4th Edition: November 2012

mspdp™
MIDDLE SCHOOL PUBLIC DEBATE PROGRAM

Core Skill Development
Debate helps students develop reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills across the curriculum as students learn to research and defend a variety of positions on controversial issues

Citizenship Laboratory
To enhance productive citizenship in a democratic society, debating facilitates the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence.

Best Program Design
The program offers standards-based instruction with an emphasis on the specific needs of students and teachers in the middle grades. The biggest and most successful program of its kind.

Teachers' Guide to the

Middle School Public Debate Program

Teacher's Guide and Starter Materials

This booklet contains all the materials teachers need to learn the Middle School Public Debate Program (MSPDP) format and program. It includes sample instructional materials, information about preparing for tournaments, topic lists, and judging information. Additional materials are available online at www.middleschooldebate.com.

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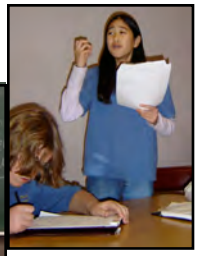
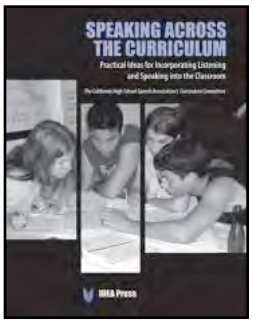


About This Booklet

This is a brief guide to the Middle School Public Debate Program (MSPDP), which currently serves tens of thousands of students in scores of schools throughout the United States. The program is housed at and primarily sponsored by Claremont McKenna College, in active partnership with the English-Speaking Union. Claremont McKenna College (CMC) is a liberal arts college with a primary mission of educating students for leadership positions in public affairs, business, and the professions.

This booklet contains starter materials for teachers, parents, and administrators interested in the MSPDP. It is normally shipped with a sample debate on DVD or VHS. Although the materials here provide most of the information needed to use the MSPDP in class and competition, additional information is available on our website, www.middleschooldebate.com. A more extensive treatment suitable for student use can be found in our textbook, Speak Out! Debate and Public Speaking in the Middle Grades, available on Amazon.com and other retailers. Teachers who are interested in integrating debate and speaking skills across the curriculum should consult Speaking Across the Curriculum.



About The MSPDP

Now ten years old, the MSPDP was designed with middle school teachers to meet the specific educational needs of young adolescents. Unlike all other middle school debating models, which merely map high school or college activities onto the middle grades, the design and implementation of the MSPDP has been informed by and geared towards research-based best practices in young adolescent education.

This model was used to create the extraordinarily successful Middle School Public Debate Program. In ten years, more than 40,000 students in hundreds of middle schools have received debate and argumentation class and contest training through the MSPDP. Pilot leagues are now starting in various locations throughout the United States.

The MSPDP works to set high expectations for students participating in fully integrated leagues that bring public, private, and charter schools together for cooperative and active learning in a laboratory environment.

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MIDDLE SCHOOL PUBLIC DEBATE PROGRAM

CMC
60 YEARS
OF LEADERS
IN THE MAKING

Introduction to the Middle School Public Debate Program:

Kate Shuster, Director, Middle School Public Debate Program

* Parts of this paper previously appeared in *idebate*, Volume 4, Issue 2.

The Need for Middle School Debate

There is a serious need for debating and public speaking programs in the middle grades. Most middle schools do not have extracurricular programs, particularly academic extracurricular programs. Students rarely have a chance to interact with students from other middle schools, particularly students from other communities. Further, middle school may be the last chance to productively reach students who are classified as "at-risk" students. These students are usually tracked into programs for low-achievers by the time they reach high schools, meaning that they are often not reached by high school debate programs, which normally reach students who are able to spare the time for elective courses or extracurricular clubs. If we can reach students in the middle grades, they are able to get the benefits of debate training. This means that students will be able to use the benefits of debate training once they get to a high school and beyond. Young adolescents are also less likely to be concerned about appearing "smart" in front of their peers, which means that students in the middle grades are particularly susceptible to involvement in debate and public speaking activities. In addition, parents are more likely to be actively involved in the education of their children in the middle grades than they are in high school. This is primarily because children are less independent in young adolescence than they are in later adolescence. Parental involvement is an essential part of program sustainability and expansion, as I will explain later.

Given the demonstrated importance of oral literacy in high school and beyond, it is particularly important to train young adolescent students in public speaking and debate. Young adolescents are quite talkative and argumentative, especially when compared to their counterparts in high schools. This makes debate a natural fit for the middle grades. When I speak to teachers about debate education, they often remark that the challenge for middle school students is not how to get them to debate, but how to get them to listen. Fortunately, debate does teach students how to be active and critical listeners. Listening skills are increasingly important in state-mandated content standards. These skills are critical to success across the curriculum, because if students do not develop sophisticated listening skills, they will not be able to fully process and engage other aspects of curricular instruction. In addition, debate creates an incentive structure to build listening skills as well as providing the infrastructure upon which such skills can be effectively constructed and developed. Such learning tools as "flowing," the system of taking notes in a formal debate, can help students to immediately focus on listening and critical engagement with an ongoing discussion.

Debate practice in the middle grades allows students to build skills they will need in high school and beyond. Debating is "active learning," understood as a process of involving students in an activity while they reflect critically about what it is they are doing. Active learning strategies help students to master content and develop thinking skills. This skill acquisition means that students are more likely to succeed in classes, particularly smaller and more challenging seminar-style classes, where students are normally called upon to discuss a wide variety of subjects on relatively short notice.

Although debate programs in the middle grades can help build and sustain high school debate programs (and this has been borne out in our outreach program), it is important to note that the purpose of middle school debate outreach should not be the expansion of high school debating. Middle school

students and middle level education should be seen as ends in themselves, rather than as instrumental to some further program. If students choose (for whatever reason) not to debate in high school and beyond, our programs can still be successful if they convey to students the skills they need for success in high school and beyond. In other words, we should design programs *for* middle school students rather than for high school students by way of middle school students. This approach, which sees middle level education as its own end, is consistent with the mission statements of organizations like the National Middle School Association, and is essential to understanding and taking action to meet the unique needs of young adolescents, their teachers, and their parents.

Indeed, the purpose of debate education should not necessarily be the indefinite continuation of formal debate practice. If debating is genuinely cross-curricular, students will not need to participate on the interscholastic debate team (if one is available, an increasing rarity in times of tight budgets) in order to reap the benefits of training in academic debate. Academic debate is a valuable exercise because it trains students to employ various component skills. In this respect, participating in a debate is much like writing a research paper. When students write a research paper, they use a variety of component skills such as spelling, grammatical construction, argument construction, evidence analysis, organization, outlining, persuasion, word choice, and citation. Similarly, when students engage in a debate, they are exercising a variety of component skills, practicing their oral literacy in a laboratory environment which enables careful and refined practice (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Some skills learned from debate in the middle grades.

Skill	Acquisition
Research Competence	Students research constantly throughout the debate season. Because topics change and are announced in advance, special impetus is created for students to learn about current events. Changing topics encourage students to constantly research through the season. Topics are designed to be interesting and accessible for students, creating additional incentives. Students research in a variety of accessible media and learn to share their research with other teammates through synthesis and summary, thereby exercising writing skills as well.
Media Literacy	Because students must consult and evaluate information from a variety of media, they develop media literacy skills as part of research. The debate process amplifies this learning, as students must find evidence and arguments to support multiple sides of given topics. Media literacy is developed in tandem with its companion skills: reading comprehension and argument literacy. Students learn to analyze arguments for their validity and the strength of evidence, thereby developing the leverage to critically analyze sources of information.
Reading Comprehension	Through debate participation, many students confront sources of information that they would never otherwise consume. Debate provides a series of incentives that challenge students to read materials which are often considerably above their customary reading levels. As students develop argument literacy, they gain tools to increase their reading comprehension because they can analyze difficult texts in terms of their more recognizable component parts. Reading comprehension is also aided by the development of summarization and outlining skills.
Argument Literacy	Students gain argument literacy as they learn to identify the constituent parts of arguments (including assertions, reasoning, and evidence). Argument literacy is a key skill for building reading comprehension and media literacy. Students learn to identify and compare arguments for their relative validity, using understanding of logical fallacies and other failures of reasoning. These skills apply across the curriculum, as students learn to evaluate systems of proof, critically engage difficult texts, and construct persuasive essays – often significantly above the expected abilities for their grade levels.
Evidence Evaluation	Associated with argument literacy development, debate helps students learn to critically evaluate many types of evidence, including historical and contemporary examples. Debate fosters a sensitivity to bias (student bias as well as author bias), assisting students in developing critical thinking skills.
Summarization and Outlining	Students summarize and synthesize their research. This summarization, necessitated by the extemporaneous demands of the format, helps students refine recall and reading comprehension skills.
Public Speaking	The debate format helps students to develop an optimal mix of impromptu and extemporaneous speaking skills. Oral literacy is developed through informed practice and repetition. Students gain confidence in otherwise intimidating speaking situations by preparing in advance by learning speaking techniques and conducting research on issues.
Floor Management and Civility	Students engage each other throughout the debate using points of information. This teaches skills associated with civil engagement. Students also learn a skill unique to parliamentary debate formats: floor management. Students learn to manage engaged discussions when multiple parties are seeking to enter the discussion. This management skill translates into multiple educational and professional settings.

The creation of the MSPDP presented unique opportunities to rethink existing debate education practices and outreach strategies. The challenge was to maximize student participation while maximizing skill acquisition at the same time. As a first step in designing the new program, I worked to cultivate a network of school administrators, teachers, and parents whose input was critical to program design, evaluation, and revision. This process of consultation resulted in a unique outreach model and debate format which was designed especially to meet the needs of middle school students while maximizing the acquisition of skills associated with debate. The program also vastly exceeded our projections of student participation – in the pilot year of the program, almost 2,000 students participated in classroom and competitive debates.

The MSPDP is now entering its seventh year, serving seven formal leagues of schools and with partnerships with many dozens of schools that are not participating in competitive interscholastic debating.

Program Design: The Format

For competition, the MSPDP uses a unique debate format that draws from many sources to maximize student participation as well as skill acquisition. This format was developed in consultation with professional educators. The format is outlined in Figure 2.. This debate format is designed to maximize skill development including student investigation and collaborative learning. The format is designed to emphasize public accessibility while emphasizing age-appropriate rigor. In this section, I will briefly highlight some key features of the program.

Three-Person Teams

After consultation with middle school teachers, we decided to use 3-person teams for the MSPDP format. The primary reason for this decision was to enable more students to participate in the program. We knew that many students would want to debate, and that we might thereby run into a shortage of rooms and judges. Allowing 6 people per debate would permit more students to debate than the standard American 4 person format. Further, the three-person format follows standard models for three-student workgroups commonly used in curricula for young adolescent students. Many teachers prefer to use three-person workgroups in learning situations, as these groups challenge students to manage interpersonal relations in a more complex environment than a simple two-person dyad. In fact, students report that they enjoy the three-person format more than the two-person format.

Points of Information

We borrowed points of information from the standard parliamentary debate format used all over the world. An application for a point of information is a request to the speaker that holds the floor to yield the floor to a statement or question from a

Figure 2: MSPDP Format Summary

Basics

There are two sides in the debate: the proposition side and the opposition side. The proposition team makes a case for the motion for debate. The opposition team opposes the case made by the proposition team.

Topics are chosen by teachers and announced before a tournament. Students do not choose their side.

After topics and sides are announced, students have 20 minutes to prepare for their debate. In the debate, students may only use notes prepared during the preparation time.

Speaker Positions

There are three debaters per side. Everyone gives one speech. This is the order of the speeches:

First proposition constructive
5 minutes
First opposition constructive
5 minutes
Second proposition constructive
5 minutes
Second opposition constructive
5 minutes
Opposition rebuttal
3 minutes
Proposition rebuttal
3 minutes

Points of information

May be a statement or a question. Can only be attempted during the middle three minutes of each constructive speech. May not be more than 15 seconds long. The speaker must recognize you to make your point. If the speaker does not recognize you, you must sit down.

member of the opposing team. Middle school debate incorporates points of information into all constructive speeches. After the first minute and before the last minute of each constructive speech, members of the opposing team have the opportunity to apply for points of information. The speaker who holds the floor has the option to accept or reject all attempts. If the speaker accepts a point, she will say "Yes, I'll take your point," or something similar. If she does not accept the point, she will say "No thank you," or something similar. The speaker is under no obligation to accept a specific number of points, although it is in her interest to accept as many points of information as she can.

The value of incorporating points of information is that interactivity in the debate format teaches civility and floor management skills, abilities that students will use in future endeavors as they must learn to manage attempted interruptions and thorough engagement by other participants in debates and discussions. Many debate advocates are currently trying to find a way to incorporate elements of civil discussion into debate formats; our experience with using points of information in the middle grades suggests that this element of debate practice can be an effective way to teach the desired skills while still engaging in formal debate practice.

Points of information are particularly useful for debate in the middle grades. Young adolescents are particularly engaged in formats which allow them to participate throughout. Students in the middle grades are easily bored, and enjoy the ability to engage throughout any given debate. This is true whether students are involved in a formal debate or in a panel discussion.

Topic Variation

In the middle school program, students debate a different topic in each debate. The topics for each tournament are chosen in advance of the event by teachers and league administrators, and are released up to one month before each competition. This process allows teachers to integrate research, preparation and practice into class and after-school sessions. Teachers and students overwhelmingly report that they enjoy having students debate a diversity of topics over the course of a tournament or a season.

Since topics are selected by teachers, teachers can include instructional subject matter as part of competitive preparation. This practice reverses traditional ideas about "debate across the curriculum;" rather than simply bringing debate to the curriculum, curricular materials can be exported as debate topics. Teachers strongly prefer to be actively involved in topic selection for debating.

Figure 3: Sample Topics

- The US should eliminate farm subsidies.
- Zoos do more harm than good.
- Soccer players should wear helmets.
- The US military should leave Iraq.
- Fried foods should have warning labels.
- Television is a bad influence on children
- Cell phones should be allowed in schools.
- The U.S. should not send humans into space.
- The United Nations has failed at its mission.
- Iran should be allowed to develop nuclear energy.
- Californians should approve Prop 74.
- Food aid does more harm than good.

Further, teachers and students can adapt topics to contemporary political and social crises and issues of immediate concern to the community arise. In some debate formats, the topic is selected well in advance of competition and does not change when events change. This can make topics less relevant to students and teachers. To see a few topics used in competition in the 2005-2006 school year, please refer to Figure 3. A more comprehensive list is available in this booklet. Notice that the topics used are simple and direct. In addition, they address a diverse array of issues.

Debate on flexible topics teaches students about a wide variety of events and policies over the course of a season. This practice mirrors the aims of liberal arts education in that students inform themselves about many issues as part of integrated instruction. Further, debate on multiple topics encourages students to adapt their arguments to the subject at hand, relying on original research on a continuing basis. Students reported that the variety of topics encouraged them to seek out teachers in different departments at their schools, looking for information to help them debate issues of interest. Interestingly, this increased the spread of debate in partner schools, as different teachers became involved in

working with the debate program. The breadth of topics demanded that students continually expand their knowledge base. All of these factors combine to create strong motivators for research.

Based on my observation of middle school students at work over the last eleven years, I have found it interesting that these students appear to be doing more original research than similarly situated high school students engaged in other debate formats. This observation has been confirmed by teachers who have experience in multiple formats, including administrative directors of other debating programs.

Finally, debate on flexible topics teaches a unique skill set to needy students. The associated skills include impromptu argumentation and interdisciplinary learning. The ability to debate on changing topics mirrors and amplifies classroom competence, as the ability to speak in an informed way on a variety of topics is critical to success in high school and beyond. In a world which increasingly demands that students consume information conveyed in thousands of media messages every day, debate on flexible topics trains students to think critically in a way that amplifies the media literacy learning associated with many forms of debate. Interdisciplinary training, in fact, may be necessary to ensure that students are able to transfer knowledge from one cognitive domain to another.

Empowering Student Voice

The MSPDP format is designed to encourage students to speak out in an informed way. Students are expected to develop expertise on an issue and then be able to debate either side of that issue.

At a competition, students arrive and register for debates. They come to a central location where the “pairings” for debate are posted. The “pairing” sheet gives students information about the upcoming debate, including what side (proposition or opposition) they will be representing, who their judge will be, and the room number for their debate. Once all students have had a chance to see the pairing sheet, the topic for the debate is announced. Students are given 20 minutes of preparation time to create their notes for the debate. At the conclusion of the preparation time, the debates must begin.

The preparation time is usually one of the most exciting periods of any competition. Students transcribe or summarize relevant parts of their notes, outline speeches, and work with other students on their team or squad to gather last-minute ideas for arguments and speaking techniques. The time pressure of the preparation time encourages students to work together in a dynamic way. Students construct arguments and organize themselves and others into ad hoc collective learning communities. Materials created prior to the preparation time are not permitted in the debate itself. This means that students cannot read a speech that someone else wrote for them, for example. Students must have enough information about the issue and have done enough research to be able to debate in an extemporaneous and effective manner.

This practice “levels the playing field,” in some respects, as once the debate begins, it is the student’s voice and the student’s ability to accurately characterize and defend her research that counts most of all.

Program Design: Administration and Function

The MSPDP model is designed to promote classroom debating and local competitive debating. In this section, I will lay out the basic design features of the program as well as explain how it is administered and projected to grow.

Central Administrator

The middle school model emphasizes sustainable local competition. In the pilot year, what is now the Inland Valley Debate League was run by a central administrator (myself). My primary duties included:

- Recruiting and retaining member schools;
- Training and supporting teachers;
- Soliciting and releasing topics for competition;
- Arranging for tournament sites and trophies;
- Building constituencies with district and school administrators;
- Establishing a league infrastructure;
- Training and certifying judges for competition; and
- Holding faculty workshops to promote curricular integration at partner schools.

2006-2007 MSPDP Leagues

IVDL: Inland Valley Debate League (CA)

ISDL: Independent Schools Debate League (CA)

DVDL: Desert Valleys Debate League (CA)

DCDL: District of Columbia Debate League (DC)

BADL: Big Apple Debate League (NY)

EBDL: East Bay Debate League (CA)

As the central administrator, my goal was to cease being the central administrator of the pilot league after its pilot year. Now that we are in year five of the pilot league, that goal has been realized. In the spring of 2003, the league teachers met and elected officers to run the league. They decided on an administrative model for the league after consulting with the president of our local high school league, Bob DeGroff (of Colton High School, in Colton, CA).

