference.
- For contests, you must compete in a state-level event in order to be eligible to compete at the Educators Rising National Conference. Only entries scoring 97-100 will be eligible to advance to nationals. No other entrants from states that offer the competitive events at the state level will be eligible for those state-level-offered competitive events.
- For nationals, schools are permitted to replace up to fifty percent of the original team members who qualified at the state- level. **Replacements can be made up to 7 days prior to the conference. No replacements can be made after this time or onsite.**
- For states that do not offer state-level competitive events, students may register to compete in those events at the Educators Rising National Conference. This applies to all Educators Rising national competitions. This does not apply to contests since you must qualify at state first before moving to nationals in any competition.
    - For example, if you want to compete in Public Speaking but place eleventh or lower in your

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state-level Public Speaking competition or don't compete in the state-level competitions at all — you cannot compete in Public Speaking at the National Conference this year. If you live in a state that didn't hold a Public Speaking state-level competition, you may register to compete in that event at the Educators Rising National Conference.

Division of Competition

- The breakdown of grades noted below is used to designate levels for competition entries. Not all competitions are open to all divisions.
    - Middle School — Grades 7, 8
    - High School Junior Varsity— Grades 9, 10
    - High School Varsity level — Grades 11, 12
    - Collegiate level – Undergraduates only
- Registering in the incorrect division will result in disqualification.
- Teams consisting of students from varying grade levels will be placed in the division for the grade level of the most senior member.

Application and Submission

- All submitted materials must reflect original work from the 2025-2026 school year. Material that may have been created or submitted in previous years is ineligible.
- **To be scheduled to compete in a national competition, all competitor applications, national dues, and required materials must be submitted online by the deadline stated on the National Competitions page in the Student Resources Section of the EdRising Membership Portal. Deadline extensions will NOT be granted.**
    - **All competitions and contests require an online application submission even if no additional items need to be submitted.** Students who have won state-level competitive events must also submit their entries on the national website by the deadline to compete at the national conference. Your state does not do this for you.
    - **For team competitions only one application can be submitted** which lists all team members in all places indicated on the application form.
    - Each competition guideline will identify what materials are required for submission before the competition. Failure to submit the required materials by the submission deadline will result in disqualification. All submitted materials must be in their final form.
- All video files that are submitted in advance must be uploaded to either YouTube or Vimeo and be linked on the application form. Videos will not be accepted by mail. We recommend that competitors also bring a copy of the video file in MP3 format on a USB drive to the conference. Educators Rising competitions comply with FERPA regarding student privacy and video security. Competitors are responsible for ensuring that their competition videos comply with local and state requirements regarding student privacy.
- Except when explicitly specified, the Internet may not be used during a competition presentation at the Educators Rising National Conference. All relevant files and resources should be brought to the competition site on a USB drive. All Prezi files should be downloaded to the USB drive. Internet access may not be available during the competition. Laptops and projectors will be provided. Students should bring their own pointing device if needed.

Conference Registration, Attendance, and Participation in Events

- **All competitors must attend the Educators Rising National Conference and plan to arrive no later than 11 am on the first day of the conference and stay through the awards ceremony on the final day.** Conference dates and locations will be posted on the Educators Rising website and Membership Portal.
- Competitors must report to their assigned areas on time. Failure to report at their scheduled time can result in disqualification. ***Competition schedules will be posted in the Educators Rising Membership Portal one month before the conference.*** Be sure to check these schedules before planning your travel.
- Competitors are expected to dress in business-casual attire. (See the section Competition Dress Code for details on what is acceptable.) Points may be deducted from the entrant's score for failing to follow the dress code.
- Spectators are only permitted in the competitions marked "Open to Spectators." This includes parents, chaperones, teacher leaders, and other attendees. Spectators may not coach or offer any verbal or nonverbal assistance to a contestant during that contestant's assigned time slot with the judges. A breach of this guideline may result in the disqualification of the contestant.
- Teacher Leaders, Chaperones, and Parents are prohibited from approaching judges to discuss scoring or feedback. All questions or concerns should be brought to the attention of a national office staff member.

Judging and Scoring

- Scoring is based on the posted individual competition rubric.

