Middle School Debaters — GFCA Regulations Summary

Relevant sections of GFCA bylaws: 1.11-1.14.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Grade</th>
<th>Divisions Allowed</th>
<th>Divisions Not Allowed</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7th Grade and Below</td>
<td>Middle School divisions only</td>
<td>HS divisions — may not compete against high school students at GFCA-sanctioned tournaments</td>
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<tr>
<td>8th Grade</td>
<td>All MS Divisions</td>
<td>HS Varsity or Open</td>
<td>No longer eligible for Novice/First Year divisions or awards after the 1st year competing in high school speech and debate divisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th Grade and Beyond</td>
<td>HS Divisions</td>
<td>MS Divisions</td>
<td>No longer eligible for Novice/First Year divisions or awards after the 1st year competing in high school speech and debate divisions.</td>
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</table>

General Rules
- Students cannot compete in Georgia high school divisions until 8th grade. A high school division is any division that includes high school students.
- Students in 7th grade or below may compete in Georgia middle school divisions as long as there are no high school competitors in that division.
- 8th graders may only compete in Georgia sub-varsity divisions (novice/first year and JV/second year.)
- Once a student has competed in a high school division, they are no longer eligible for “novice” or “first year” divisions in subsequent school years.
- Students who violate these rules risk losing eligibility for GFCA events in later years of high school competition.
- None of these rules prohibit a particular tournament from deciding not to allow middle school entries at their event.

Examples
- Jeremy is an 8th grader attending the Johns Creek Gladiator Challenge in Policy Debate. That tournament offers Novice, JV, and Varsity divisions in Policy Debate, so Jeremy may compete in Novice or JV only — he may not compete in Varsity.
- Susana is an 8th grader attending the Bruce Rogers Invitational in Public Forum Debate. That tournament offers Novice and Varsity divisions in Public Forum, so Giovanna may compete in Novice only — she may not compete in Varsity.
- Hernán is an 8th grader who participates in humorous interpretation. He may only compete in middle school or novice divisions (where they are offered.) If a tournament does not offer middle school or novice speech events, Hernán may not compete at that tournament.
- Janelise is a 7th grader. She may only compete at tournaments that offer divisions exclusively for middle schoolers. Janelise may not compete against high school students until she is in 8th grade.

Best Practices
Here are some additional middle school “best practice” recommendations from the GFCA Middle School Committee:

- **Supervision** — MS students require a higher level of supervision than high school students. An adult should be on-site and available at all times, and each student should have that adult’s cell phone number. If possible, the adult should remain in a single central location, such as the cafeteria.

- **Length of Tournament** — debate tournaments are very long. Coaches should make sure to explain this to MS students and parents so they are not taken unaware. Coaches should recommend that students bring snacks (and/or provide them) for late evenings and long days. Coaches should make sure that students understand that (barring illness) they are expected to compete in all rounds through the end of the tournament.