The pilot league renamed itself the Inland Valley Debate League (IVDL). The president of the league is primarily responsible for mentoring new teachers and schools, as well as soliciting and releasing topics. The league has chosen a tournament director to tabulate and administer competitions, using our new tabulation software. The secretary takes minutes of meetings but is also in charge of picking up trophies and bringing them to competitions. The league's treasurer collects dues from member schools, using those dues to pay for trophies for league tournaments.

In the last ten years, we have undertaken a program of substantial expansion of the MSPDP. We have successfully created fourteen leagues across the country, with our newest leagues in New Orleans and New Jersey.

One of the many lessons that we have learned as we have gone through the expansion process has been that expansion works best if teachers operate in a leading role. The most effective expansion drives we have had have been those led by teachers, where they contact and train other teachers directly, using our materials. Teacher-sponsored initiatives are the most effective, least costly, and most credible mechanisms for expanding the program. If teachers rely on us for all their training, we simply do not have the staff or the time to meet the demand for training. We have relied strongly on teacher empowerment for the success of the program, and we will rely increasingly on teacher empowerment as the program continues to grow.

Teacher Empowerment

The MSPDP format, instructional materials, and supporting videos are all designed to make an extremely rigorous form of debate immediately accessible to middle school teachers. In the pilot program, no teacher had previous debate training or experience. Yet all teachers were able to pick up the program after brief training sessions. In subsequent years, we have refined our materials to include:

- The MSPDP website, at www.middleschooldebate.com, featuring a full array of free materials for teachers and students.
- A textbook designed specifically to serve teachers using the MSPDP format in their classrooms and clubs. The textbook, titled Speak Out! Debate and Public Speaking in the Middle Grades, is published by

IDEA Press.

- Sample debates available on DVD and VHS, demonstrating best practices for both novice and advanced debaters.
- Additional instructional materials, including those contained in the book Speaking Across The Curriculum, published by IDEA Press.

Mastery of the format empowered teachers to connect with other teachers. The MSPDP model puts teachers in both an administrative and instructional role, which allows them to design a program that meets the specific needs of their school site. Since the program supports classroom debating, contest debating, and ancillary public speaking and argumentation training, teachers can serve as team leaders and trainers at the site and in their communities. The MSPDP model supports site innovation. All MSPDP teachers have developed innovative teaching strategies using debate. These included school-wide debate tournaments, public debates, integration of debate format elements into the classroom, and other intrascholastic events.

Teachers are the individuals who are best-positioned to direct debate instruction. They are on-site, they are able to continually recruit and discuss the participation of students, and they are able to garner administrative and district support. Also, teachers have sophisticated knowledge of the educational needs of students and much more teaching experience than any “knowledgeable” debate proxies that might be placed in the classroom.

Relying on teachers as instructional and administrative leads in the program also guarantees that program expansion will be easy and rapid. Once a league is established, the outreach coordinator’s focus can turn to recruiting new schools for the pilot league and subsequent leagues.

It is rare that MSPDP staff will conduct formal training sessions for teachers. Generally, when a school expresses interest in the program, we will send the lead teacher a “starter packet,” which includes materials available on the website. We will also send a DVD or VHS sample debate. Then, we ask the teacher to read the materials, watch the debate, and contact us afterwards to ask questions that may remain. This strategy helps to ensure that teachers look at the materials and approach their “training” with specific, targeted questions for MSPDP staff or their local league administrator or president. It also encourages teachers to learn the material on their own so that they can then teach it on their own,

Emphasis on Class Participation

Almost all MSPDP teachers are called upon to serve as “debate and speech” consultants at their school sites. Some even set up formal training sessions to help their colleagues use debate and speech in their class. Others use a more informal process, disseminating documents and instructional guides to other teachers at staff and department meetings. Our initial teacher training sessions have replicated themselves as many more dozens of teachers have begun to use debate in their classrooms.

As part of the program, we sponsor trainings for faculty interested in using debate in their classrooms. I have conducted workshops at dozens of schools for teachers who did not want to be debate coaches, but wanted to learn techniques for meeting content standards and exciting students about learning. These workshops and other conducted (formally and informally) by teachers have really been at the heart of the program in its first six years. Promoting classroom debating has been critical to maximizing skill acquisition and student participation.

Judge Training and Certification

One stumbling block for many debate leagues has been a lack of qualified judges. One stumbling block for student success is a lack of parent participation in their schooling. Our

judge certification program has been designed to overcome these two obstacles to league success.

I train coaches and tournament directors to become judge certifiers. These coaches, in turn, certify parent and community judges to judge debates at middle school competitions. College student volunteers are not exempt from this training process. The certification process includes the following steps:

1. The trainer gives prospective judges the MSPDP judging manual. Prospective judges are asked to read the manual in advance of their training. If this is not possible, for example, if the training is happening at a tournament, judges are given an abbreviated version of the manual as a "tip sheet." This "tip sheet," which includes a rubric and was designed by teachers, is included in this booklet, and in the on the "Resources" section of our website, as is the judging manual.

2. The trainer shows prospective judges a sample debate on videotape. Prospective judges are asked to take notes in the required manner (a standard flowsheet) and fill out a ballot after watching the debate. Then, prospective judges are asked to deliver their decision and comments as they would have to after a debate. If the training is happening at a tournament, prospective judges are sent to watch a debate with a certified judge.

3. Following the sample decisions, the trainer offers helpful feedback to each prospective judge. If the training is happening at a tournament, during Round 2 the tournament director or head judge trainer will have a question and answer session with prospective judges.

4. In order to receive a judging certificate, a prospective judge must judge a debate by herself/himself. We emphasize strongly that prospective judges should not judge by themselves until they are ready to judge by themselves. One thing that I say at judge training sessions is: "If you think it is easy to judge, you are not ready to judge." We really want judges to work hard at judging.

5. The names of certified judges are submitted to the central administrator or league president for inclusion at tournaments.

In addition to the judge certification program, there is considerable "on the job" training for judges in the league. In the MSPDP, all judges are required to reveal their decisions and explain the reasons for their decisions. This process accelerates judge education as well as student learning.

We found that the judge training program encouraged parents to become constructively involved in their students' debate participation. When parents judge debates, they recognize how difficult the process of debating and judging is. We also found that the certification process increased the numbers of available judges, allowing us to accommodate the sheer size of some of our competitions.

Finally, the certification process improved the quality of judging across the board in our competitions. It is our hope that some of these trained judges will "trickle up" to judge at high school competitions as students graduate and move on to participate in high school speech and debate events.

Sustainability

One of the challenges that has faced debate outreach programs in the USA and around the world is the question of sustainability. Leagues that are formed around a central administration with a centralized funding structure are particularly vulnerable to dissipation if the central administrator leaves, if the sponsoring institution decides to go in a different direction, or if the centralized funding pool dries up. Several debate leagues started in a centralized manner in the USA have suffered from these problems and collapsed in recent years. Others have struggled with issues of sustainability. Still others appear to have no interest in moving towards sustainability.

The MSPDP has successfully developed a protocol for transferring complete fiscal, administrative, and instructional responsibility to the leagues we have helped to start. I want to briefly explain how this has occurred:

- **Fiscal Responsibility.** Leagues are not financially supported by Claremont Colleges National Debate Outreach. Schools are expected to pay dues into a central league fund that is used to buy trophies for league competitions. Dues are $300 per school for a year. These funds are used exclusively to buy trophies, and are sufficient to fund competitions for the year. These dues cover school participation at all tournaments for all students for the year. Schools are responsible for their own costs for transportation to tournaments.

- **Tabulation**. One major obstacle to league sustainability has been tabulation. In many debate leagues that have been started by a central administrator or administering organization, the league tournaments are tabulated (and, in fact, must be tabulated) by central administrators. The MSPDP has successfully transferred tabulation and tournament direction to teachers and school administrators. It is, as far as I know, the only similar program in the USA that has successfully transferred this control. Danny Cantrell, the assistant director of debate at Cerritos, CA, in Southern California, designed a tabulation program specifically for MSPDP competitions. The program, MSPDP Tab, is easily operated by novices and is available on our web site along with a manual for the program.

- **Administrative Responsibility.** MSPDP leagues, after the first year, are fully administered by their elected officers. In the first year, it is necessary to have someone (possibly a teacher) function as the central administrator for the league. After the first year, control is completely transferred to the league.

Conclusion

I have been involved in debate outreach in one form or another since 1997. In all this time, I have never had the privilege to participate in a program like the MSPDP – a program which has been an unbridled success and which has brought the skills associated with debate to such a large number of students for so little money. It has been a privilege to be associated with the program and with the teachers and students who have made it their own. I can remember pleading with schools to join our debate outreach program. But now, the schools call us. The word of mouth surrounding the program has been so positive that even in an era of tight budgets I receive phone calls from several schools every week. These schools just want to know how they can be involved.

It would be my pleasure to help any school in any country if they are interested in developing a MSPDP league or program. Please feel free to contact me with any needs for information or answers.

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Guide to the Sample Debate

Introduction

"Ban Boxing!" is a good example of how a middle school debate should run. The sample debate closely mirrors the conditions of league tournaments: the debaters received their topics a few weeks in advance; the teams were assigned to the proposition or opposition 20 minutes before the debate is to start; and the debaters are using their own intellectual power and" flow sheets" to deliver arguments (they are not reading from a script). The purpose of this guide is to provide supplemental information to the debate. The attached flow sheet serves as a guide for how judges and students should follow and participate in debates. Below, there are explanations of speaker roles and essential elements of debating.

What You Do Not See:

- ✓ **The Judge:** The judge is sitting just behind the camera, diligently taking notes on his or her flow sheet, and timing the debate. The slap on the table that you hear one minute after construction speeches begin, and one minute before they end, is an indication that debaters are in unprotected time. Protected time exists to ensure that each debater has the ability to begin and conclude his or her major arguments without interruption.

- ✓ **The Audience:** Often, there are audience members present during debates. They sit respectfully listen to both sides of the debate. Audience members cannot communicate in any way with debaters, but they can heckle (see 'heckling' below).

What You See:

- ✓ **The Proposition**: The proposition sits on the judge's left and makes a case for the motion.

- ✓ **The Opposition:** The opposition sits on the judge's right and argues against the case that is made for the motion.

- ✓ **Points of Information (POIs):** During unprotected time the debaters may use POIs. A POI is an argument delivered by the opposing side during a speech (it can also be a question). To give a POI, a debater stands politely during their opponent's speech and waits to be called upon. The person giving the speech can politely take POIs ("Yes, I'll take your point.") or reject them ("No, thank you.").

- ✓ **Heckling:** Banging desks, shouting 'Hear! Hear!', and saying 'shame!' are appropriate means of heckling. It is an act of good will to bang a desk when anyone takes the floor for a speech. It is also helpful for debaters to bang desks when a speaker on their side has made a good point. Shouting 'Hear! Hear!' is another way to affirm good arguments. Debaters should say 'shame' if they feel a team has accidentally misrepresented previous arguments or has said something deplorable. It is not appropriate to shame every argument made by an opposing team.

- ✓ **Use of flow sheets:** Debaters, the judge, or anyone else actively following the debate, take notes on a flow sheet. Debaters structure arguments around their flow sheet because it helps them stay organized during a debate. The papers you see at the debaters' tables and on the podium are their flow sheets. Attached to this guide are two sample flow sheets done by two different judges who watched this debate.

Speeches

- ✓ First Proposition Constructive (5 minutes): This is the first speech presented in a debate. The first proposition speaker uses this speech to introduce the motion, provide an interpretation of the motion, and outline the major arguments for his or her side. This speech is the foundation for the whole entire debate. During the boxing debate, Chloe advances about five major arguments for her side. Before doing this, she offers an introduction and narrows the definition of 'boxing.'

- ✓ **First Opposition Constructive (5 minutes):** It is the role of this speaker to both engage arguments from the previous speech and give new arguments to advance the opposition case. It is critical that this speaker engages all information he or she has on their flow sheet. Brandon specifically addresses each argument brought up by the proposition side. At the same time, Brandon advances unique arguments about the merit and safety of boxing.

- ✓ **Second Proposition Constructive (5 minutes):** The nature of this speech resembles the first opposition constructive. This is the last chance for the proposition to introduce new arguments. First, this speaker should give a brief summary of proposition arguments brought up earlier in the debate. Then, the speaker should engage in line-by-line refutation. The speech should end with a relevant conclusion that informs the judge about the major issue of the debate. Chaithra refutes Brandon's opposition arguments and extends proposition arguments brought up during Chloe's speech. She adds new examples and analysis about death, crime, and emulation of boxing. She ends the speech with new arguments about the brainwashing effect of boxing on children. She uses the example of Lionel Tate to prove her point.

- ✓ **Second Opposition Constructive (5 minutes):** This is the last chance for the opposition to present new arguments. A second opposition speaker can continue line by line refutation, advance new arguments to the case, add depth to previous arguments, and engage in analysis about which arguments are important, inconsistent, or unimportant to the resolution of the debate. Kevin presents a new argument about the difference between boxing and wresting. In the end, the focus of his speech is about how making boxing an underground sport will create more problems than it solves.

- ✓ **Opposition Rebuttal (3 minutes):** This speaker must identify a few important issues and use these as independent proofs about why the opposition should win. It is impossible to use all points brought up during the debate. No new arguments are allowed at this point in the debate. The speaker should take care that she or he does not simply repeat what was said in the second opposition constructive speech. Valerie identifies about five critical issues and turns them into multiple independent proofs about how the opposition side won those issues and the debate.

- ✓ **Proposition Rebuttal (3 minutes):** This is the final speech in the debate. This speaker should answer arguments brought up in both the second opposition constructive and the opposition rebuttal speeches. Using the critical issues of the debate, the speech should culminate in a few independent proofs about why the proposition side has won the debate. Richard refutes the slew of arguments presented in the final opposition stand. His argumentation culminates with the ongoing theme that was first presented in the beginning of Chloe's speech: the barbarity and immorality of boxing.

Using The Sample Debate To Teach Debate

When to Show the Debate

The MSPDP is designed to be easy to learn and difficult to master. This means, in part, that students can learn the basics of the format simply by watching some of the sample debate. It is easier to teach students about points of information by watching them in action than it is to teach this technique in the abstract. Similarly, students can immediately grasp the idea of refutation and the responsibilities of both teams by watching the first two speeches. If you are preparing students for competition, it is useful to watch the debate before a tournament, so they know what to expect. If you are using the MSPDP format in class, the debate will help you provide a model for your students.

The debate itself is about 27 minutes long on your VHS or DVD, so it will easily fit into a class period for viewing. Many teachers prefer to show it over a period of a few days, while some will show it all in one day. Either strategy is perfectly fine. You may prefer to show the debate in pieces, so you can review the content and purpose of each speech, and encourage students to think critically about what the students in the debate are trying to accomplish.

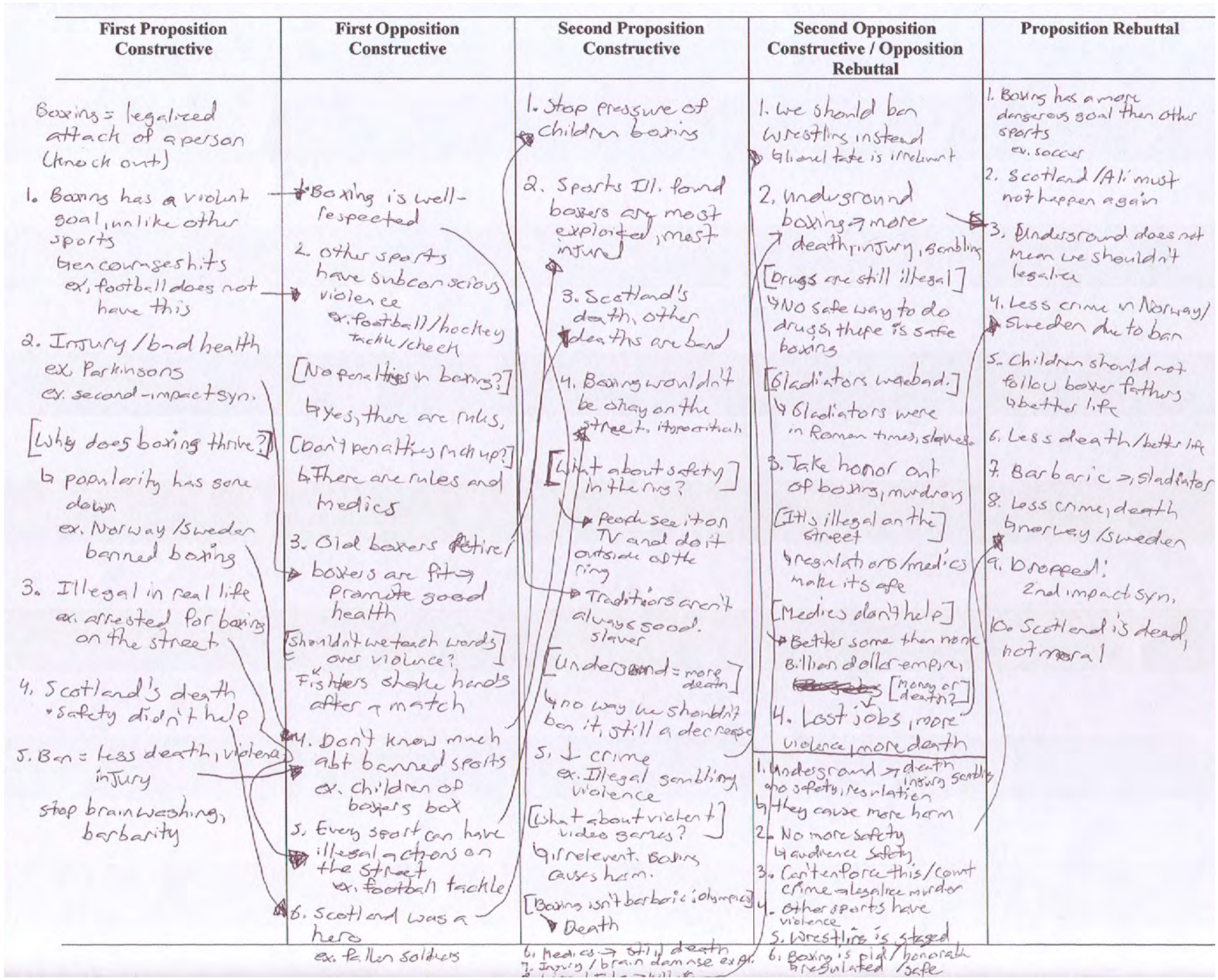
How to Show the Debate

The debate is useful as a model for practice. It is also useful to teach students how to take notes in a debate. Students need to learn to take notes on a flow sheet to be successful in competitive debating, and in classroom debating, flow sheets are essential to ensure and assess meaningful participation and learning outcomes. For more about “flowing” a debate, see the section in this booklet on pp. 26-27. Two sample flow sheets used by judge trainees who viewed the sample debate are included here on the next two pages.