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- Final scores will be based on a scaled score. Scaled scores are calculated through a number of methods including judges tie breakers and room normalizations.
- Judges will break ties in all competitive events.
- To accommodate a large number of competitors, we use multiple rooms each with its own set of judges. To ensure fairness across these rooms, we employ a well-established mathematical method to normalize scores. This method helps balance judge subjectivity and ensures all competitors have a fair shot, regardless of their assigned room.
  - In each competitive event, each competitor gets an average score from the judges. That score is averaged with the partner judge. If there is a deviation of more than one standard deviation between rooms, the two rooms are normed against one another to that deviation. Final scores used for ranking are the normalized (also known as scaled scores).
  - When normalizing scoring, perfect scores will be excluded from the normalization process. If more than one student in the same division in the same competition receives a perfect score, a second set of judges will review the recorded presentations for those students to make a final decision.

Awards

- For Competitions: Medals and certificates will be presented to the top three entries in each division for individual competitions. Trophies and certificates will be presented to the top three entries in each division for team competitions. All places will receive electronic certificates after the conference.
- For Contests: Ribbons will be awarded to students in each category in each division with scores as follows:
  - Blue-Scores 98-100
  - Red-Scores 94-97
  - White-Scores 90-93

Inquiry Process

- Following the conference, the student scores will be released directly to the participating student(s). The scores will provide individual judges' scores, the average score for the two judges, and the normalized score (if necessary.)
- Students will have 3 business days to file an inquiry regarding the validity of their score. Students will be required to complete the online inquiry request form and submit all required documentation for consideration. **No appeal will be accepted after the 3-day period.**
- Staff will review the scoring and respond to the inquiry within 30 days. **All decisions are final.**

Competition Dress Code

All competitors are expected to dress in business casual attire when competing. Refer to the guidelines below for a detailed explanation of what is and is not permissible as business casual.

- **Slacks, Pants, and Suit Pants**
  Slacks that are similar to Dockers and other makers of cotton or synthetic material pants, wool pants, flannel pants, dressy capris, nice-looking dress synthetic pants and jeans without holes are acceptable. Inappropriate slacks or pants include jeans with holes, sweatpants, exercise pants, Bermuda shorts, short shorts, shorts, bib overalls, leggings, and any spandex or other form-fitting pants that people wear for biking.
- **Skirts, Dresses, and Skirted Suits**
  Casual dresses and skirts, and skirts that are split at or below the knee are acceptable. Dress and skirt length should be at a length at which you can sit comfortably in public. Mini skirts, skorts, sun dresses, and spaghetti-strap dresses are inappropriate.
- **Shirts, Tops, Blouses, and Jackets**
  Casual shirts, dress shirts, sweaters, tops, and polo shirts are acceptable. Educators Rising polo shirts are encouraged. Inappropriate attire includes tank tops; midriff tops; shirts with political messaging and/or potentially offensive, terms, logos, pictures, cartoons, or slogans; halter tops; tops with bare shoulders; sweatshirts, and t-shirts unless worn under another blouse, shirt, jacket, or dress.
- **Shoes and Footwear**
  Conservative athletic or walking shoes, loafers, clogs, sneakers, boots, flats, dress heels, and leather deck-type shoes are acceptable. Flashy athletic shoes, thongs, flip-flops, and slippers are not acceptable.
- **Hats and Head Covering**
  Hats are not appropriate inside the building. Head covers that are required for religious purposes or to honor cultural traditions are allowed.

Citations, References, and Copyrighted Material

- All ideas, text, images, and sound from other sources used for the competition must be cited in competition submissions.
- Competitors are strongly discouraged from using copyrighted material in their competition entries. If copyrighted material is used, written permission must be obtained to display and present media-related materials at the Educators Rising National Conference and post-media-related materials on the Educators Rising website. All permissions obtained to use copyrighted material must be included with the entry submission. (Note: This requirement applies to music used in videos, graphics taken from the

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internet, and other media-related materials. It does not apply to artifacts collected for a project.)

- Plagiarism is strictly prohibited in all documents submitted. Judges can disqualify students from competing if it is determined that any part of their documents have been plagiarized.

Use of AI

- Unless specifically stated in the guideline, the use of artificial intelligence (AI) software and programs is strictly prohibited in creating and preparing all materials submitted for Educators Rising competitions. This includes but is not limited to, documents, graphics, speeches, videos, and presentations. All submitted work must be the original and independent creation of the participant. Use of spelling and grammar check is allowed.
- Students competing will attest that they did not use any AI in the development and delivery of their competition. Students who are found in violation will be disqualified from the competition.

Electronic Devices

- Recording devices are not allowed in competitive events.
- All electronic devices—including but not limited to, cell phones, iPads/tablets, electronic readers, smart watches, etc.—must be turned off unless otherwise noted in specific event regulations.
- No electronic communication devices of any kind are permitted during competition.

