**LPDL Scrimmage Guidelines**

**(adopted Fall, 2020)**

**The Theory of Scrimmages:**

Among the definitions of the word scrimmage are two from the Merriam-Webster dictionary that particularly apply to what we’re doing in the LPDL: a scrimmage is “practice play,” or “the interplay between two teams.” The idea of “play” is central to both of these phrases. Scrimmages are not all-out conflicts. They are not high-stakes contests. They don’t even result in formal “winners” and “losers.” Rather, they are a form of organized play – a chance for people to practice and develop their skills, to interact in a “friendly” way in a context that allows everybody involved to learn from each other and grow together. As we will conduct them this year, they are essentially a form of expanded team meeting. But instead of having just our own school teammates to interact with, we will participate in an expanded community that will help us all to expand our perspectives and learn from each other’s knowledge and philosophies. All of the guidelines provided below are designed with this philosophy in mind.

**Student Participation in Scrimmages (Parliamentary Debate):**

***Overview:*** The scrimmage administrators are dedicated to ensuring that all students have the opportunity to participate in as many scrimmage rounds as possible. With that in mind, the scrimmage administrators retain the right to *either*: (a) schedule “singleton students” as Maverick teams, *or* (b) pair singletons together in order to create two person teams. The decision on which approach to use will be based on which best ensures that an “even number of teams” is entered in the scrimmage, thus obviating the need to schedule “bye” rounds.

***Pairs vs. Mavericks***: Whenever possible, in order to approximate the Parliamentary debate model, students will participate as two-person teams. However, whenever necessary, “singleton” students are encouraged to participate as “Mavericks” when no partner is available (within the limitations of the “Overview” comments above). Any given scrimmage may potentially have multiple “Mavericks” representing different schools.

***Hybrids:*** Hybrid teams are a great opportunity for debaters with different backgrounds, training, and levels of experience to learn from people they don’t otherwise get to work with. Recognizing the value of hybrids, the organization, and/or individual coaches, may encourage the formation of inter-squad “hybrid” teams. These hybrids may be created in any of the following ways:

(1) A school enters an “odd number” of students and prefers to have their “extra singleton student” debate as part of a team (rather than as a Maverick). This school may arrange in advance to have their student partner with a particular student from another particular school. For example, the coaches of “School A” and “School C” may decide in advance to have their students work together. Hybrid teams created in this way cannot be split into two separate Maverick teams unless the scrimmage administrators (in an attempt to avoid the use of byes) request such a split and both team coaches agree to this splitting.

(2) At other times, a singleton student may be entered by any given school, and their coach may say “this student is available for a hybrid pairing.” Such hybrids will be scheduled when the following conditions apply: (1) more than one school wishes to have a “singleton” student participate as part of a hybrid, (2) the creation of hybrid teams will best serve the logistic needs of the scrimmage event (enabling all students to participate in all rounds by avoiding the need for “bye” rounds), and (3) the students involved (in consultation with their coaches) agree at the point of entering the scrimmage to be placed in a hybrid pairing. Students entered as “hybrid-available students” will be required to partner with whoever the scrimmage administrators pair them with.

(3) In order to encourage inter-squad learning and camaraderie, schools are encouraged to perform in hybrid pairings *even when it is not numerically “necessary” to do so*. Thus, for example, The University of Malrolle might enter two students, and the College of Kamchatka might enter two students – and these students might participate in the scrimmage as “Team A = Malrolle Student 1 paired with Kamchatka Student 2,” and “Team B = Malrolle Student 2 paired with Kamchatka Student 1.” Such hybrids might be formed according to the procedures outlined in either (1) or (2) above.

**Coach/Judge Participation in Scrimmages:**

Given the small number of schools who might participate in any given scrimmage, it is not feasible to guarantee the availability of critics/judges unconnected to any of the schools participating in any given round. Furthermore, any attempt to provide “neutral” judges is unnecessary, given the nature of these scrimmages as “interactive play.” Since they are learning opportunities, we will not treat them as “adjudicated contests.” Instead, we will view them as an extended form of team practice sessions, opportunities for expanded coaching. Thus, any given round may receive feedback from either of the following: (1) neutral critic(s)/judge(s) unconnected with any of the participating schools, or (2) one or more coaches/critics affiliated with one or more of the participating schools. Some scrimmage rounds might receive feedback from a single critic/judge. Other rounds might receive feedback from two or more critics/judges.

*No “win/loss” decisions will be rendered in any scrimmage rounds*. Rather, the purpose of each round is to help all students involved become more aware, skillful, and competent debaters. Critics/judges are defined as feedback-providers who seek to help all students in the round (whether they are their own students or not) improve as a result of the round. Students should listen with open minds, attempt to understand and process any feedback they receive, and then consult with their own personal coaches as to how to make use of (or set aside) any particular bit of guidance they receive.

In order to increase student engagement and the educational value of scrimmages to all participants, the LPDL encourages students and coach/critics to participate in post-round conversations. All participants should feel free to ask questions, discuss specifics, and request more information about each other’s perceptions of the round. However, these post-round conversations are expected to abide by several guidelines: (1) the tone of these discussions should be collegial and supportive, not confrontational or combative (and under no circumstances aggressively rude), (2) these conversations should focus on debate issues rather than personal issues, (3) coaches/critics should respect the fact that different schools have different philosophies and different approaches, and (4) these conversations should not be so lengthy as to interfere with the scheduling of the scrimmage or the timely completion of the scrimmage experience.

**Logistics:**

As feasible, the LPDL organization will schedule one or more LPDL-sponsored scrimmages during academic year 2020-21. The dates and times of these scrimmages will be announced at least one week in advance, and all League Members will have the option of entering (or not entering) each such scrimmage. LPDL Officers will schedule each scrimmage. The League retains the option of scheduling these scrimmages at any of the following times: (1) Fridays, (2) Saturdays, (3) weekday evenings, and/or (4) Sundays. Any given scrimmage will be scheduled based on the consideration of such factors as the existence of conflicting tournaments, the general availability/calendar of other tournaments, the preferences of member schools, and/or the availability of students-judges-administrators.

Individual member schools, of course, retain the right to hold inter-squad scrimmages outside of these official league-sponsored events. Thus, School B and School D might choose to set up a private scrimmage just for their students without opening the event up to the broader group.