As students learn more about debate, they will become interested in how debates are judged. The sample debate can be used to show students how the judging and evaluation process works, because it is also used as a judge training instrument. Students may be interested to watch the judge’s decision and commentary after the debate, included on the sample debate after the debate itself.

Learning to Judge

If you are interested in earning your judging certificate, you may use the sample debate to train as a judge. Begin by reading the MSPDP judging manual, included in this booklet on pp. 68-82. Then, watch and flow the sample debate. Make your own decision, assigning points to individual speakers and generating a ballot. Finally, watch the judge’s decision and compare your findings to the findings of the judge. Remember that there is no “right answer” to a given debate. The important thing is that judges follow the basic expectations of fairness and neutrality outlined in the judging manual.



First Proposition Constructive	First Opposition Constructive	Second Proposition Constructive	Second Opposition Constructive / Opposition Rebuttal	Proposition Rebuttal
Boxing = legalized attack of a person (knock out) 1. Boxing has a violent goal, unlike other sports then courses hits ex. football does not have this 2. Injury / bad health ex. Parkinsons ex. second-impact syn. [Why does boxing thrive?] ↳ popularity has gone down ex. Norway / Sweden banned boxing 3. Illegal in real life ex. arrested for boxing on the street 4. Scotland's death • safety didn't help 5. Ban = less death, violence, injury stop brainwashing, barbarity	• Boxing is well-respected 2. other sports have subconscious violence ex. football / hockey tackle / check [No penalties in boxing?] ↳ yes, there are rules, [Don't penalties match up?] ↳ There are rules and medics 3. Old boxers retire → boxers are fit → promote good health [shouldn't we teach words over violence? Fighters shake hands after a match 4. Don't know much abt banned sports ex. children of boxers box 5. Every sport can have illegal actions on the street ex. football tackle 6. Scotland was a hero ex. fallen soldiers	1. Stop pressure of children boxing 2. Sports Ill. found boxers are most exploited, most injure 3. Scotland's death, other deaths are bad 4. Boxing wouldn't be okay on the street. it's unethical [What about safety in the ring? → people see it on TV and do it outside of the ring → Traditions aren't always good. slavery [Underground = more death] ↳ no way we shouldn't ban it, still a decrease 5. ↓ crime ex. Illegal gambling violence [What about violent video games?] ↳ irrelevant. Boxing causes harm. [Boxing isn't barbaric / olympics] → Death 6. Medics → still death 7. Injury / brain damage ex.	1. We should ban wrestling instead ↳ literal fake is irrelevant 2. Underground boxing → more death, injury, gambling [Drugs are still illegal] ↳ NO safe way to do drugs, there is safe boxing [Gladiators were bad.] ↳ Gladiators were in Roman times, slaves. 3. Take honor out of boxing, murders [It's illegal on the street] ↳ regulations / medics make it safe [Medics don't help] → Better some than none Billion dollar empires [money or death?] 4. Lost jobs, more violence, more death 1. Underground → death, injury, gambling, no safety, regulation ↳ they cause more harm 2. No more safety ↳ audience safety 3. Can't enforce this / cont. crime → legalize murder 4. Other sports have violence 5. Wrestling is staged 6. Boxing is old / honorable / regulated / safe	1. Boxing has a more dangerous goal than other sports ex. soccer 2. Scotland / Ali must not happen again 3. Underground does not mean we shouldn't legalize 4. Less crime in Norway / Sweden due to ban 5. Children should not follow boxer fathers ↳ better life 6. Less death / better life 7. Barbaric → gladiator 8. Less crime, death ↳ Norway / Sweden 9. Dropped: 2nd impact syn. 10. Scotland is dead, not moral

Townsend Showdo

January 22, 2005

Valerie-

Chaitra 27.5

Kevin 27

Richard 27.5

Caesar 27

Brandon 28

1st Proposition	1st Opposition	2nd Proposition	2nd Opposition	Proposition Rebuttal
Boxing - legalized way of attacking another. toe to toe → hit till knocked out. Football etc → other goals - this sport due to laws & the opp may say it, but after - 2nd ! synd. Car moving - brain is passenger. [Why so popular?] - Brit/Aus could ban. Nzw (Swed). ban boxing. - Why ↓ crime? Boxing → influence to fighting. → rest of lives - → hypocrisy - & protect Beat Scotland - - Ban → less people hurt + die. - stop = ↓ crime - boxing is barbaric - in the ring it's suddenly OK? - hurts children	→ It's a sport - well respected sport - Hockey, Football, etc - indirect attention - due. - hit the guy - penalties. - 3 few blows, 3 hard shots → out. - medics in every corner / breaks - & barbaric - it's a sport. - make so much $ that - are fit → good health → role models. [boxing → & use their words - if's not like wrestling - → try to ban it - Ali, boxes, but his daughter does too - Bucho Camacho. too - hockey fools → arrested - flip over head → arrested. had no alt - provided for family while boxing -	How many deaths before boxing is banned? [in the ring there are medics] • slavery was a tradition; & etc. • more people hurt in boxing [BAN → UNDERGROUND & like murder → boxing - gambling illegally. = copying. → no, SI showed > explicit & most injured. → still people lose their lives - ↓ 2nd ! syndrome. → pros / legend → lives lost. - Lionel Tate. → banning boxing → & feel pressure to box - ↓ pressure on Laila. → $7K & enough to show for it.	→ Lionel Tate → wrestling - & relev. to boxing. wrestling soap opera → safety reg. → everything they say is true - w/o gloves, medics, etc. → much more ↑ illegal gambling. [then should we leg. drugs or murder?] ↓ Olympics → clean + safe. [Honor? - Gladiators & honored - & talk about] - Hawaii honor + safety Moh. Ali Act / Boxing Ref Act. → make safer Medics may & work but better to have safety [Betting; etc →] → black market / & safety, & more trained refs, & more breaks, etc. → OK, those are our args. - safety → as watching an opera. → ban boxing = thous of B. Scotlanders. - & ban it - leave it. hockey + soccer → affix same	- Goal in hockey → ball - football, goal is to have - How many? 1 is enough. → Drugs underground; we & leg. that. Norway + Sweden have less crime - Ban boxing = won't get Parkinsons disease → ↓ crime, better lives - barbaric; like Gladiator. ↓ violence; ↓ crime - IE Norway + Sweden. → & cause 2nd ! syndrome.

One Page Debate Reference Sheet

There are two sides in the debate: the proposition side and the opposition side. The proposition team makes a case for the motion for debate. The opposition team opposes the case made by the proposition team, through both direct and indirect refutation.

There are three debaters per side. Everyone gives one speech. This is the order of the speeches:

First proposition constructive – 5 minutes

This speaker makes a case for the motion for debate, providing a proof of the topic with three or four major points.

First opposition constructive – 5 minutes

This speaker makes several arguments against the proposition team's case and refutes the proposition's major points.

Second proposition constructive – 5 minutes

This speaker should rebuild and extend upon the proposition's case. This means that this speaker must extend and amplify the original proposition points and refute the opposition's major arguments against the case.

Second opposition constructive – 5 minutes

This speaker amplifies the opposition arguments against the case, providing new information about why the opposition team should win the debate. This speaker should answer the proposition's answers to the opposition team's original arguments.

Opposition rebuttal – 3 minutes

This speaker must put the debate together and explain why, given all of the arguments in the debate, the opposition team should still win the debate. Should finalize refutation of the proposition's major points.

Proposition rebuttal – 3 minutes

This speaker should summarize the issues in the debate and explain why, even with the opposition's arguments, the proposition teams should win the debate. Should refute the opposition's major points.

Points of information

May be a statement or a question. Can only be attempted during the middle three minutes of each constructive speech. May not be more than 15 seconds long. The speaker must recognize you to make your point. If the speaker does not recognize you, you must sit down.

Make Better Arguments: Understanding Logical Fallacies

ARE: Building Arguments

Most students in the Middle School Public Debate Program are familiar with the three essential parts of an argument. Just as a reminder, an easy way to remember these three parts is the abbreviation **ARE**. A stands for **assertion**. This is a claim about the world, or a simple statement:

- "Homework should be banned."
- "Poverty is harmful."
- "The United Nations should be reformed."

An assertion itself is not an argument. It has no support, and so by itself, it's basically nothing other than a baseless claim. The second part of an argument is **reasoning**. Adding reasoning is essential to making arguments. Of course, the reasoning part of an argument is the "because" part of the argument:

- "Homework should be banned because it interferes with effective learning."
- "Poverty is harmful because when families are poor, they cannot regularly feed their children."
- "The United Nations should be reformed because it is not effective now."

Adding reasoning to your assertion helps to make it an argument. However, you're still missing one part. You'll still need **evidence**. Evidence provides proof of your reasoning. The most common type of evidence is the example. So, for the arguments we've been looking at, we might say:

- "Homework should be banned because it interferes with effective learning. For example, students have to stay up late to finish their homework, and this makes them tired in class so they can't pay attention. "
- "Poverty is harmful because when families are poor, they cannot regularly feed their children. For example, often poor families have to choose between paying their rent and buying food."
- "The United Nations should be reformed because it is not effective now. For example, the U.N. is so disorganized that it can't conduct effective peacekeeping operations, like the operation in Rwanda that failed because there weren't enough troops and so many people died."

There are, of course, other kinds of evidence. Other sections of this booklet deal with evidence and how to evaluate it. The purpose of this section is simply to review the ARE model for argument construction.

When Reasoning Goes Bad: Logical Fallacies

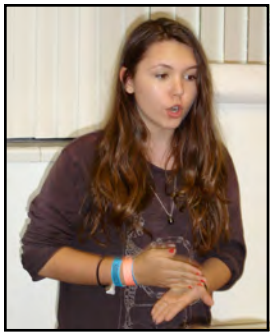
To be successful in debate, you will need to know the difference between good reasoning and bad reasoning. Sometimes reasons that seem to be solid are, upon closer inspection, flawed. The term "logical fallacy" refers to an incorrect conclusion that comes from faulty reasoning. Sometimes, people will call certain arguments "fallacious." What they mean is that the reasoning for the argument is flawed. Although there are many logical fallacies (some lists contain many dozens), I will discuss five of the most common.

- **The appeal to tradition**. Sometimes speakers will justify their position in a debate by arguing that we should do something a certain way because we have always done that thing a certain way: "School uniforms are good because we have a tradition of having school uniforms." To be sure, there are reasons why it might be good to preserve a tradition – for example, traditions in a school may help to build and maintain a healthy community, or create a sense of shared purpose, but simply saying that we should do something because we've always done it that way is not good reasoning. Consider that plenty of bad behaviors (holding slaves, denying women the right to vote) were at one time traditions in this country, but that didn't mean that they were necessarily good ideas.

- **The appeal to authority**. Debaters often refer to sources in debates to prove their points. For example, to support the idea that we should not lower the driving age, you might point to a study from the Centers for Disease Control that showed that teenagers were 33% less likely to wear seatbelts in cars. That's a good use of an authoritative source to support your argument. But if you simply said that teenagers were dangerous drivers, and Time magazine said so, then you're not actually offering reasoning or evidence to support your point. In

other words, just because someone said something, that doesn't make it true. While it is often appropriate and even necessary to cite credible sources to prove a point, the appeal to authority becomes fallacious when it is a substitute for reasoning or when the cited authority isn't actually an authority.

- **The fallacy of false cause**. This fallacy occurs when the speaker says that something happened, and then something else happened, so therefore the first thing caused the the second thing. So, if you said: "The sun rises every time I get out of bed. Therefore, by getting out of bed, I make the sun rise," that would obviously be arguing from a false cause. In Latin, this fallacy is called "post hoc, ergo propter hoc," which means "after this, therefore because of this. Order in time does not imply causality. In The Simpsons, there is an episode where Homer says that Springfield's new bear patrols are working because there aren't any bears around. Lisa points out to him that this is faulty reasoning. She picks up a rock, and says: "By your logic, I could argue that this rock keeps away tigers." Homer asks her to explain. Lisa says: "Well, you don't see any tigers around, do you?" Sometimes, speakers will draw a faulty link between premises and a conclusion so that the link depends upon a causal connection that probably does not exist.



- **The fallacy of composition**. Often, when is true of a part of something is also true of the whole of something. For example, one member of a debate team may be smart, and every member of the debate team may also be smart. What is true of the part is true of the whole. But it is important to remember that what is true of the part is not necessarily true of the whole. Just because a dozen people in your school are great at math, it does not follow that all of the students at your school are great at math. Consider what you would say if a speaker said: "Atoms have no color. Humans are made up of atoms. Therefore, humans have no color." What is true of the part is not necessarily true of the whole.

- **Fallacy of division**. The opposite of the fallacy of composition, the fallacy of division occurs when the conclusion of an argument depends on falsely extending a characteristic from the whole to its parts. In other words, just because something is true of the whole, it does not necessarily follow that this thing is true of its parts. You might read a story that says that the average American family has 2.3 children. Does this mean that the Jones family (an average American family) has 2.3 children? What would it mean to have .3 of a child?

When you encounter faulty reasoning in a debate, you should point it out. The best way to do this is to reference the argument made by the other side and answer it by showing that it uses faulty reasoning. So, for example, you might say:

"They say that the Patriot Act works because there haven't been any terrorist attacks in this country recently. But this doesn't necessarily prove that the Patriot Act works. Just because something happens after something else, that doesn't prove the first thing causes the second thing. That's like saying that waking up causes the sun to come up. Unless they can show some specific reasoning evidence to prove this point, this claim is unsupported and should be rejected."

Knowing common logical fallacies can help you win more debates, because you'll be better equipped to answer the points made by the other side and make sure your own reasoning is correct.

Further Reading

Stephen's Guide to the Logical Fallacies:
http://datanation.com/fallacies/
This is a good website for learning more about different errors in reasoning. It is clear and easy to use.

Informal Logical Fallacies:
http://sun-design.com/talitha/fallacies.html
This website organizes logical fallacies into three categories: fallacies of presumption, fallacies of ambiguity, and fallacies of relevance. If you don't know what those words mean, you should check this site out to find out. It's got some fun examples of different errors.

The Fallacy Files:
http://www.fallacyfiles.org/index.html
This website organizes examples and explanations of many common and obscure logical fallacies. It may be a little advanced for some students, but is a good place to expand your knowledge.

For Teachers:
http://www.nd.edu/~fwriting/resources/active/09logicfalse.shtml
This site, maintained by a college teacher, contains good ideas for activities that can be scaled to work with middle school students.

Teaching Argumentation

The ARE model for teaching and reinforcing argument can be used across the curriculum for teaching students to make sure that their ideas are complete and fully supported. Some teachers may have a poster supporting ARE in their classroom, and encourage students, in classroom discussions and in written assignments, to use ARE for points that they make. The same is true for 4-step refutation, discussed in the next section of this booklet. The basic debate skills, argumentation, refutation, and note taking, are also basic skills for school success. Public speaking and research are also basic debate skills, and can help students succeed in school.

One way to help students learn and apply ARE is by teaching them to analyze advertisements. All advertisements make an argument -- usually, that the viewer, listener, or reader, should purchase the product being advertised. Students can use ARE to "unpack" advertisements, and you might couple a media literacy lesson with an ARE chart like this one, encouraging students to take an ad and break it into its component parts. Bear in mind that most advertisements *imply*, rather than state explicitly, their reasoning and evidence.

Name:_____

Assertion:

Reasoning:

Evidence:

Another way to reinforce the ARE model is to help students to fill in the parts of ideas for different kinds of arguments and ideas. You might give students different kinds of assertions, and have them fill in the reasons. Or you might give them the assertions and reasons, and have them fill in the evidence. A more sophisticated approach might present students with evidence and reasoning, and have them deduce the conclusion. A mixed approach is shown in the chart that follows, where students are asked to fill in the missing boxes, applying both induction and deduction. This kind of approach teaches a sophisticated array of logical reasoning.

	Assertion	Reasoning	Evidence
1	The minimum driving age should be raised to 18.	Raising the driving age will save lives by reducing accidents.	16-year-old drivers have three times as many crashes as drivers aged 18 and 19.
2	Television is a bad influence.	Television shows too much violence.	
3	The United States should not have the death penalty.		Since 1973, 108 people in 25 states have been released from death row because they were found innocent.
4		Eating junk food is bad for your health.	Junk foods are high in fat and sugar. Too much fat and sugar puts you at risk for diabetes and heart disease.
5		Allowing younger people to vote would increase their involvement in politics and society.	
6			Incidents of school violence have shown that students use their cellular phones to notify police and parents.
7	Schools should not use animal dissection in classes.		

Introduction to Refutation

Refutation is Important

Debate isn't just about making arguments for your side. To win the debate, it is essential that both sides *refute* the points made by the other side. Because two-team debate is based on a legal model of argument, the job of the proposition team is to make a case for the motion for debate. They try to prove, through their arguments, that the motion for debate is more likely to be true than false. The job of the opposition team is to show why that case is wrong and why it might be dangerous to agree with the case for the motion. This process involves refutation by both sides in a debate. Both teams must engage the arguments made by the other side. In this way, debate is a little like playing ping-pong. You can always choose not to answer the argument made by the other side, but if you do not, you signal that you agree with the argument. Arguments that are not contested, or refuted, stand as points that both sides agree upon. While sometimes it is a good idea to agree with the other side, all debaters must be able to refute points that they think are wrong or dangerous.

Imagine a debate without refutation. This wouldn't be a debate at all, but only an exchange of ideas that are not related to each other.

> **Speaker 1: Television is a good influence because it helps you learn valuable skills. For example, children learn to read and count by watching educational programs.**
> **Speaker 2: Blue is a better color than red because it is relaxing. For example, many hospital waiting rooms are painted blue to make people less nervous about seeing the doctor.**

What this "discussion" is missing is what in debate we call *clash*. Both speakers are making arguments, but their statements are unrelated to each other. Clash is one of the fundamental principles of good debate; in fact, it is fundamental to any debate. Unless arguments clash, there is no way to compare and judge them. Debate is about arguments that are in dispute.

To dispute an argument effectively, you must master the skill of *refutation*. Arguments of refutation answer arguments that are already in play. Refutation is necessary in debates because it promotes direct clash between arguments. You already know how to advance arguments using ARE; now, you need to learn how to refute arguments.