Student Responsibilities for Competitions

- Students who participate in any Educators Rising competitive event are responsible for knowing all deadlines, updates, changes, and clarifications related to that event. Students and advisors must routinely check the EdRising Membership Portal for updated information.
- Entrants grant Educators Rising the right to use and publish the submission in print, online, or in any media without compensation.
- Entrants grant Educators Rising the right to post photos of students for promotional purposes on the Educators Rising website, Membership Portal, and social media sites.

DEADLINES AND CHECKLIST

Ready to compete at Nationals?

Here is a checklist to help you get prepared, registered, and on the official schedule for nationals!

SUBMISSIONS OPEN: **FEBRUARY 1, 2026, 8:00 A.M.** EASTERN TIME
DEADLINE TO SUBMIT COMPETITION APPLICATIONS: **APRIL 6, 2026, 5:00 P.M.** EASTERN TIME
DEADLINE FOR COMPETITORS TO REGISTER FOR CONFERENCE: **APRIL 6, 2026, 5:00 P.M.** EASTERN TIME

- ☐ **Review the full national competition guidelines and rubric.** Check the Resources Section in the EdRising Membership Portal. ***Some processes may be different from your state/regional conference.***
- ☐ **Update your contact information in the EdRising Membership Portal for the summer.** It is recommended that students use a personal mail address where they can receive Educators Rising email communication. Confirmations and reminder emails will be sent to the email listed on the competition application. Often school emails do not allow for Educators Rising emails to be received.
- ☐ **Step one:** Go to the National Competition page in the EdRising Membership Portal. **Step two:** Click on the title of the competition for which you are signing up to compete. **Step three:** Read the guidelines and rubrics. **Step four:** Click Apply, which will take you to the national competition online application platform. All competitors must submit the online competition application even if no additional documents need to be submitted. Only one application is to be submitted for Dual or Team competitions. ***This only registers you for the competitions, you will still need to register for the conference separately.***
- ☐ **Complete the online application, upload any required documents/video links, and submit by the stated deadline.** Depending on your competition, some of these items are judged before the conference so make sure they are in their final form. Recommendation: Have someone proofread your documents before submitting them. Only competitors who register by the deadline will be scheduled to compete.

  For competitions that have multiple students participating only one application should be submitted and all students need to be listed as team members in all places indicated on the application form.
- ☐ **Print and save your confirmation email and application number.** You will need the application number when you register for the conference.
- ☐ **Register as a competitor for the Educators Rising National Conference**. All national conference information, including how to register, can be found on the Educators Rising National website.
- ☐ **Find out when you are scheduled to compete onsite.** Competition schedules will be posted in the EdRising Membership Portal one month prior to the conference. Go to the Resources section to find the posted schedules. Be sure to check these schedules prior to planning your travel. Competitors should plan to be available for competitions from 1 PM (conference time zone) on opening day through the awards celebration on the afternoon of the last day.
- ☐ **Practice, practice, practice!** The best way to prepare for your on-site competition is to practice in front of your peers. Recommendation: Reread the National Competition Guidelines and Rubric for your competition.
- ☐ **Head to Nationals!** National placers will be announced at the National Conference Awards Celebration on the final day of the conference. Don't miss your chance to be recognized! Be sure that when you plan your transportation for the conference you can attend this final celebration.

PUBLIC SPEAKING COMPETITION

COMPETITION TYPE: Individual — Open to spectators
ELIGIBILITY LEVELS: Middle School, High School Junior Varsity, High School Varsity, Collegiate
EDUCATORS RISING STANDARDS:

- Standard I: Understanding the Profession
- Standard II: Learning About Students
- Standard VII: Engaging in Reflective Practice

Contest Purpose

Self-composure, confidence, and the ability to clearly articulate and communicate information are valuable skills for all educators. The Public Speaking Competition is designed to highlight students who demonstrate these qualities by combining thoughtful preparation and confident delivery into an interesting presentation on a current education topic.

Students participating in this competition will compose and deliver a speech of approximately 400 to 600 words (three to five minutes when spoken aloud) on the assigned topic. Competitors will be delivering their speech in front of on-site judges.

Assigned Topic

The topic for the 2026 Public Speaking Competition: Creating student-centered assessments

In recent years, learner-responsive assessment has become a central focus in education reform. Traditional assessment practices often overlook the varying needs, strengths, and contexts of students—resulting in missed opportunities to support authentic learning and growth for all learners.