There are many ways to answer an argument that has been advanced. Of course, some methods are better than others. The first and most common, way of refuting an argument is simply to provide a counter-assertion:

> **Speaker 1: Television is a good influence because it helps you learn valuable skills. For example, children learn to read and count by watching educational programs.**
> **Speaker 2: Speaker 1 says that television is a good influence, but I disagree. Television is a bad influence.**

Speaker 2 has simply provided an assertion to counter the assertion of the first speaker. Who wins this debate? Clearly, Speaker 1 has the edge, since she is the only debater to have actually provided reasoning for her claim ("because it helps you learn valuable skills."). Good reasoning always trumps no reasoning at all. Speaker 1 has also provided evidence for her claim ("For example, children learn to read and count by watching educational programs.").

A more advanced method of refutation is to provide reasoning for your counter-assertion:

> **Speaker 1: Television is a good influence because it helps you learn valuable skills. For example, children learn to read and count by watching educational programs.**

Speaker 2: Speaker 1 says that television is a good influence, but I disagree. Television is a bad influence, because it causes obesity. For example, the average child spends 4 hours every day watching television, when they could be engaged in physical activity such as sports.

What makes this better than Speaker 2's previous attempt? Here, she is providing reasoning and evidence for her claim: "because it causes obesity. For example, the average child spends 4 hours every day watching television, when they could be engaged in physical activity such as sports." Imagine that you are asked to judge this debate. How will you decide who wins? You find that Speaker 1 has proven conclusively that children learn to read and count by watching educational programs. You also find that Speaker 2 has proven that watching television trades off with time that could be spent playing sports. Neither debater really has the edge here, do they? Notice that while there is direct clash between the assertion and the counter-assertion, there is no direct clash between the reasoning for each claim. Speaker 2 has not yet succeeded in completely refuting her opponent's argument.

Complete refutation is important to win decisively when arguments clash against each other in debates. In order to refute an argument, you must include what we call a "*therefore*" part. The "*therefore*" part of refutation is where you explain why your idea is better, more important than, or more likely to be true than the argument of your opponent. Observe:

Speaker 1: Television is a good influence because it helps you learn valuable skills. For example, children learn to read and count by watching educational programs.
Speaker 2: Speaker 1 says that television is a good influence, but I disagree. Television is a bad influence, because it causes obesity. For example, the average child spends 4 hours every day watching television, when they could be engaged in physical activity such as sports. Therefore, television is more of a bad influence than a good influence, because children can always learn to read and count from other sources, like books or their parents, but they can't get back the time they've wasted in front of the television when they could have been exercising.

Speaker 2 wins. She has completed the process of refutation by including a "therefore" component in her rejoinder. Notice how this last part of her argument works. She compares her reasoning to Speaker 1's reasoning to show why her argument is better than her opponent's. Almost all refutation can follow the basic four-step method demonstrated above. As you practice your refutation skills, consider starting with this model:

Step 1: "They say…." It is important to refer to the argument you are about to refute so that your audience and judges can easily follow your line of thought. Debates can be composed of many different arguments. Unless you directly refer to the point you're addressing, you may confuse your judge and audience. Confusion will not help you win debates. Good note-taking skills will help you track individual arguments and how they are refuted (or not).

One important thing to remember here is that when you refer to your opponent's argument, you should do it quickly. Don;t try to repeat everything they said -- otherwise, you won't have any time for your own ideas. Try to *summarize* the argument you're about to refute in just three to seven words: "They say that reducing welfare benefits helps the economy, but…;" or "They say Batman is better than Superman, but…"

Step 2: "But…." In this part of your refutation, you state the basics of your counter-argument. This can be, in the case above, simply the opposite of your opponent's claim. It can also be an attack on the reasoning or evidence offered for your opponent's claim. The important thing is to state clearly the counter-argument you want the judge to

agree with. You can say more about it later. For now, it is important to phrase your argument as briefly as possible. Sum up your point in a sentence. This helps your judge, audience, and opponents to remember it and get it in their notes.

Step 3: "Because ...." Having made your counter-argument, you need to proceed to offer reasoning and evidence. This makes sure you're making a complete argument. Your reasoning can be independent support for your counter-claim, as in the case above. It can also be a reasoned criticism of the opposition's argument.

Step 4: "Therefore...." Finally, you need to draw a conclusion that compares your refutation to your opponent's argument and shows why yours effectively defeats theirs. This conclusion is usually done by *comparing* your ideas to theirs. You need to develop a variety of strategies for argument comparison and evaluation, as this is a critical skill for success in competitive debate. What you need to accomplish here is to show that your argument is better than their argument because....

- ✓ **It's better reasoned.** Perhaps their argument makes some kind of error in logic or reasoning.
- ✓ **It has better evidence.** Maybe your argument makes use of more or better evidence. Perhaps your sources are better qualified than theirs, or your evidence is more recent than theirs.
- ✓ **It has been true in the past**. Maybe your ideas are supported by historical examples, or events that have happened in the past, while theirs are based on speculation without much support from the past.
- ✓ **It takes theirs into account.** Sometimes your argument may take theirs into account and go a step further: "Even if they're right about the recreational benefits of crossbows, they're still too dangerous for elementary school physical education classes."
- ✓ **It has a greater significance.** You can state that your argument has more significance than their argument because (for example) it matters more to any given individual or applies more to a larger number of individuals.
- ✓ **It's consistent with experience.** Perhaps your argument is consistent with experience over time, a in different place, or in different circumstances. This technique is particularly effective with audiences: "Hey, this is something we can all relate to, right?"

Teaching Refutation

Refutation is an essential debate skill. It is what is missing from many discussions, including such prestigious events as debates between political candidates, including the debates that come before a presidential election. Many teachers begin having debates in class by simply having students deliver speeches for and against a particular idea. What these debates are missing is comparison and evaluation of ideas. In the Middle School Public Debate Program, students must refute the ideas of the other side. If they do not, they are considered to have agreed with those ideas. In a debate in the MSPDP format, the issue for the debate is proving or disproving the proposition team's case, which is (in turn) a proof of the motion for debate. The proposition side builds a house - their case for the motion. The opposition case tries to tear that case down. It is important to do this through careful attention to detail. Expecting students to engage in specific and systematic refutation teaches students how to process and handle multiple ideas, reason "on the fly" in an impromptu manner, and creates an incentive for students to take good notes, developing both their thinking skills and their note-taking skills at the same time.

There are two basic kinds of refutation: direct and indirect refutation. Direct refutation responds in a specific way to particular claims made by the other side. So, the proposition team may offer three arguments in support of allowing cell phones in schools. One of these points might be that students need cell phones in case of emergency. The opposition team might refute this directly - for example, they might show that there are few emergencies that require cell phones, or show that cell phones won't help if there is a genuine emergency.

The opposition might also bring up issues that do not directly refute specific arguments in the case, but which they feel are important for the debate. So, for example, the proposition team in this debate might not talk about how cell phones could be used for cheating -- that would undermine their case! But the opposition team can bring up this important issue as one of their arguments, using it to indirectly refute the case.

Direct refutation: **Responds directly to the ideas of the other side**

Indirect refutation: **Bringing up new issues that aren't specifically addressed by the other side but which are important for deciding the issue for debate.**

Of course, both sides must refute the arguments of the other side. In every speech in the debate, students should add something new to the debate, even if they're just adding a fresh perspective or a new example. Students must also refute the arguments of the other side, and *keep their side's arguments in play*. Arguments need to be extended and amplified throughout the debate. Ideally, students will apply all three of these techniques in concert; however, this is complicated and takes practice. One of the skills students learn by participating in debating is how to *synthesize* arguments as they go, applying higher-level thinking skills in impromptu and extemporaneous contexts.

There is one final lesson about refutation you can offer to your students. Students' first instinct about how to refute arguments is simply to reply, even if they are applying 4-step refutation. But some responses are better than others, and there are 4 core *strategies* for refutation that can be applied in any circumstance. These are listed hierarchically here. Beginners will have trouble applying these concepts, as they will not have a lot of context to see how these ideas can be applied. For more advanced students, however, applying these ideas will be no problem. The more topics that students debate, the more they can apply critical thinking and reasoning skills to new issues and topics. One key to critical thinking instruction is *interdisciplinary reasoning*.

Four Strategies for Refutation

1. Test for Relevance. The best option, when confronted with an argument made by the other side, is to show that it is not relevant to the debate, or not relevant to your side's ideas. This way, you don't even need to directly refute the argument- if you can show that it is not relevant, you can move on to spend more time on other issues that are relevant. This is a kind of *strategic agreement*, where you might agree with the other side's idea but disagree on its importance for the debate.

2. Test for Significance. The second best option, when confronted with an argument made by the other side, is to show that it is not significant for deciding the debate. This strategy is similar to the test for relevance in that you don't even need to directly refute the argument- if you can show that it is not significant or important, you can move on to spend more time on other issues that are significant. You can show an issue is not significant by comparing it to your ideas- for example, you might say: "They say that reducing global warming will increase bureaucracy, but that's not a reason not to act, because the consequences of global warming are so much more severe than the consequences of bureaucracy."

3. Turn or Capture the Argument. The third best option, when confronted with an argument made by the other side, is to try to capture the argument for your side. Sometimes we call this argument strategy a "turn," because you are turning the tables on the other side. Like the first two strategies, this is also a kind of *strategic agreement*, where you might agree with the other side's idea. In fact, you agree so much with their idea that you're trying to show how it proves your side. So, for example, if you're arguing that all students should have to take a college preparatory curriculum, and the other side says that students can't pass those classes, you might say that this argument supports your side, because that is one of the reasons we need to set higher, more challenging, expectations for students.

4. Answer the Argument. Finally, if you can't dismiss an argument because of irrelevance or insignificance, or capture it, then you should go ahead and answer it. There are, of course, a variety of ways this can be done- you can show its reasoning is flawed, or that there is evidence to the contrary, or that there are meaningful exceptions to a rule they have proposed, for example.

All Students In a Debate Should:

✓Add something new to the debate, especially new examples or new perspectives.

✓Reply to the arguments of the other side.

✓Extend on and amplify their partners' arguments.

Taking Notes in Debates

Why Take Notes in Debates?

Students and judges must take notes during debates. This accomplishes three related objectives. First, it helps students to win debates. Second, it helps judges to fairly judge debates. Third, it helps students to improve their note-taking abilities. In the MSPDP, all students and judges learn and practice note-taking using a specific organizer called a "flow sheet." A flow sheet is like a flow chart in that it tracks ideas and their development over time. The flow sheet, which has vertical columns for different speakers, helps students to learn to use relational notation and other visual markers to see how arguments relate to each other and develop (or don't) during the course of the debate. This process is essential to the development of higher-order evaluative, comparative, and synthetic skills. Students use the flow sheet to visually represent the debate and organize their speeches. Because the judge is also taking notes in the same way, the judge can model effective note-taking behavior as well as work off of a graphic organizer that is mostly similar to those the students will generate in debates.

Note taking in debates also helps students develop ancillary skills such as summarization and abbreviation. As a speaker talks, the student can't write the speech down word for word. This means they have to learn to summarize on the fly as well as translate their summaries for rejoinder, for example when engaging in 4-step refutation. Most students report that participation in the MSPDP has taught them how to take notes in class.

Part of the reason for this is that in debate, students have immediate reinforcement and reward for good note taking. Good note taking skills will help students to win more debates, because they are expected to answer all the points of the other side and extend specifically on the points made by their partners. Most students will not think that *they* need to take notes in debates, but they quickly learn the error of that perspective through immediate reinforcement and instruction by judges. Because trained judges give feedback and instruction, students can apply that feedback in their subsequent debates.

How to Take Notes in Debates

There is a sample flow sheet included in this booklet, and also online at www.middleschooldebate.com, in the "Resources" section of the website. Most teachers will duplicate this sheet for students to use in practice debates and at tournaments. It is even more effective if reproduced on a legal sized piece of paper, to create more room for students to write. The flow sheet is divided into 5 columns, labeled like this:

1st Proposition	1st Opposition	2nd Proposition	2nd Opp/Opp Rebuttal	Prop Rebuttal

Notice that although there are 6 speeches in the debate, there are only 5 columns. Two of the opposition's speeches, the 2nd opposition constructive and the opposition rebuttal, are in the same column. This is because those speeches happen back to back- they are essentially two parts of the same speech, and the proposition rebuttalist will answer them as such. Breaking them into two columns is only likely to confuse students.

Students may ask why the opposition has two speeches back to back like this. The reason has to do with the burden of proof in the debate. Because the proposition team has the burden of proof (the harder job), they get to open and close the debate. To accomplish this, the opposition's final speeches are put together. Also, having the two speeches together creates a formidable obstacle to be overcome by the proposition rebuttalist, slightly offsetting any advantage that might be created by getting to speak first and last.

To see the flow sheet in action, let's look at a sample. Here is a sample flow sheet from part of a hypothetical debate about school uniforms. Let's say that the proposition team makes a brief case for student uniforms. They might advance three basic arguments:

- Cost. Many students can't afford to look sharp every day for school, and students get embarrassed if they don't have the latest fashions.
- Uniforms aren't as distracting, and will help students focus on their classwork, not their clothes.
- Uniforms reduce violence, because students can't wear gang clothes or gang symbols.

As the first proposition speaker makes their case, everyone else should take notes on their flow sheet. Then the first opposition speaker refutes the case. She might begin by bringing up the issue of freedom of expression. She could say that uniforms are a bad idea because students need to be able to express their individuality in schools. Then she would move on to answer the arguments made in the proposition's case. On the "cost" point, she might say that uniforms are expensive, too, particularly since people have to buy a bunch of them at once. On the "distraction" point, she could say that there are always things to distract students, and that districts have dress codes in place to deal with distracting clothing. Finally, on the "violence" point, she could say that dress codes already prevent gang clothing, and that uniforms won't reduce the gang problem because students who want to be in gangs will be in them whether or not they have to wear uniforms.

Then the second proposition speaker has to answer the opposition's arguments while rebuilding and extending on the proposition's case. The flow sheet will help her do this, as she knows what arguments she has to answer and extend upon. She should begin by answering the freedom of expression argument by saying, for example, that students have many ways to express themselves, and that clothes are a shallow and unimportant method of expression. Then she can move on to rebuild her team's case. To extend on the "cost" argument, she should probably reiterate it briefly before beginning her refutation: "We said that many students can't afford to keep up with the latest trends, and that's embarrassing. Now, they said that uniforms are expensive to buy, but they're cheap compared to the latest pair of Nikes or Hillfigers, and that means that poorer students won't be made fun of for their clothes." She could repeat this process by moving through the other opposition arguments and rebuilding her case.

1st Proposition	1st Opposition	2nd Proposition	2nd Opp/Opp Rebuttal	Prop Rebuttal
	Hurts freedom of expression – students need to express individuality.	1. Students have other ways to express themselves. 2. Clothes not important for expression – too shallow.		
1. Cost – many can't afford expensive clothes; are embarrassed.	Uniforms expensive too – must buy a lot at once.	Students can't keep up with trends – Nikes. Even if uniforms expensive, clothes are worse. Also, poor students won't be made fun of.		
2. Not as distracting, so students can focus on classwork.	1. Always things to distract students. 2. Dress codes address the problem.			
3. Reduce violence – students can't wear gang symbols or clothes.	1. Dress codes already stop gang clothing. 2. Uniforms won't help-they join for other reasons.			

Because students are not generally effective note-takers when they are in middle school, it is necessary to reinforce note-taking as part of debate instruction. There are a variety of exercises available for teaching note-taking abilities, but reading lists or recipes to students is one way to teach basic skills. Another is to tape panel talk shows on TV and have students practice "flowing" those shows.

Learning to Take Notes For Debate

Introduction

Debate is about the give and take of arguments. As arguments are made, they relate to each other in a variety of ways. Good note-taking abilities are essential for success in debate. If you are able to track how arguments relate to each other, you will be able to compare and contrast the balance of arguments.

The system of notes used to take notes in a debate is called "flowing." It's called "flowing" because arguments flow across the page as they relate to each other. Taking notes in this format provides a map of the debate and shows what was said and by whom. Flowing also allows you to plan specific attacks on your opponent's arguments, and organizes your thoughts for your speeches. You make a flow by taking notes of each speech in a column.

Do not try to write down every word your opponent says. Try to capture only the major ideas and arguments of your opponent. It will be important to use symbols and abbreviations to help you take more efficient notes.

Normally, there are two sides in a debate. One side makes a case for the motion for debate (they propose the motion, for example), while the other side argues against that case (they oppose the motion). The two sides alternate speeches as the debate progresses. This process is graphically represented in a debater's notes. Here's an example of a bad debate:

Proposing side	Opposing Side	Proposing Side	Opposing Side	Proposing Side
YES →	NO →	YES →	NO →	YES

Why is this an example of a bad debate? The example "debaters" are not making arguments, and just saying "Yes" and "No." But it shows basically how you should take notes in debate. You will write down what speakers say. and show how ideas relate to each other using arrows and lines to connect arguments with each other. This is how you will know which arguments have been refuted, and which remain unrefuted. This will also help you to remember the arguments made by your side, so you can answer them appropriately.

When you take notes in debate, you will use a worksheet called a "flow sheet" to track arguments in the debate. You can take your flow sheet up to with you when you speak, and since the judge will also use a flow sheet, taking notes during the whole debate will help you understand the decisions of your judges. At first, it will be hard to take notes in the debate. You may even feel you don't need to take notes. However, if you do not take notes in debates, you will fall behind other students as they gain more experience. Debates are composed of many dozens of arguments. Even students with excellent memories can't remember all of them. When you write arguments down, you can use your brain for other tasks besides storing arguments- like figuring out how to help your side win!

Help for Using Your Flow Sheet

1. Write down as much as possible as the speaker talks.
2. Use abbreviations so you don't get too behind.
3. Connect arguments with each other using lines, arrows, and circles.
4. Take notes on all speeches so you can help your partners and make effective points of information.

On Topic Writing

By John Meany, Director of Forensics, Claremont McKenna College

Class and contest debate preparation (idea brainstorming, subject research, argument briefing, speaking practice) is based on the specific language of a set of debate topics. The importance of debate topics cannot be underestimated. They establish the issues in controversy. They motivate students to explore the world. They direct library, Internet, and personal reading. They introduce students to new ideas; students use them to spark their own intellectual creativity and argument innovations. And, as students quickly realize from their experiences in challenging debates, the particular words selected for a debate topic may carefully distinguish the arguments that are available for the proposition or opposition teams.

Debate tournament hosts, league officials, teachers, and student practice leaders recognize that it is important to write appropriately worded topics. Badly worded topics generally result in bad debates. Because the topic is interpreted by the proposition as a statement of proof (that is, a claim that the proposition team will attempt to show is more likely to be true than false), an entire debate may collapse due to confusing, vague, or awkward wording. Most people, then, would probably agree that it is a good idea to avoid badly worded topics. But what are the guidelines for a well-worded topic for debate?

First, a topic author should consider the purpose of a topic statement.

It ought to be designed to promote serious discussion and argument clash. It should provoke important and challenging questions. It ought to be a subject that is controversial or encourages an examination of obvious difference. In other words, the subject should promote debate. A topic should also be an issue for which students could draw conclusions. Debates do not merely create an opportunity to open an issue for discussion but they also produce a definitive result, a conclusion that an opinion on an issue may be better than other opinions on the matter. In this way, a debate topic should allow students to identify and determine concluding arguments for its side of the topic.

Topics should be interesting; they should appeal to different students. They should focus the discussion. They must be in the form of a simple declarative sentence. They should help students create powerful arguments explaining the world they know. Topics may be about the issues faced by middle school students each day, e.g., “Schools should require uniforms,” “Cell phones should not be permitted at school,” or “Peer pressure does more good than harm.” Debate topics should teach students to advance sophisticated arguments about the subjects they learn at school: “The United States should significantly increase space exploration,” „Schools should ban animal dissection, or “The United States should pay reparations for slavery.” In addi-

tion, topics should provide opportunities for new learning, a chance for students to develop research skills and understand a complex world: “The United States is winning the war on terror,” “NAFTA should be extended throughout the Americas,” or “Congress should pass the Clear Skies Initiative.”

A topic author should consider many issues. Is enough research material for debating the topic statement? Is the information presented in a way to engage students? Is it accessible? Does the research avoid technical or difficult language so that students from different grades (the MSPDP permits students from the fifth to the eighth grade to participate in competitions) could use it? In other words, a topic author should probably do some of the work that is expected of a debater confronting a particular topic. Some exploratory examination of the research is required before a final decision can be made to use a topic.

In addition to these general guidelines, here is a list of some popular problems with debate topics, as well as recommendations as to how to avoid them.

1. Avoid “cutesy” wording.
A motion for debate ought to be written for the purpose of introducing a debate. Motions should not be composed for the purpose of making the person the topic to appear particularly witty or clever. Do that on your own time. Please avoid this sort of topic: “The public education system should start doing its own homework” or “The United States should unplug the electric chair.” It is easy enough to use topics that directly address issues of public education and capital punishment, such as, “The No Child Left Behind Act does more good than harm” or “Abolish the death penalty!”

2. Avoid multiple proofs by the proposition team.
It is difficult to make one proof in a debate. It is unfair to require that the proposition team prove several issues simultaneously. Poorly worded topics of this kind include “Standardized testing is fair and necessary,” or “Columbus Day is the worst national holiday.” The first topic makes the proposition team prove that standardized testing is both fair and needed. The proposition team arguing the second motion would have to compare Columbus Day to each of a half dozen other national holidays. This is too much work to have to accomplish in a brief debate.

3. Avoid extremist language.
“Always,” “all,” “never,” and other unconditional words or expressions place too high a burden or proof on the proposition team. Not only must the team establish its proof but it must be one for which there are no exceptions, even an extraordinarily rare case. Examples include “The Federal Government,s power comes at the expense of all the states” or “The time for any negotiations for peace in the Middle East has passed.” These topics raise important issues but better wording might be “The Federal Government should not surrender its authority to states” or “The United Nations should establish negotiations for Middle East peace.”

4. Avoid false dichotomies.
In a false dichotomy, a debate teams are presented with two choices, when in fact there are more than two choices. For example, "If today is not Tuesday, it must be Wednesday." The fact that it is not Tuesday does not mean that it is Wednesday. The speaker would have to make an argument to show that it is Wednesday. Examples of false dichotomies include: “Public schools should give up freedom for safety” or “An oppressive government is better than no government.” The listed topic areas are not bad areas for debate but the topic wording could certainly be improved. It is, once again, possible to transform these topics for meaningful debate: “Public schools should increase student surveillance” or “In this case, the United States should reduce free speech rights.”

5. Avoid awkward or confusing expressions.
These are actual examples of topics used in intercollegiate debate competition. When announced, they were greeted with calls of "Shame!" This House believes that we cannot let terrorists and rogue nations hold the nation hostile and our allies hostile." "This House would rock mob style." "Title IX is a bridge too far." "Nero's encore demands a response." Huh???

Topic authors need to carefully examine each topic; they also need to consider a tournament topic set. It is important that the topics are balanced and diverse when considering all 4 or 5 topics for a league tournament. In particular, a topic author, league official, or tournament host (the person or committee making the final decision on the topic list) should evaluate the topics to ensure that students debate some familiar issues, as well as more challenging and lesser-known matters. Of course, it is important that topics have little or no argument overlap. It is often the case that topic language will change but arguments will not. For example, it is possible that the different motions, "The United States is winning the war on terror," and "Saudi Arabia is more an enemy than an ally of the United States" may produce many proposition and opposition arguments in common, as both topics would focus on terrorism and Middle East policy.

Like most serious educational tasks, topic writing should involve the efforts of several people. It is a good idea to have trusted colleagues review topics before a final topic announcement. The preparation work should be accomplished over time. Patience is a virtue (but the statement, "Patience is a virtue," should never be a topic.) Topic construction should include time for some preliminary research and review. The more care is devoted to topic writing, the more opportunities debaters will have to subsequently, rigorously, and meaningfully examine and debate the substantive details of important issues.

For a successful debate, students must have well-constructed topics. The Middle School Public Debate Program recommends that topics should follow the following guidelines:

1. **Topics should be simple, declarative sentences.**
2. **Topics should address serious issues of local, national, or international concern.**
3. **Topics should be challenging.**
4. **Topics should be age appropriate.**
5. **Topics should, where possible, intersect meaningfully with the school curriculum.**
6. **Topics should be chosen by and approved by middle school teachers.**

Sample Topics

These are the topics that tens of thousands of students in 7 leagues debated in extracurricular competition in from 2002-2008 as part of the Middle School Public Debate Program (MSPDP). Topics in the MSPDP are chosen by teachers. More topic lists are available online at www.middleschooldebate.com.

2007-2008 Topics: Independent Schools Debate League

California should raise the driving age to 18.
The U.N. should impose sanctions on Myanmar/Burma.
California should legalize physicial-assisted suicide.
Junk food should be banned from school cafeterias and vending machines.
Zoos do more good than harm.
Single-sex education is better than co-ed.
Wal-Mart is good for America.
Homeland security is more important than the protection of civil liberties.
US military involvement in Iraq has done more good than harm.
Television is a bad influence.
It is unethical to buy an SUV.
College football should be exempted from Title IX requirements.
The American presidential primary and caucus system does more good than harm.

2007-2008 Topics: Desert Valleys Debate League

California should ban drivers' use of cellular phones in cars.
Water rates should be the same price for farmers and residential customers.
Size zero fashion models should be banned.
The United Nations Security Council should have no permanent members.
Schools should provide for single sex instruction.
Torture is justified for national security.
Schools should be year round.
On balance, George W. Bush has done more good than harm.
Middle schools should not have promotion ceremonies.
Desert area residents should be required to use desert landscaping.
American military involvement in Iraq has done more good than harm.
The president of the United States should be elected by popular vote.
The Amero should adopted.
Private swimming pools are unethical.
Extra-terrestrial intelligence exists.
John McCain is the best choice for Commander in Chief.
The United States should end its use of the penny.
On balance, special interests are a positive influence in American politics.
The public's right to know is more important than the privacy of celebrities.
The United States should guarantee health care for its residents.
Students should be required to learn a second language for high school graduation.

2007-2008 Topics: District of Columbia Debate League

All DC public middle schools should have student-run disciplinary courts.
The late-night Metrorail service is a failed transportation experiment.
The DC government should provide free wireless internet access.
The United States should ban the importation of all products from China.
All DC public high schools should have childcare facilities for their students on site.

DC should keep its taxi zone fare system.
The United States should launch a preemptive strike against Iran.
Giving money to panhandlers is justified.
The DCPS funds spent to renovate athletic fields in the summer of 2007 did more good than harm.
All DC public schools should adopt a teacher performance bonus program.
Michael Vick's punishment is too severe.
The United States should withdraw all its troops from Iraq by December 31, 2008.
John McCain is the best choice for Commander in Chief.
The United States should end its use of the penny.
On balance, special interests are a positive influence in American politics.
The public's right to know is more important than the privacy of celebrities.
The United States should guarantee health care for its residents.
Students should be required to learn a second language for high school graduation.

2007-2008 Topics: Inland Valley Debate League

September 11 should be made a national holiday.
The U.S. should take military actions against Iran.
Parents should be held legally responsible for their children's actions.
Celebrities should not be role models
Letter grades in schools do more harm than good.
Term limits for state legislators should be eliminated.
The driving age in California should be raised to 18.
Television does more harm than good.
Washington D. C should be made the 51st state
Home schooling does more good than harm.
John McCain is the best choice for Commander in Chief.
The United States should end its use of the penny.
On balance, special interests are a positive influence in American politics.
The public's right to know is more important than the privacy of celebrities.
The United States should guarantee health care for its residents.
Students should be required to learn a second language for high school graduation.

2007-2008 Topics: Big Apple Debate League

Physical education in grades K-12 should be compulsory.
Ban plastic bags in grocery stores.
Americans should not be allowed to burn the United States flag as an act of free speech.
It should be illegal to sell coffee and coffee products to minors anywhere in the United States.
Organ donation should be compulsory for all United States citizens.
Voting rights of United States felons should be reinstated after they have served their time.
John McCain is the best choice for Commander in Chief.
The United States should end its use of the penny.
On balance, special interests are a positive influence in American politics.
The public's right to know is more important than the privacy of celebrities.
The United States should guarantee health care for its residents.
Students should be required to learn a second language for high school graduation.

2006-2007 Topics: District of Columbia Debate League

The US prison at Guantanamo Bay should be closed .
All schools should provide students with music and art education.
District of Columbia should make it mandatory for its citizens to vote in elections.
Fast food restaurants do more harm than good.
Nontraditional English should be acknowledged in academia.

All DC Charter schools should be placed under the authority of the superintendent.
College athletes should be compensated.
The Bush administration guest worker program should be implemented.
Adult-oriented cartoons should only be broadcast on television after 10PM.
DC area public schools should have single sex classrooms.
Cigarettes should be illegal in the US.
Puerto Rico should be a state.
MySpace.com should not allow users under 18.
Juveniles should be tried as adults for felonies.
The US government should allow oil exploration in the Alaskan National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR).
The French government should permit students to wear visible religious symbols in state schools.

2006-2007 Topics: Desert Valleys Debate League

Re-elect Governor Schwarzenegger.
Californians should approve Proposition 87.
Cell phones should be allowed in schools.
Businesses should not place advertisements in schools.
It is unethical to eat meat.
Parents should not purchase war toys for their children.
The No Child Left Behind Act has done more good than harm.
Middle schools should require students to wear uniforms.
The United States military should immediately withdraw from Iraq.
Fossil fuels are easily replaced.
Hugo Chavez is not a friend to the United States.
Community service should be mandatory in high school.
The movie rating system is ineffective.
The US should proceed with oil and gas development on the Arctic Coastal Plain (ANWR).
The Internet has done more harm than good.
Human cloning should be permitted in the United States.
Parental spanking of children should be a crime.
New York Senator Hillary Clinton should be elected President of the United States in 2008.
On balance, nuclear energy does more good than harm.
Students should be allowed to chew gum in school.
The United States should switch to the metric system.
Homework does more good than harm.
Boycott the Beijing Olympics.
Schools should ban animal dissection.
The United States should amend the constitution to criminalize flag burning.
Genghis Khan did more good than harm.
The United States should significantly expand its use of nuclear power.
It is better to be a follower than a leader.

2006-2007 Topics: Big Apple Debate League

For adolescents, television is a better teacher than books.
George Bush is good for America.
In the case of student lockers, school safety is more important than student privacy.
Single sex schools are better for students than co-ed schools in grades K-12.
New York Senator Hillary Clinton should be elected President of the United States in 2008.
Cigarettes made from tobacco should be illegal.
US troops and its allies should withdraw their forces from Iraq immediately.
War toys are good for children.
There should be year-round schooling for students in grades K-12.
Repeal the trans fat ban in New York City.
Capital punishment should be banned by the United States federal government.

The United States should switch to the metric system.
Colleges' early admission policies do more harm than good.
Schools in the United States should ban animal dissection.
The U.S. troop surge in Iraq is desirable.
There should be mandatory drug testing for all high school athletes in the U.S.
Lower the legal drinking age in the U.S. to 18.
It is morally acceptable to experiment on animals for medical purposes.

2006-2007 Topics: Inland Valley Debate League

Re-elect Governor Schwarzenegger.
Californians should approve Proposition 87.
Cell phones should be allowed in middle schools.
College athletes should be paid.
SAT/ACT prep classes do more harm than good.
Repeal the Military Commissions Act.
All Middle schools should institute school uniform policies.
California should abolish the death penalty.
Junk food should be banned from school cafeterias and vending machines.
The President of the United States should be elected by the direct vote of the people.
The U.S. should sign the Kyoto Accord (Protocol)
Peer pressure does more good than harm.
All Americans should be required to provide 1 year of national service.
The U. S. should end the embargo on Cuba.
Parents should not buy war toys for their children.
The United States should switch to the metric system.
Homework does more good than harm.
Boycott the Beijing Olympics.
Schools should ban animal dissection.
The United States should amend the constitution to criminalize flag burning.
Genghis Khan did more good than harm.
The United States should significantly expand its use of nuclear power.
It is better to be a follower than a leader.

2006-2007 Topics: Independent Schools Debate League

Drug companies should not be allowed to advertise prescription drugs to the general public.
L.A. County should ban all transfats in restaurants.
Animals should not be used for entertainment.
The United States should eliminate its own weapons of mass destruction.
Colleges' early admissions policies do more harm that good.
The electoral college should be abolished.
All Americans should be required to provide one year of national service.
The United States should end the embargo on Cuba.
The United States should switch to the metric system.
Homework does more good than harm.
The United States should adopt President Bush's proposed guest worker program.
The United States Constitution should be amended to establish a mandatory retirement age for Supreme Court Justices.
Teachers should not use candy as rewards.
Beauty pageants do more good than harm.
Boycott the Beijing Olympics.
Schools should ban animal dissection.
The United States should amend the constitution to criminalize flag burning.
Genghis Khan did more good than harm.
The United States should significantly expand its use of nuclear power.
It is better to be a follower than a leader.

2006-2007 Topics: East Bay Debate League

Television is a bad influence.
California should abolish the death penalty.
The United States should withdraw its military from Iraq.
Students should be able to have cell phones at school.

2005-2006 Topics: Inland Valley Debate League

Cell phones should be allowed in middle schools.
Iran should be allowed to develop nuclear energy.
Californians should approve Prop 74.
The United States should close its Guantanamo prison.
Middle schools should have mandatory drug testing for participation in extracurricular activities.
School vouchers should be allowed.
Cigarettes should be banned.
Credit cards do more harm than good.
The U S Government subsidy of the arts should end.
Corporal punishment of children should be illegal.
The NBA player dress code is justified.
The District of Columbia should become the 51st state.
Parents should not purchase war toys for their children.
California should legalize physician-assisted suicide.
The United States should withdraw from Iraq.
Warrantless wiretaps in America do more harm than good.
The US Federal Government should significantly increase taxes on gasoline.
Released felons should have voting rights.
The focus on standards-based education in public middle schools does more good than harm.
Schools should ban junk food.
Pakistan is more an enemy than an ally of the United States.
On balance, video games do more good than harm.
Algebra should not be required for high school graduation.
Wal-Mart is good for America.
The atomic bombing of Hiroshima was justified.

2005-2006 Topics: Desert Valleys Debate League

The federal government's response to Hurricane Katrina was appropriate.
Food aid does more harm than good.
Cell phones should be allowed in schools.
Californians should vote for Prop. 74.
All students should be required to say the Pledge of Allegiance
The US should eliminate farm subsidies.
Zoos do more harm than good.
Soccer players should wear helmets.
The US military should leave Iraq.
Fried foods should have warning labels.
California's Class Size Reduction (CSR) program should be extended to middle schools.
The NBA player dress code is justified.
The District of Columbia should become the 51st state.
Parents should not purchase war toys for their children.
California should legalize physician-assisted suicide.
Warrantless wiretaps make America safer.
The United States should negotiate with Osama Bin Laden
Students should take parenting classes.
Students should be punished for failing to report cheating.

Schools should ban junk food.
Pakistan is more an enemy than an ally of the United States.
On balance, video games do more good than harm.
Algebra should not be required for high school graduation.
Wal-Mart is good for America.
The atomic bombing of Hiroshima was justified.

2005-2006 Topics: District of Columbia Debate League

Cellular phones should be allowed in schools.
Celebrities should not be role models.
Rap music does more harm than good.
Middle grades should require students to wear uniforms.
Junk food should be banned in schools.
The federal government's response to Hurricane Katrina was appropriate.
The United States is losing the war on terror.
Schools should eliminate letter grades.
The United States Federal Government should ban production of genetically modified organisms(GMO's).
The number of charter schools in the DC metro area should be increased.
The District of Columbia Curfew law(The Juvenile Curfew Act of 1995 (DC Code 6-2181)) does more harm than good.
Human cloning should be allowed in the United States.
Professional athletes should be role models.
Asian Oyster seeding in the Chesapeake Bay should be banned.
Gentrification does more harm than good.
Professional athletes should not be allowed to compete in the Olympic Games.
Animal performances should be banned in circuses.
Advertisements around schools should be banned.
Spanish should be a mandatory course in public schools.
The District of Columbia should become a US state.
The electoral college should be abolished.
PE should be compulsory in school.

2005-2006 Topics: Big Apple Debate League

Television is a bad influence.
Cell phones shold be allowed in schools.
U.S. intervention in Iraq has done more good than harm.
The United States should ban the death penalty.
The NBA player dress code is justified.
Junk food should be sold in schools.
The United States Federal Government should significantly increase the gas tax.
In the case of metal detectors, students' privacy is more important than security.
Iran has the right to develop nuclear power.
Zoos do more harm than good.
Homework should be banned.
Algebra should not be required for high school graduation.
Wal-Mart is good for America.
The atomic bombing of Hiroshima was justified.

2005-2006 Topics: Independent Schools Debate League

All students should be required to say the Pledge of Allegiance.
The U.S. should not send humans into space.
The United Nations has failed at its mission.
Cell phones should be allowed in schools.
K-12 schools should ban junk food sales.