As prospective educators and leaders, your ability to design and champion for assessments that are fair and student-centered for everyone is essential. The Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing urges educators to shift from one-size-fits-all assessments toward approaches that recognize historical barriers to success, incorporate student voice, and allow for multiple forms of demonstrating learning.

How can traditional assessments reinforce unfair systems or structures in classrooms? What does it mean to design assessments with all learners in mind? What strategies can educators use to ensure that every student has a fair opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge? How can student-centered assessment approaches strengthen student confidence, learning outcomes, and classroom relationships?

Citation:

American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, & National Council on Measurement in Education. (2014). Standards for educational and psychological testing. American Educational Research Association. https://www.aera.net/Publications/Books/Standards-for-Educational-Psychological-Testing-2014-Edition

Competition Guidelines

A. The speech must be about the assigned topic. Research and use of data are encouraged.

B. The length of the speech should be approximately 400 to 600 words (three to five minutes when spoken aloud) in length.

C. Two copies of the Public Speaking Competition speech script must be brought to the competition and given to the judges at the start of the competitor's presentation.

D. The speech must be uploaded at the time of application.

E. The competitor may use up to five 4x6-inch index cards while delivering his or her speech. Only one side of each index card may be used for notes.

F. Each presentation is to be a minimum of three minutes and a maximum of five minutes. Competitors will respond to judges' follow-up questions. The entire presentation and question session will last a total of no more than 10 minutes.

G. One judge will also serve as a timekeeper. Speakers will receive a visual, non-verbal indication that there is one minute remaining when they reach the four-minute mark of their speeches. Speakers will be stopped at five minutes.

H. A microphone will be available for the presentation.

I. One visual aid may be used, but this is entirely optional. AV equipment will not be available for this competition.

PUBLIC SPEAKING COMPETITION

LEVEL (MIDDLE SCHOOL, HIGH SCHOOL JUNIOR VARSITY, HIGH SCHOOL VARSITY, COLLEGIATE)

DETAILED SCORING RUBRIC

Judges should use this rubric as a guide to assigning points on the Feedback & Tally Sheet.

PRE-SCORED COMPONENTS

Speech Mechanics

Points Available	**15–13** **Accomplished**	**12–9** **Commendable**	**8–5** **Developing**	**4–1** **Needs Improvement**
Organization	The speech has a logical and effective structure with clear transitions.	The speech is generally well-organized with some effective transitions.	The speech structure is somewhat disorganized, or transitions are lacking	The speech is poorly organized with unclear or absent transitions
Grammar and Mechanics	Reflects a professional-quality document. Contains no errors in mechanics (spelling, grammar, punctuation, formatting, capitalization).	Reflects a commendable, student-level document with one or two errors in mechanics (spelling, grammar, punctuation, formatting, capitalization).	Reflects a document in need of some proofreading and/or revision. Contains three or four errors in mechanics (spelling, grammar, punctuation, formatting, capitalization).	Numerous errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, formatting, capitalization.
Supporting Evidence	The speech contains strong, relevant, and credible evidence to support claims.	The speech contains adequate supporting evidence but could be stronger.	The speech has limited or weak supporting evidence.	The speech lacks supporting evidence or contains irrelevant evidence.

COMPONENTS SCORED ON-SITE

Presentation Content

Points Available	**20-16** **Accomplished**	**15-11** **Commendable**	**10-6** **Developing**	**5-1** **Needs Improvement**
Depth	The speech reflects a deep and comprehensive understanding of multiple factors and points of view involved in the issue. It succeeds in uncovering root issues and proposing compelling, well-founded solutions.	The speech reflects an understanding of the issue and succeeds in proposing well-founded solutions.	The speech is on-topic. Responses offer multiple good points but would benefit from more exploration, detail, or research.	The speech reflects a limited or flawed understanding of the issue. Solutions offered may not be plausible. An effort by the speaker to prepare by gathering relevant information may not be evident.
Insight	The content of the highly focused speech reflects keen understanding and striking insight into a major public issue.	The speech offers useful, well-detailed ideas that warrant further exploration beyond this session.	The speech offers intuitive ideas that would have benefited from further unpacking in this session.	The inconsistently focused speech may offer ideas that are only partially developed and feel incomplete.