Medical testing on animals does more good than harm.
The United States should ban the death penalty.
Warrantless wiretaps make America safer.
Pakistan is more an enemy than an ally of the United States.
On balance, video games do more good than harm.
Algebra should not be required for high school graduation.
Wal-Mart is good for America.
The atomic bombing of Hiroshima was justified.
The US should set a timetable to pull its troops out of Iraq.
Food aid does more harm than good.
Parents should be held legally responsible for the actions of their minor children.
Californians should pass Proposition 82.

2004-2005 Topics: Independent Schools Debate League

Beauty pageants do more harm than good.
The Constitution should be amended to follow foreign born citizens to serve as President of the United States.
Schools should end the practice of giving awards.
The United States should expand its use of nuclear power.
Homeland security is more important than the protection of civil liberties.
Violent video games should be banned.
It is unethical to eat meat.
Junior high and high schools should randomly test their athletes for drug use.
James Hahn should be reelected mayor of Los Angeles.
Physician-assisted suicide should be legalized.
The United States should sign and ratify the Kyoto Protocol.
American intervention in Iraq has done more good than harm.
Governor Schwarzenegger has been good for California.
Congress should pass the "Clear Skies" initiative.
Homework should be banned.
California should raise the driving age to 18.
The legal system should have the option to charge juveniles as adults in murder cases.
Schools should ban animal dissection.
The US government should not allow drilling for oil in the Alaska National Wildlife Reserve.
Middle schools should require students to wear uniforms.
California should ban drivers' use of cellular phones in cars.

2004-2005 Topics: Inland Valley Debate League

Middle schools should have student lockers.
The United States should amend the Constitution to allow foreign-born citizens to serve as President.
The United States should have a draft for military service.
California high schools should substantially expand vocational training.
Teachers should not use candy as rewards.
George W. Bush should be re-elected.
Rap music does more harm than good.
Californians should vote for Proposition 68.
The assault weapon ban should be extended.
Supreme Court proceedings should be televised.
Public funds should not be used for professional sports stadiums.
On balance, children's television does more good than harm.
California should ban drivers' use of cellular phones in cars.
United States military forces should intervene in the Sudan.
Stem cell research should be expanded.
The United States should substantially increase its use of nuclear power.
Fast food restaurants do more harm than good.
Schools should provide for single sex instruction.

American intervention in Iraq has done more good than harm.
Governor Schwarzenegger has been good for California.
Congress should pass the "Clear Skies" initiative.
Homework should be banned.
California should raise the driving age to 18.
The legal system should have the option to charge juveniles as adults in murder cases.
Celebrities should not be role models.

2003-2004 Topics: Inland Valley Debate League

California should substantially increase the minimum wage.
The United States is losing the War on Terror.
Parents should be punished for their childrens' mistakes.
The United States should pay reparations for slavery.
Middle schools should allow outside food vendors for lunch.
The United States should ban the death penalty.
College athletes should be paid.
Consumers should not purchase SUVs.
American involvement in Iraq has done more good than harm.
The United States should adopt a new timber policy.
Saudi Arabia is more an enemy than an ally to the United States.
Violent video games should be banned.
The United States should adopt English as the official national language.
Middle schools should increase required classes and reduce electives.
The United States should open federal lands and offshore areas for oil drilling.
Beauty pageants do more good than harm.
California should issue drivers' licenses to undocumented immigrants.
Cigarettes should be illegal.
Bush's plan for space exploration will do more good than harm.
High school students should have to pass a national exit exam to graduate.
George W. Bush should be re-elected.
NAFTA should be extended throughout the Americas.
Ban boxing!
All middle schools should require student uniforms.
The No Child Left Behind Act has done more good than harm.
Television is a bad influence.

2002-2003 Topics: Inland Valley Debate League

Cellular phones should be allowed in schools.
The United States should significantly increase space exploration.
Television is a bad influence.
The United States should invade Iraq.
The United States should lower the voting age.
Torture is justified for national security.
Junk food should be banned in schools.
State lotteries should be ended.
School should be year-round.
The United States should eliminate its own weapons of mass destruction.
Peer pressure is more beneficial than harmful.
Schools should not use standardized testing.
Human cloning should be permitted in the United States.
The United States should ban the death penalty.
Schools should not support competitive interscholastic sports.
Schools should ban animal dissection.
California should eliminate its "three strikes" law.

Homeland security is more important than protection of civil liberties.
School attendance should be voluntary.
Violent video games should be banned.
The U.S. should have a draft for military service.
California should raise the minimum driving age to 18.
The United States should ratify the Kyoto accord.
Parents should not purchase war toys for their children.
The Supreme Court should end affirmative action in higher education.
There should be mandatory drug testing for participation in extracurricular activities.
The U.S. invasion of Iraq has done more harm than good.

Sample Debate Topics for Social Science and History

These sample debate topics are drawn from the California History-Social Science Content Standards for the California Public Schools, in Grades 6-8. More topic lists are available online at www.middleschooldebate.com.

Mesopotamia was a greater influence on world history than Egypt.
This House would follow Hammurabi's code.
Athenian democracy is better than representative democracy.
The advancement of civilization through empire did more good than harm.
The caste system was good for Indian society.
When in conflict, Confucianism is better than Taoism.
The invention of gunpowder did more good than harm.
This House regrets the rise of Julius Caesar.
Barbarian invasions caused the fall of Rome.
This House would side with Carthage.
In medieval Europe, the failure to separate church and state did more harm than good.
Feudalism is an effective form of government.
The Crusades were morally justified.
The United States should have a parliamentary government.
Cortez was guilty of crimes against humanity.
Power should be given based on birthright.
Luther's rebellion was justified.
Joan of Arc was a heretic.
The Renaissance was not a Golden Age.
The printing press has done more harm than good.
Marco Polo misrepresented his achievements.
European exploration has done more good than harm.
Economic trade positively influenced democracy.
This House would remain loyal to King George the III.
For securing individual rights, the central government is better than local governments.
This House would support U.S. isolationism.
An enlightened monarch is preferable to a chaotic legislature.
This House would not sign the Articles of Confederation.
Political compromise undermined the ideals of the American Revolution.
Westward state expansion in America was justified.
The principal of judicial review established in Marbury v. Madison has gone too far.
Majority rule does not protect the rights of minorities.
This House would join Shay's Rebellion.
The United States should have more than two political parties.
The free press does more good than harm.
The Constitution should contain a right to privacy.
This House regrets the Monroe Doctrine.
The United States government should not support privateering.
The spoils system is necessary for government.
This House would not have war with Mexico.
In this case, the United States should break a treaty.
The United States should have no restriction on immigration.
This House would not vote for Andrew Jackson.

This House would choose gold over silver.
Texas should remain an independent nation.
The North should have let the South secede.
The cotton gin has done more harm than good.
Conscription is immoral.
The Draft Riots were justified.
The South should supervise its own reconstruction.
A war crimes court should be established for civil war veterans.
Laissez-faire economics do more harm than good.
Urbanization produces misery.

These sample debate topics are drawn from the California History-Social Science Content Standards for the California Public Schools, in Grades 10-12.
The American Revolution was not justified.
This House regrets the French Revolution.
The Industrial Revolution has done more harm than good.
Socialism is preferable to capitalism.
Slavery was not the primary cause of the Civil War.
In this case, colonialism has done more good than harm.
Nationalism is to blame for the First World War.
The United States should join the League of Nations.
This House believes that Lenin misread Marx.
The United States should intervene to stop the extermination of Armenians.
The Cold War was a "hot war."
This House would substantially change the Bill of Rights.
In this case, state authority should trump federal authority.
This House regrets the growth of cities.
The federal government should substantially increase the power of labor unions.
Break up the monopoly.
Church and state should be separate.
The United States should build the Panama Canal.
This House would pass the Volstead act.
Prohibition is good social policy.
The assembly line method of production has done more good than harm.
The United States should establish a Federal Reserve.
The United States has not learned the lessons of the Great Depression.
The United States should have a New Deal.
The United States should significantly restructure Social Security.
This House would negotiate with Hitler.
The United States should use atomic weapons against Japan.
The Supreme Court's decision in Fred Korematsu v. United States of America was wrong.
The United States should endorse the Marshall Plan.
The United Nations is obsolete.
The United States should ratify the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
The "Atoms for Peace" program was a failure.
The Alliance for Progress undermined development in the Americas.
NATO prevented a war between the United States and the USSR.
Nuclear weapons have done more good than harm.
The Cold War military buildup was justified.
On balance, the Truman Doctrine did more good than harm.
This House would not fear Communism.
The Korean War was justified.
The United States should not intervene in Vietnam.
This House would threaten Cuba.
The Cuban Missile Crisis promoted international security.
U.S. policies of containment did more harm than good.

Reagan won the Cold War.
This House would build "Star Wars."
The Supreme Court should reverse the Bakke decision.
"Separate but equal" education is justified.
This House would vote "No" on Proposition 209.
To accomplish social change, violence is preferable to nonviolence.
Malcolm X is more responsible for civil rights reform than Martin Luther King, Jr..
The goals of the Voting Rights Act have not been fulfilled.
This House would substantially change public accommodation law.
Separatism is preferable to assimilation.
The two-party system does more good than harm.
Nixon should have come clean.
The Supreme Court should rule for Nixon.
In this case, property rights are more important than environmental protection.
Machiavelli was right.
In this case, promoting the public good is more important than protecting individual rights.
Supreme Court justices should be elected.
The terms of Supreme Court justices should be substantially restricted.
It should be easier to become a United States citizen.
Abolish the electoral college.
The Constitution should be easier to amend.
The President has too much power.
This House would substantially reduce the freedom of the press.
The right to privacy is more important than the public's right to know.
In this case, the government should intervene in the free market.
This House rejects property rights.
Outsourcing jobs is good for America.
The United States should substantially increase the minimum wage.
Free trade is better than fair trade.

Middle School Public Debate Program Rules For Competition

The Middle School Public Debate Program Rules for Competition cover seven key areas of a debate. These are:

1. Debate Topics

The Rules:

Each debate has a different topic. There are two kinds of topics for PDP debates: *prepared* and *impromptu* motions. A prepared topic is announced in advance of a competition (generally four weeks beforehand). Middle school debates exclusively use prepared topics, sometimes referred to as *extemporaneous* motions. There will be several weeks of time for thinking about these topics, researching the main points of arguments for and against the topic and carefully organizing some notes about the better arguments.

Understanding the Rules:

Over the course of a semester of class or a season of competition, students will debate a variety of social and political issues. They are expected to learn both sides of each topic, with sides assigned shortly before a debate is scheduled to begin. This means that students will be able to understand the major arguments and issues on each side of many current controversies, building a knowledge base that will help them to become informed citizens.

Topics should follow established guidelines for selection and phrasing. The Public Debate Program uses the following seven guidelines for topic writing.

1. Topics should be simple, declarative sentences such as “Extra-terrestrial intelligence exists” or “Schools should not serve junk food.” Extra language only make
2. Topics should encourage students to apply higher-level thinking skills. This means, where appropriate, using comparative language such as “On balance, video games do more good than harm” or using complex terms as in the topic “It is unethical to eat meat.”
3. Topics should be challenging, serious issues of local, regional, national or international concern. While it might be fun to debate about whether Batman could defeat Superman (hint: Batman will probably lose), students deserve to be challenged by the practice of debate. Even quite young students can debate topics such as “Nuclear power does more harm than good” or “The benefits of China’s Three Gorges Dam outweigh its costs” with suitable preparation and teaching.

4. Topics should be age appropriate. Although students should be challenged, topic writers should also choose issues that interest the age group scheduled to debate. This might mean using topics like "Parents should not purchase war toys for their children" or "Celebrities should not be role models."
5. Topics should, where possible, intersect with the school curriculum. This means drawing from multiple disciplines including science and history, while being mindful that it is inappropriate to use topics that might advantage some students because of their age in school (for example, by picking a topic about the bombing of Hiroshima when ninth graders may not have studied 20th century history yet).
6. Topics should be chosen by and approved by school teachers. Teachers have the best idea of what their students can do. In the past, they have come up with many of the PDP's most innovative topics, such as "Zoos do more harm than good."
7. Topics should be fair to both teams. This includes the following considerations:
   - Topics should not require multiple proofs by the proposition team. Topics such as "Standardized testing is fair and necessary" ask too much of one team while making it much easier for the opposition team (they need only focus on the word "and" to win the debate).
   - Topics should not use extremist language like "always," "never" and "all." It is nearly impossible to prove an absolute statement in a 26 minute debate.
   - Topics should avoid false dichotomies. A false dichotomy occurs when a topic poses a choice when in fact a choice need not be made. A topic such as "Schools should give up freedom for safety" makes it proportionately much easier for the opposition to win, as they must only prove that schools need not make such a choice.

2. Number of Teams and Debaters

The Rules:

Each Public Debate Program debate has two teams. One team is called the **proposition**. The other team is called the **opposition**. Each debate team has **three students**. One student is known as the **first speaker** for the team; one is the **second speaker** for the team; and the third student is the team's **rebuttal speaker**.

At a competition, each team of three students will remain together throughout the day without substitutions. If, for some reason, only two students are able to make up a team (for example, if a student becomes ill), those two may participate as a team. For teams of two in competition, the student who speaks first also delivers the rebuttal speech. It is important to note that in competition, the missing student on a team of two will receive an individual score of zero.

Understanding the Rules:

The Public Debate Program uses teams of three because there are educational and social benefits to working in larger groups. Teams of three allow more students to debate per judge than other formats that use teams of two. Teams of three also teach students to work in more complex team environments, helping students to learn valuable negotiation and compromise skills important to work in school and professional contexts. Finally, they mean that beginning students can be brought into a team without shouldering the sole burden for a rocky performance.

3. Speaking Order and Speaking Time Limits

The Rules:

Speakers make their presentations in the following order.

• **First Speaker, Proposition Team**	**5 minutes**
• ***First Speaker, Opposition Team***	**5 minutes**
• **Second Speaker, Proposition Team**	**5 minutes**
• ***Second Speaker, Opposition Team***	**5 minutes**
• ***Rebuttal Speaker, Opposition Team***	**3 minutes**
• **Rebuttal Speaker, Proposition Team**	**3 minutes**

The first four speeches (the five or six minute speeches) are sometimes called **constructive speeches**. In these speeches, each team will construct, or build, its arguments. New arguments may be introduced in any of these speeches. The final two speeches of the debate (the three or five minute speeches) are called **rebuttal speeches**. These are the final speeches of the debate for each side. They are summary speeches. In these speeches, the debaters try to make the best case for its side of the debate and, at the same time, try to eliminate the major points of the other team.

Judges should disregard new arguments made in the rebuttal speeches. New arguments are defined as arguments without a foundation in the constructive speeches. For example, if the debate thus far has been about health care policy and a concluding speaker offers new ideas about U.S. policy toward Africa, that would likely be considered a new argument and not used in the final evaluation of the debate.

Understanding the Rules:

The proposition team opens and closes the debate. That is because they have the **burden of proof** in a debate, much like the prosecution in a trial. Their job is harder – it is always more difficult to build something than to tear it down. For this reason, the proposition begins with a case and is allowed the final word in a debate. To accommodate this, the opposition has two speeches in a row – the second opposition speech and the opposition rebuttal are back to back. These two speeches function as a unit, with each speech adding its own material, summation, and ideas to the debate. The last speech is therefore the most difficult in the debate, as this speaker must respond to eight (or eleven, in high school) minutes of material in addition to reinforcing her team's ideas.

As the debate goes on, it becomes more complicated. The debate begins with a case for the motion. The next speaker refutes the case and brings in new ideas. Each subsequent speaker continues the process of refutation while keeping their team's ideas afloat. It is up to the final speakers to make sense of the debate in a way that will encourage the judge to vote for their side – a role that requires cleverness and careful note taking.

4. The Preparation Period

The Rules:

Before each debate, students are assigned a side (proposition or opposition), an opponent and a judge. Tournament officials distribute colored paper for use during the preparation period. A different color is generally used for each tournament debate. After students have received their paper, a topic is announced. If the topic has been announced before the tournament or competition (an extemporaneous topic), debaters have 20 minutes of preparation time to

review their notes, speak with their coaches and teammates, and copy notes or other information onto the colored paper.

Electronic retrieval of information is not permitted in preparation time. Students may not use computers or other mechanical devices during the preparation time unless permission has been granted in advance of the competition for reasons of equity related to a disability.

Understanding the Rules:

The preparation period is designed to encourage students to understand their ideas in advance of the competition. If they know they will not be able to read prepared speeches, they are more likely to read and comprehend material before the tournament. In addition, it helps to "level the playing field." Students cannot read speeches that others (parents or the Internet, for example) have written for them, so must express their own ideas. Finally, the preparation period encourages students to develop the skills they need for professional communication. It is very unusual for anyone to be asked to deliver a speech that they can read from a manuscript. Also it is quite boring to be read to, unless you are a very young child. Effective speakers are able to talk from a limited set of notes with their own ideas – the preparation period helps students to practice this skill set.

Colored paper simply helps to ensure fair play in debates. During debates, students are allowed to use flow sheets as well as notes printed on colored paper. When there is colored paper, there is no debate about whether notes are pre-written or not.

5. Debate Materials

The Rules:

Before a debate tournament or competition, or during preparation time, students may review any and all information that would help them prepare for a debate. They may review books from the library, current event articles in newspapers and magazines, class notes, and written records of debate meetings and previous debates. They may speak to teachers, coaches, teammates, parents, friends, and others.

Once the debate begins, however, students **MAY NOT REVIEW OR USE** any notes that were not prepared during the preparation time period. In preparation time, students may look at and copy materials from their notes and ask the advice of coaches and teachers. These new notes, written during preparation time, are allowed in the debate. Students may not use any materials, even hand written notes, which were prepared before the announced start of preparation time. In particular, students may not read prepared speeches in a debate. The use of pre-prepared materials is a serious violation of the rules and their use may mean a forfeit and loss of a debate.

Understanding the Rules:

Although coaching is allowed, even encouraged, in preparation time, students should write their own notes. This ensures they are able to read them in debates. Plus, it means there is no equity issue. As much as parents or other adults might like to help students win debates, it is important to remember that the purpose of a tournament is to help students learn the skills associated with effective debating. If adults interfere too much, students will ultimately suffer.

Too many materials in the preparation period can be a disadvantage to students. The most successful debaters have already read and digested their research for presentation in the form of outlines or other easily copied materials. Of course, students will learn over time what techniques work best for them.

On occasion, some students may require special assistance to participate in a debate. They may need a Braille reader or other help, and this is accommodated in the rules. Students needing this assistance need only to register with their coach and tournament officials before the event to ensure smooth participation.

6. Points of Information and Heckling

The Rules:

There are parts of parliamentary procedure that are used in the debates. These are **points of information** and **heckling**. **A point of information (also known as a POI, pronounced "P-O-I") is a request by a member of one team to the person who is speaking to give some of her speaking time to the other team to make a comment or ask a question about her speech.**

Points of information may only be offered during the middle minutes of the constructive (longer) speeches. The first and last minute of those speeches is called *protected time*, when the speaker is protected from inquiries from the other side. Judges will signal the beginning and end of protected time by slapping the table once. There are no POIs in the rebuttal speeches.

Points of information may be accepted or rejected by the speaker. A person applies for a point of information by standing and saying "Information" or "Point of Information." A speaker may reject a point by gently waving a hand in the down position, indicating that the opponent should sit. A speaker may also reject the point verbally by saying "No, thank you." Either method of rejecting a point attempt may be used, although the former is preferred as it is less disruptive for the speaker.

If the speaker accepts a point (as a guideline, 2 or more points ought to be accepted during any given speech), the speaker simply replies to an attempt by saying "Yes" or "I'll take your point." It is possible for more than one person on a team to request a point at any one time. A rejection by the speaker (by a nonverbal wave of the hand or negative verbal reply) is understood to apply to all opponents attempting a point at that time.

If the speaker accepts a point, the opposing team's point may not last longer than 15 seconds. The speaker accepts only a single point at a time. The person making a point of information may not interrupt the speaker's answer to the point, make a two-part question, ask a follow-up question, or make any other comment unless the speaker agrees to it by accepting another point of information. Students should stand to offer points of information. If the speaker does not wish to accept a point, they may simply

A **heckle** is an interruption of a speaker during her presentation. Heckles are argumentative and are directed at the judge. Responsible heckling is not only permitted, but also encouraged, in the Public Debate Program formats. Students heckle to applaud teammates and opponents before and after their speeches. This is done by pounding on a desk or tabletop with an open palm or slapping one's hand on the table a few times. This is just like regular applause, except the debaters use a desk or table as the "second hand." **Supportive heckling** is a sign of respect for your friends and opponents. This is a way of showing support for all those people who are willing to participate in a difficult, challenging competition.

Debaters may also cheer the good arguments of their teammates and show their displeasure with some of the opinions of their opponents. During a partner's speech, it is appropriate to slap the table in support of a particularly clever or winning argument. The members of the team supporting the speaker may also add a shout of "Hear! Hear!" to the pounding. During an opponent's speech, it is appropriate to say, "Shame!" if you strongly disagree with the opinion of the speaker. This is called **negative heckling** Debaters should not pound on the table when they say, "Shame!" Remember–pounding on the table is applause. Debaters would not cheer and boo a speaker at the same time. There are advanced uses of heckling also permitted in the format, including phrases of up to a few words offered at relevant points in the opponent's speech.

Understanding the Rules:

There is no rule about how many points a speaker should accept during her speech (as earlier, a guideline is to accept at least two). Similarly, there are no rules about how many points any student should offer during a debate (but students should attempt to make points as appropriate). If a speaker takes so many points that their speech becomes disorganized and confusing, they have lost control of the floor and should be scored accordingly. Similarly, if the speaker does not take and respond to points of information, they have failed to demonstrate mastery of the format and should be scored accordingly.

Points of information and heckling are included in the PDP formats to encourage impromptu argumentation and advanced public speaking skill development. They make the debate exciting, interactive, and fun. Debaters can use these techniques long after their speaking time in the debate is over. They let debaters stay involved in the debate both before and after their speeches.

Points of information and heckling should be used strategically to show the judge that your opponent cannot defend an argument or has made an error during a speech. Heckling can show support for particularly good arguments made by your teammates. These techniques should be used carefully, however, and may never be used to distract a speaker or continually interrupt a presentation. Debaters should not get carried away with using POIs and heckling. A judge should score students appropriately for rude behavior during an opposing team's speeches. A judge may also reward individual speakers and teams for the effective use of points of information and heckling.

7. Judge Training and Decision-Making

The Rules:

Every Public Debate Program judge must be certified to participate. Once a judge is certified, she may judge at competitions. To be eligible for certification, a person must be at least a high school sophomore. Judges are expected to decide the outcomes of a debate in a careful and fair manner. Any judge who cannot fairly decide a particular debate should notify a tournament director or other responsible person and remove herself from judging. Judges are never assigned to judge students from their own school. Judges must take notes using a flow sheet and are responsible for ensuring accurate timing of the debate. There are two outcomes for a debate. The judge must decide the winning side of the debate. That is the team that argued successfully on the topic. If the proposition team proves its case for the motion, the judge should reward the proposition team. If the proposition team did not prove its case for the motion, the judge should declare the opposition team as the winner. There are no ties in debates. Neither can two teams win a debate or both teams lose a debate.

In addition to deciding the winning team in the debate, a judge must award individual points to each of the six debaters. Student are rated on a scale of 0-100 points, with "100" points awarded for a perfect performance. Judges must use the official MSPDP rubric (contained in this guide) to assign points, depending on the grade level of the debaters. The judge should consider public speaking, argumentation, and teamwork skills in assigning individual speaker points. It is possible to give the same speaker points to more than one student.

After careful deliberation of the outcome of the debate, the judge will complete a **ballot**, a record of the debate, given to her by the tournament host. The judge will then announce the outcome of the debate to the participating teams, including individual scores. The judge will explain the reasons that a particular side has won the debate. The judge will provide some constructive criticism to help debaters improve in future debates. The judge will then complete the written ballot, providing a detailed description of the reason(s) for the outcome, as well as listing any additional comments to help debaters improve their public speaking and debate skills.

Understanding the Rules:

The Public Debate Program is the only debating program in the United States that requires training and certification of judges. It is also unique in requiring full disclosure from judges at the end of the debate. At first, this might seem odd – after all, in a soccer game officials do not hide who made goals. But in many debate formats, judges do not reveal their results to students until after the competition is over. The Public Debate Program strongly believes in the educational and social values of transparency. Students learn best when judges fully reveal their rationales. They will apply concrete advice in the next debate. Also, learning is more fully absorbed sooner to the speech in question. Finally, transparency encourages judges to be accountable for their decisions. It is not easy to judge debates; on the contrary, many highly accomplished professionals say that evaluating debates is one of the more difficult things they have ever done.

8. After the Debate

The Rules:

Once the debate is over, students are encouraged to discuss their results with the judge. They should ask their judges for advice to improve their debating skills. However, no person is permitted to dispute the judge's decision. This includes teachers, coaches, parents and debaters. If anyone has a complaint about a judge's behavior during the debate, they should speak to the designated coach for their affiliated school. That person may then bring up the matter with appropriate tournament officials.

Understanding the Rules:

A judge's decision is final. To proceed otherwise is to undermine the system of mutual and professional respect that makes debating programs possible. Judges are human. This means that each one may watch a given debate and make a slightly different decision for slightly different reasons. At first, this may seem unfair. But judging debates is more art than science. All educated people do not watch a speech by an elected official or celebrity and leave with a uniform opinion. This is because communication is a complicated enterprise. Successful debaters are able to win no matter who is judging; it is a beginner's mistake to blame a poor performance on judging. Adults who encourage this behavior on the part of debaters only delay the learning that comes from the opportunity to try and persuade diverse audiences.

Preparing For Your First Tournament

By Kate Shuster, Director, Middle School Public Debate Program

If you are reading this, you are probably already part of your school's debate club, or you are in a debate class. Most students join the debate team because they like to argue, or because they want to improve their speaking and listening skills. Some students are interested in current events. Others want to prepare for a potential career in law, politics, or business. Whatever your reasons for joining the debate team, you will find that participating in debate is challenging, fun, and exciting.

If you are a brand-new to debate, you probably have some anxiety about your first debate tournament. Most new debaters have a lot of questions before they go to a tournament. If you have these questions, you are not alone. You may wonder what the tournament will be like and what you will do there. Will it be fun? Exciting? Difficult? Will there be lunch? The purpose of this article is to help you prepare for your first tournament, and to help you get a sense of what the experience will be like.

Before the tournament

It is essential to prepare before you attend a debate tournament. Research, thinking, and practice will pay off at a tournament. If you play a musical instrument or a sport, or are learning another language, you already know that practice is critical for success. Preparation begins with understanding the format for debate. You should learn the order of speeches and know how to make and answer points of information. You should develop some ideas for how to give a speech. Finally, you should make sure that you know how to take notes on a flow sheet. If you need some help with any of these tasks, ask your teacher or coach for assistance. You will also be able to perfect your knowledge of the debate format at the tournament.

You will also need to do some research on the topics for debate. For a tournament, you are given either 4 or 5 topics in advance of the competition. Your teacher will give you a copy of the topics. Look over the list carefully. Normally, there will be some topics you could begin to debate immediately. Others may deal with unfamiliar issues, or may be a little outside your realm of expertise. Make a note of which topics seem the most challenging. Why do they seem challenging? What kind of research will you have to do to understand the topics better?

At a debate tournament, you will debate on all of the given topics. You will not get to choose what side you are on – your side will be assigned randomly by a computer program. This means that you will need to be prepared to debate on both sides of all topics. Some students find this intimidating. It can be a little scary, but it is also exciting. At a league tournament, you will have the opportunity to meet and debate against students from all over your area. You may not be the best debater in the league yet, but that is because you haven't started yet! The sooner you get started, the better you will be as a debater. Think about a tournament as an opportunity to develop your skills.

Your debate club will need to develop a research strategy to effectively explore the issues for debate. It is most effective to divide the responsibilities for research among the members of your club, so that each person has a "research assignment" for the club. You may work on your assignment in a small group or on your own, depending on what your coaches suggest. Once everyone in the group has completed their assignment, they can share the results of the research with the rest of club. This way, everyone works together to prepare for the tournament. The best way to prepare research for a tournament is to make "briefs," or summary sheets, for each topic. An argument

"brief" sums up the arguments on an issue and shows the major evidence and arguments for and against a given topic. Preparing briefs based on your research will also help you develop writing and summarization skills. To research the topics for the tournament, begin by brainstorming about the topics. Ask yourself: What do I know about this issue? What do I not know about this issue? Who might be affected by this issue? How might those people be affected by this issue? Filling out an "issue analysis worksheet" might help you do this. Finally, ask yourself: Where might I go to look for information about this issue? Ask your teacher and classmates for help in finding information about the topics. Keep notes on what you read, and try to figure out what they key facts about the issue are, and begin to think about arguments you might make in favor of and against the topic. Anticipate ideas that other people might have - what arguments could be made for each side of the topic? What will you say if they try to make those arguments?

Don't worry if you are not completely prepared for the tournament. No one is ever completely prepared for a debate tournament. Just bring your research and briefs in a notebook or binder, some paper for taking notes, and get ready for a day of exciting debate competition.

What should you wear? Wear something comfortable and clean. You may wear a school uniform, or "dressy casual" clothes. There is no need to wear a suit, but you may wear a suit if you wish. If you have questions about what to wear, ask your coach for advice.

Your First Debate

When you get to the tournament, there will be many students from all over the area who are nervously anticipating the first debate. Begin by scouting the school a little bit. Find out where the topics will be announced. Pick a good place for your school's team to meet between debates and before debates. Your coach will register with tournament administration to make sure your teams are entered. Then, you will have time to relax, prepare, and perhaps even purchase a snack from the host school's concession stand.

When all teams have registered, it will be time for the first debate. The tournament administrator will post "pairings" for the first debate at several locations. These pairings list the matches for the upcoming round of debate. You should consult the pairings or send a teammate to consult the pairings. The pairings tell you what room you will be in, what side you will represent, who you will debate, and who your judge will be. Your team is listed by school and the last initials of the debaters. The pairings look like this:

Claremont McKenna Championship Tournament, Round 1: Topic Announced at 9 AM

Room	Proposition	Opposition	Judge
1	Desert Springs ABC	Frisbie DEF	B. Walters
2	Townsend GHI	Canyon Hills JKL	K. Couric
3	La Contenta MNO	Northview PQR	T. Brokaw
4	Nicolet STU	DC Prep VWX	G. Rivera

You should consult the pairings or send a teammate to consult the pairings. The pairings tell you what room you will be in, what side you will represent, who you will debate, and who your judge will be.

Once you have consulted the pairings, it is time for the announcement of the topic for debate. Everyone at the tournament will gather in a common area, and the tournament administrator will announce the debate topic. You

will then have 20 minutes for preparation. At the end of this 20-minute period, you will have to be in your room and ready to start your debate. The preparation period is time for you to review and copy relevant parts of your notes on the topic.

Remember that you cannot use any materials in the debate that you did not prepare during preparation time. This means that you must use your preparation time to review your notes, and copy any parts of these notes for use in debates. Practically speaking, this means that you must understand the issues and arguments you will advance in your debate. Preparation time is also time to consult your coach and teammates. Make sure you know what your position will be in the debate. Consider the arguments you think the other side will make in favor of their side of the motion for debate.

Once you are done preparing, go to your debate room. You will debate against one other team in front of a judge. Sometimes there will be an audience, but usually there will not be an audience. Parents are always welcome to come and watch debates. The debate will be fun and challenging. You will deliver speeches, make points of information, and take careful notes so that you can refute the arguments of the other side. Try to use all of your speech time and answer all the arguments of the other side. Work with your teammates After the debate is over, the judge will make a decision. Most judges will ask you to wait outside while they make a decision. During this time, the judge will assign a winner in the debate, and will assign "speaker points" to every individual debater. Speaker points, assigned on a scale of 1-30, assess the skill and performance of each individual debater. When the judge has made a decision and finished filling out a ballot, you will be called back into the room. The judge will announce the decision for the debate, and offer comments to all participants. Pay close attention, and take notes. This will help you understand how to improve your performance in upcoming debates. After the judge is done, rejoin the rest of your school's team to discuss the results with your coach and plan for the next debate.

You will have four or five similar debates during the day. In the middle of the day, you will have lunch. The host school will provide a low-cost lunch for sale at the tournament. You may purchase lunch at the tournament, or you may bring your own.

The End of the Tournament

After the debates are over, everyone at the tournament will gather for the awards ceremony. Three kinds of awards will be presented. Students may receive "speaker awards." These are individual awards, given to students who have the highest speaker points overall in the tournament. The second kind of award is a "team award." These awards are given to teams of three who have the best winning percentage, combined with the best overall speaker points. The third kind of award is a "school award." School awards are given to schools whose teams won the most debates overall.

After the awards ceremony, everyone leaves to go home. The ride home is a time to reflect on the tournament and anticipate the rest of the competitive season. You will have many opportunities to debate this year, and your first tournament is only the beginning. A few days after the tournament, your coach will receive the team's ballots from the tournament in the mail. These are the sheets your judges filled out with comments for students and the reasons for their decisions. Read your ballots carefully, and pay special attention to the comments and suggestions of your judges. Talk with your teammates about what the ballots said. Try to figure out how you can follow the suggestions at your next tournament.

Preparing Students for Their First Tournament

By Kate Shuster, Director, Middle School Public Debate Program

Students and teachers may choose to attend MSPDP competitions to test and improve their debating skills in competition with other schools. Tournaments are exciting, fun, and challenging events. They normally occur on a Saturday and last from 9 until 4:30. Tournaments may feature 4 or 5 debates for students. If you are a teacher, a student, or a parent, you may be nervous about going to a competition. The purpose of this page is to help you prepare to compete and give you an idea of what to expect.

It is important to remember that students will never be completely prepared for any tournament. Some teachers are tempted to keep students out of competitions until they are totally ready to compete. However, if this were true, students would never compete. Tournaments are like laboratories for debate training. They are events that are organized to help students practice and learn. Even students who are ill-prepared can benefit from tournament experience, as they will learn the value of preparation. Most students, even the very inexperienced, leave a tournament feeling excited and energized to work hard for their next competition. MSPDP events are designed to be a safe and cooperative environment for learning. Students will get substantial feedback and instruction during the course of a tournament. They will meet and work with students from other schools. They will learn to function as a team with other students from your school. In short, the experience will be beneficial for all of your students.

Helping Your Students Prepare for the Tournament

Before your first tournament, you should make sure your students know the rules for the event. You can also give students a "cheat sheet" like the one-page reference guide included in this booklet, to help them remember the order of the speeches.

To understand the rules, your students need to know the order of the speeches in the debate, the time limits for those speeches, and what to do during those speeches. Your students also need to know the basic roles of the proposition team and the opposition team – they should be able to explain that the proposition's job is to make a case for the motion for debate, while the opposition's job is to refute the proposition team's case.

Students should know what points of information are, and should be able to demonstrate how to attempt to make a point of information (rise and say "Point of information," or "On that point," or something similar). Students should be able to demonstrate how to accept a point of information ("Yes, I'll take your point"), and how to reject a point of information ("No, thank you."). Students should be able to make points of information within the 15

second time limit after being recognized. Students should also know how to answer points of information ("That's a good point, but we've already addressed that concern," or "Thank you for your point," or "We disagree with that point, and let me explain why," or similarly answering the issue raised in the point of information).

In general, there are three basic skills that students should learn for competition: the A-R-E model of argumentation, the 4-step model for refutation, and how to take notes in debates. All three of these skills are covered in separate handouts that can be found in this booklet.

Most instruction to prepare students for competition can be accomplished by watching a sample videotape with students and noting how the debate process works. Students also need to prepare research and think about arguments they might make on both sides of each of the tournament topics. Start by having students fill out an "issue analysis" worksheet like the one included in this booklet. Then encourage students to work in small groups to investigate different sides of the topics and prepare T-charts or other abbreviated analyses of arguments to share with you and others in the class. Try to use this kind of exercise to reinforce ARE, so that students get used to providing reasoning and evidence to support their points. In this booklet, there is also a short article by Paul Bates, Master MSPDP Coach from Townsend Junior High School, in Chino Hills, CA. Paul explains how he has organized his award-winning team for successful research. Remember, however, that in the beginning, students are unlikely to be able to do research or understand why they need to do research. This is normal, and does not mean they shouldn't go to the tournament. Going to the tournament will help them learn what kinds of research they should do, and how research will help them at their next tournament. Practice should be integrated with preparation, and students will develop their skills over time.

Finally, students should have had practice preparing for debates during limited time. Use the announced topics before every event and have "mini-debates" with abbreviated time limits and no points of information (try 1 or 2-minute constructive speeches and 30-second rebuttals). Teach students how to effectively use their pre-prepared notes to prepare for debates.