Presentation Delivery

Points Available	10–9 Accomplished	8–6 Commendable	5–3 Developing	2–1 Needs Improvement
Structure	The speech reflects a truly impressive, nuanced command of how to build and deliver a powerful message. The speech is successfully and strategically sequenced to move the listener.	The speech reflects a largely successful effort to develop a compelling message to the listener.	The speech follows a traditional structure. While on-topic, the speech lacks strength at one or more moments. The structure may be lacking or weak in one or more areas.	The speech reflects an attempt to address the prompt but is missing multiple necessary components to offer a cogent, compelling message.
Presence	The speaker's sustained eye contact, effective posture, and professional demeanor, expertly complement the substance of the speech to deliver the maximum possible impact to the listener.	The speaker's mostly sustained eye contact, positive posture, and pleasant demeanor complement the content of the speech quite well. The presenter may appear to slip in and out of character when beginning and concluding the speech. With further practice, the speaker could develop into an accomplished public presenter.	The speaker's inconsistent eye contact, posture, and demeanor reflect a straightforward recital of the material. The speaker could do more to fully capitalize on the added impact possible with a focused, sustained presence.	The speaker's eye contact, posture, and demeanor could benefit from more practice and coaching so that the speaker's presence consistently complements the content.
Vocal Delivery	Clarity of voice, pacing, and modulation of tone are expertly crafted to deliver to the listener maximum impact and understanding.	Clarity of voice, pacing, and modulation of tone are strong. The listener is able to understand what the speaker is conveying.	Clarity of voice, pacing, and modulation of tone are straightforward. The listener is able to understand, but the impact would be increased with a more dynamic vocal delivery.	Clarity of voice, pacing, and modulation of tone are inconsistent during the speech. At times, the vocal delivery distracts from the content of the speech and diminishes its potential impact.

Overall Impact

Points Available	20–16 Accomplished	15–11 Commendable	10–6 Developing	5–1 Needs Improvement
Overall Impact	The content and delivery blend seamlessly to craft an exceptional experience. The speech is ready right now to be delivered to policy-makers and education stakeholders because it has the potential to sway the debate on this issue.	The content and delivery work to offer a commendable speech. With some revisions and delivery tweaks, the speech would be ready to deliver to policy-makers and education stakeholders.	The speech reflects a developing effort to engage in oratory on public issues. The speech's delivery and content have room for improvement.	The speech requires significantly more work. Delivery and content would benefit from guided practice. Significant errors may distract from the content of the speech.

Length

Points Available	5	3	1
Length	Speech is between four and five minutes.	Speech is between 2.5 and less than 4 minutes.	Speech is shorter than 2.5 minutes or had to be stopped at 5 minutes.

Speech Copies

Points Available	5	0
Speech Copies	Competitor provided two hard copies of the speech to the judges at the start of the presentation.	Competitor did not provide two hard copies of the speech to the judges at the start of the presentation.

PUBLIC SPEAKING COMPETITION

LEVEL (MIDDLE SCHOOL, HIGH SCHOOL JUNIOR VARSITY, HIGH SCHOOL VARSITY, COLLEGIATE)

Student Name:_____

Student's School, City, State:_____

- Judges will use the Detailed Scoring Rubric as their guide to score students' competition entries.
- Points and feedback will be emailed to the student competitors no later than two weeks after the conference.

PRE-SCORED COMPONENTS

Speech Mechanics

	Accomplished	Commendable	Developing	Needs Improvement	Score
Organization	15-13	12-9	8-5	4-1	
Grammar & Mechanics	15-13	12-9	8-5	4-1	
Supporting Evidence	15-13	12-9	8-5	4-1	

PRE-SCORE_____/45

COMPONENTS SCORED ON-SITE

Presentation Content

	Accomplished	Commendable	Developing	Needs Improvement	Score
Depth	20-16	15-11	10-6	5-1	
Insight	20-16	15-11	10-6	5-1	

Presentation Delivery

	Accomplished	Commendable	Developing	Needs Improvement	Score
Structure	10-9	8-6	5-3	2-1	
Presence	10-9	8-6	5-3	2-1	
Vocal Delivery	10-9	8-6	5-3	2-1	

Overall Impact

	Accomplished	Commendable	Developing	Needs Improvement	Score
Overall Impact	20-16	15-11	10-6	5-1	

Length

	4-5 Minutes	2.5 – less than 4 Minutes	Less than 2.5 Minutes or had to be stopped at 5 Minutes	Score
Length	5	3	1	

Speech Copies

	Provided 2 Copies	Did not provide 2 Copies	Score
Speech Copies	5	0	

ON-SITE SCORE_____/105

TOTAL SCORE_____/145

FEEDBACK FOR STUDENTS: Write two or more sentences.