Knowing What to Expect

Here are a few things you may need to know about a tournament, if you have not attended one before:

- **Students will compete in teams of three.** As you may already know, students compete in teams of three. You should go to the tournament with your students already divided into teams of three. You may divide the students into teams, or they may divide themselves. It is up to you to decide how students will be formed into teams. You will be required to present the students' names at registration before the competition day. This allows the tournament director to enter student information into the computer they use to tabulate the event. Students will be listed as a team by their last initials and school name. So, for example, if you are bringing three teams from Roswell Middle School, your teams might be listed as Roswell ABC, Roswell DEF, Roswell GHI, and Roswell JKL. Normally, your teams will not change during the course of the day. If you need to use a "sub," check with the tournament director to see if this will be okay. Also, the order your students are listed in does not necessarily reflect the order in which they will speak.

- **All students will participate in all debates**. The tournament will use a number of different classrooms for each "round" of debate. Each team of three students will debate at the same time on the same topic (but not necessarily on the same side) for each "round" of debate. So, if there are 5 topics for the tournament, students will debate each topic.

- **Students will be assigned to one side of a topic.** Many students are surprised and intimidated to learn that they will not get to choose what side of each topic they will defend. This means that students must prepare to

debate each side of each motion for the tournament. Students will be assigned randomly to a side for each debate. However, over the course of a tournament, students will get to be on each side an equal number of times. If students are on the "proposition" side in Round 1, they can expect to be on the "opposition" side in Round 2. When the tournament offers 5 rounds of debate, the 5th round will use random side assignment.

- **Stay in the common area for postings and topic announcement.** When you arrive at the tournament, you will register with the tournament director to make sure the tournament knows you and your students have arrived safely. When the first "round" of debate is about to begin, the tournament director will post several copies of a sheet in a public place. This sheet has the "pairings" for the upcoming debate. The pairing sheet may look something like this:

Claremont McKenna Invitational, Round 1 – Topic Announcement at 9:00 AM

Room	Proposition	Opposition	Judge
1	Desert Springs ABC	Frisbie DEF	B. Walters
2	Townsend GHI	Canyon Hills JKL	K. Couric
3	La Contenta MNO	Northview PQR	T. Brokaw
4	Nicolet STU	Eliot VWX	G. Rivera

When the pairing sheet is up, your students should go and check to find their team name. They should write down their side (proposition or opposition) and their room. This will tell them what side they will be on and where their debate will take place. After students have had a chance to look at their pairing, the tournament director will get on stage and announce the topic for the upcoming debate. The topic will be one of the topics you were given in advance of the tournament. It will have the same wording as you were given before the tournament. Students will then have 20 minutes to prepare their notes for their upcoming debate. At the conclusion of the 20-minute "prep period," students must be in their debates ready to start speaking.

- **Getting certified to be a judge will help you be a better coach.** At MSPDP tournaments, there will normally be opportunities to earn your judging certificate through a training program that happens during the tournament. It is important to earn your judging certificate. Judging debates is one of the best ways to train students. During the course of a competition, students are able to get constructive feedback from many individuals with many points of view. Judging and critiquing debates is also one of the things that makes debate events so collegial – everyone is helping out all of the students, maximizing education for everyone involved. Also, learning to judge helps you to learn what judges are "looking for" in debates, which allows you to do a better job coaching your students. Some teachers worry that they do not know how to judge. But if you are a teacher, you already have the essential skills associated with judging. Training will help you to learn, and you'll quickly pick up the ability to judge.

- **Judging is an art, not a science.** Many teachers are surprised to find out that judges don't always agree on the outcome of a given debate, and they worry that judging is inconsistent. This mirrors the nature of human communication. Even highly educated adults may have different opinions about what makes an effective or ineffective speech. Differences of perspectives guarantee that people have different views, opinions, and perspectives on the world. Part of what students learn through participating in debate is how to communicate effectively with a diverse group of individuals, just as they will have to do as professionals and as adults. The MSPDP does try to guarantee a certain level of consistency among its judges, through our training and certification program. However, this certification only sets a "floor" for judging, and lets us convey our basic expectations to judges. Judges themselves work to set their own personal "ceiling" for judging. Judging is also hard work. It is difficult to set aside your personal ideas and assumptions about the world, and if you are a teacher,

sometimes it is extra hard to take what students say at "face value" rather then discounting it because it is not correct.

- **Students don't automatically know how to win and lose gracefully.** Many students have a difficult time winning and losing debates. This is also true in sports, and in any other competitive activity. Part of your job as a coach is to help students learn to win and lose gracefully. Many students' instinct is to blame judges when they lose debates, and often they will try to get you to agree with them that judges were bad. Resist the temptation to do this. It sends a bad message to your students. In any given debate, any given judge might make a different decision. It is up to us to respect the decisions that judges make. For any given debate, there is no "right answer." Even though some answers may be more right than others, this does not mean that there is a "wrong answer" for any given debate.

After the tournament is over, review the experience with your students. Brainstorm ways you can improve their performance next time. Most students will be eager for their next experience, and will work even harder to prepare the next time around. Getting students to go to a tournament is one of the best ways to get them excited about preparing for debating.

Issue Analysis Form

Name:_____

Topic:_____

Date:_____

What do I already know about this issue?

What do I not know about this issue?

Who is affected by this issue? How might they be affected?

Why is this issue important?

Coordinating a Debate Team for Research

By Paul Bates, Townsend Junior High School, Chino Hills, CA

Like most schools, Townsend has an eclectic group of students comprising its debate team. Kids more at home on the soccer field or poised in front of the piano have made time in their schedules to join debate and compete against their peers from across the region. Creating a cohesive unit that can effectively deal with unfamiliar and complex topics starts with members grappling with topicality and gathering research.

When topics are announced, we hold a meeting where the main thrust of each concept is discussed. Depending on the topic, we may even begin to mold how we're going to define it. For example, with a topic like, On balance, children's TV does more good than harm, we throw around exactly what a child is. Is it someone who is simply under 18, or a preschooler? What's TV? Is it cable, network or a cadre of children's programming? I play a role in this dialogue, but my voice is only one among many. Already strategies begin to form as students launch spirited defenses for their positions. Occasionally during these preliminary discussions we'll reach consensus, but more often, we'll postpone a final decision until members have had an opportunity to do some research.

The following meeting, students gather to share their research. Students are acutely aware that I am the only one not responsible for bringing material in, though I have been known to teach a directed lesson when the subject area requires it, such as the Sudan topic. How do I know when a topic calls for this extra effort? When a child raises his hand and asks, "Isn't Sudan a car?" and is met with nodding approval from his peers, I know that I need to engage in a BAM: Background Awareness Maneuver!

Research isn't ready to be shared until a student has gone through it, highlighted it for prop and opp, and is ready to defend its saliency. Here is a typical scene: A few days after topics have been announced, thirty or so kids gather in my classroom after the school day has concluded and I say something like, "Alright, what do we think about funding sports stadiums?" Hands fly up, proposition points are offered, generally attacked, inevitably defended, and either agreed to or discarded by consensus. Meanwhile, our fastest typist is strategically positioned at the computer with a blank screen in front of her. If we find the idea worthy, then the students compete to state the concept in the most effective, accessible manner. When that's accomplished, it's typed up and we move on to the next point. When we have 8 - 10 prop ideas, we move on to the opposition side.

Opposition is quicker because we revisit the prop points and ask, "What would you say back to that?" The most effective responses comprise our opposition points, along with any other items we feel may be of use, even if they are not directly related to refuting our proposition arguments. Important to note in this process is respect for dissension. Some debaters won't agree with the majority and believe that a discarded argument is useful to them. They are more than free to use these throwaways during practice debates. Occasionally when this happens, the lone student will prevail by effectively employing it with the result of the rest of the debaters scribbling it into their notes or "skeletons" (discussed below). This provides an opportunity for sweet vindication that is cherished by the admired student. The phenomenon of note addition occurs any time a new point is brought up that is recognized as affecting our GNP (Gold Nugget Potential).

When we have completed this process for all topics, we copy and pass them out. This is always accomplished before the weekend prior to the tournament. We call these notes "skeletons" because they are only a framework. Students must be able to flesh these out and extend them in order for them to be worthwhile. The debater who depends solely on the skeletons will be woefully unprepared.

Research continues right up until the tournament. Bus rides to competitions are scenes of focused frenzy where students share events that have occurred in the previous 24 hours with bearing on this or that subject, such as the “Bush should be re-elected” topic at the La Contenta Tournament. Skeletons are living documents, with the students not only responsible for creating them, but also for breathing into them the vital life force necessary for success.

Whether or not students win a debate, I have found that they enjoy learning the material and gain confidence by engaging in this process, and that's what it's all about.

Public Speaking Training and Debate, Part I

By John Meany, Director of Forensics, Claremont McKenna College

Speaking in public involves a combination of mechanical and intellectual skills, including effective breathing, the use of appropriate volume and tone, eye contact and gesturing, issue analysis, selecting appropriate language, adapting to the audience, and grouping distinct ideas into an organized presentation. In school, effective public speaking can be used for class discussions, individual and group presentations, the oral delivery of written and book reports, science fair demonstrations, club and student government meetings, and much more. The skills of public speaking are also essential to debate success.

Students need to learn oral communication to make friends, get good grades, apply for a job, volunteer for local organizations, and become a club or team leader. In fact, effective public speaking to others, in personal conversations, small groups, and large audiences is one of the more common human experiences. According to a study published in the early 1990s, the average person spends 75% of each day communicating as a speaker or listener.

Although oral communication is an important daily activity and verbal skills may be fundamental to student life and learning, it is also the case that a lack of public speaking and communication skills is common among today's students. That has been noted in several national reports. Debate may assist in helping students acquire and develop the important communication skills they need. In particular, debate training may provide public speaking instruction to help students

- Speak in a poised and confident manner
- Decide which topics or ideas are the best to speak about
- Organize a speech to capture the attention of an audience
- Use language properly
- Anticipate and adapt to the needs of an audience
- Be more sensitive to the opinions of others
- Expand their intellectual horizons to participate in serious school and community issues.

In debates, it is not enough to have the best idea; it is not effective to just have an entertaining presentation. Persuasive public speakers are able to blend the right arguments and a clear and confident style of delivery. Debaters are both entertaining and informative. They cleverly use many different kinds of effective public speaking techniques, including organized and logical arguments, careful and proper use of words, simple and direct messages, powerful images, and interesting vocal delivery. Effective speakers research and know their topics, organize and practice their delivery, and anticipate the differences of opinion that opponents or an audience might have to their presentation.

Good public speakers use many of the same techniques–there is, however, no one best way to deliver a speech. There are differences among experienced and talented speakers. Although they are known as highly effective public speakers, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Winston Churchill, Christiane Amanpour, Hillary Clinton, Jerry Seinfeld, Rush Limbaugh, Dave Chappelle, and Oprah Winfrey do not deliver speeches in the same way. They adapt different speaking techniques to enhance their natural abilities. They make presentations that are unique and consistently effective. This means that what makes you a good public speaker may not be exactly the same method that works for others.

You should learn to speak in public just as you would any other new skill – (1) identify your strengths and weaknesses, then (2) work on making your presentations better through regular and patient practice. There are many techniques that are designed to improve public speaking skills or to help new speakers overcome nervousness or speech anxiety, but nothing works as well as simple practice. As you prepare for debate competition, you should practice delivering the kinds of speeches that you would in a debate. For example, if you are the opening speaker for the proposition side and the rebuttalist for the opposition side, you should practice each of these speeches several times. You should try to

practice for the amount of speaking time that you would have in tournament competition. In this case, imagine that you debate on the proposition three times and the opposition twice. Then you would need to practice a 5-mintue speech, the opening proposition speech, three times, or fifteen minutes, and the 3-minute opposition speech two times, for a total of 6 minutes. In less than a half-hour, you could match the speaking time of a full debate tournament!

The purpose of this article on public speaking is to introduce you to some of these techniques and provide practice tips to help you develop and improve your public speaking skills.

Oral Communication Skills

The speaker's VOICE, the confident and powerful delivery of ideas, will, will influence the way that a judge or audience will listen to your message. In other words, you will not be able to persuade another person of your opinion if you do not speak clearly and with authority. But what does it mean to speak persuasively? Outstanding speeches include many effective public speaking techniques. Some of these include the *volume* of the speech, the *rate* or speed of delivery, the speaker's *clarity* and pronunciation, the manner of *emphasis*, and the speaker's *word choice*.

Volume

The volume of a speech should not be too soft–the audience should be able to hear the speech without straining to listen. It should not be too loud–no audience enjoys having a speaker YELL AN OPINION AT THEM! A speech should be delivered in a slightly louder voice than daily conversation. Additional volume shows that the speaker is confident of the information. Have you ever noticed the speaking styles used in television commercials, by politicians and preachers, or on radio and television talk shows? The speakers use volume to prove that they are convinced that their message is right. Their volume also tries to get the agreement of their listeners or audience.

You should speak more loudly in a large room than a small one and in a more crowded room than in a room with a few people. You may raise and lower the volume of your delivery to attract the attention of the audience, emphasize an important point, or show emotion. To practice your volume control, you should deliver a section of a speech, perhaps thirty seconds of speaking, in differently sized rooms. Have a friend listen to the speech from the back row of the room. Is the speech loud enough in a classroom or larger room? Is it too loud for a small space?

Rate

The rate of delivery is the speed or pace of a speech. Some speakers deliver a speech too quickly. This is often because the speaker is nervous. On the other hand, some speakers deliver their messages too slowly.
You may have had the experience of knowing what a speaker was going to say before the speaker completed her or his thought. It is not interesting to be a member of an audience who is always filling in the concluding words of a speaker's sentence. ("And so, in conclusion…we…should…remember…that our children…are…our…yes, it is important...to remember…that…our children…are…our..." Yes! Future! The word you need to finish that sentence is FUTURE! Say it! Say it!)

A speaker's rate of delivery should be slightly faster than the normal conversational rate for that speaker. This is sufficiently fast that the audience will have to pay attention. It will not be a dull presentation and it is unlikely that the audience will fill in any words of the speech. The audience will not easily get distracted or daydream. The speaker's pace, at a slightly faster rate than their average conversational rate, will sound natural and will keep the audience's interest.

A good public speaker should avoid slowing their rate of delivery with "speech fillers," inappropriate words or sounds included in the presentation. Speakers should avoid fillers ("you know, umm, whatever"). It is much better to simply pause, to have a bit of silence, than it is to have a vocalized pause. If you read the following example aloud, you will immediately realize that it is not as effective as the speech without the vocalized pauses.

"The, you know, death penalty has been, you know, abolished in 12, umm, states, you know what I'm saying. In none, umm, of these states, umm, has the, you know, homicide rate increased...(More slowly and clearly, enunciating each word) No, umm, state that has abolished, you know, the death penalty, or other stuff, has had an increase in, homicides, and whatever. (Now louder, and with more emphasis) NOT ONE, YOU KNOW, EXAMPLE! Whatever…"

Clarity

People will pay closer attention to what you are saying and how you are saying it when you speak in a public setting. If you make a mistake saying a word, the audience will probably notice it. The audience might then suspect that you are not so familiar with the subject or have not adequately practiced your speech. This will hurt your credibility with your audience. The audience might then be less likely to believe your opinions or be persuaded by your message. By focusing on the skills of articulation, by speaking clearly and correctly pronouncing words, you will be more likely to establish trust with the audience.

Word spelling is tricky and can interfere with pronunciation. Students must learn to both develop their vocabulary and practice their public speeches to deal with the challenges of proper pronunciation. When in doubt, however, you can check pronunciation at this website: http://www.fonetiks.org/; there is also online pronunciation practice available at http://www.manythings.org/pp/.

Effective techniques for pronunciation practice require that you practice saying unusual or difficult words and phrases. To do this, you will have to concentrate on each sound, which helps to eliminate casual speaking errors. Practice exercises of challenging individual sounds that force you to move the major mouth muscles, tongue twisters, and quotations or speeches that are unfamiliar to you help develop pronunciation skills. Additionally, these exercises can be used to practice volume, rate of delivery, emphasis, and other public speaking skills.

Emphasis

Not all words in a speech should be emphasized in an equal way. A good public speaker should focus the listener's attention on the specific words of an oral presentation that have more drama, meaning, substance, power, or imagery. The speaker tries to use the pitch or tone of her voice to emphasize those key words.

Word Choice

Although some words may generally mean the same thing as other words, an effective public speaker carefully selects the appropriate word for the most accurate and persuasive description. Is your new video game "good" or "exciting?" If you want to persuade others or if you want to make meaningful distinctions in what you say, you need to develop a vocabulary and use vivid and powerful images to describe your ideas. Here are some persuasive words to make a speech more convincing. Do you recognize that these are often repeated in television commercials and infomercials to persuade consumers to purchase products? *Abolish, act, adopt, avoid, awesome, best, collapse, compare, connect, crisis, deliver, deny, discover, duty, focus, forward, freedom, guarantee, identity, implement, improve, innovate, justice, liberty, lifesaving, manage, mobilize, overcome, patriotism, plan, prevent, progress, protection, responsibility, resist security, sensational, simplify, solve, suddenly, superior, tradition, triumph, truth, ultimate, urgent.* In addition to individual words, some phrases can also help convince an audience. Here are some popular and effective persuasive phrases*: as the evidence shows, at last, call to action, important development, last chance, new technique, now is the time, on the brink, the key to the truth is*. Can you think of other words and phrases to add to this list?

These are the basic techniques of effective verbal delivery of a speech. There is much more to learn to be a clever and successful public speaker. In *Part Two*, you will learn about nonverbal communication, including the use of eye contact, body positioning, and gesturing. There will also be more speaking exercises.

Public Speaking Training and Debate, Part II

By John Meany, Director of Forensics, Claremont McKenna College

You may be surprised to learn that much of effective public speaking does not involve speaking at all.

Nonverbal communication, often called "body language," involves formal hand gestures, body movement, nods, shrugs, hugs, "high fives" smiles, frowns, head shakes, raised eyebrows, rolled eyes, a look of fear or surprise, clothing choices, hairstyles, folded arms, bows or handshakes, yawns, and much more. These movements are used to communicate important messages from one person to another. Imagine (or even try) a day without using nonverbal communication. Not only is it impossible to have a day without it, you wouldn't want to. That's because nonverbal communication is often more persuasive than what it is you might say. For example, a smile and nod of the head shows *agreement* in a more convincing way than, perhaps, a 30 second explanation.

The manner or styles of nonverbal communication varies between regions and cultures. The same gesture pointing a finger to the side of one's head in reply to a speaker might mean "I disagree," in the Czech Republic, "The speaker is saying something illogical or foolish," in the United States, or "I have a telephone call," in Argentina. There are, however, some nonverbal messages that are universal. A smile, for example, means the same thing in every culture.

For debaters, there are some guides to using techniques of nonverbal communication to effectively communicate their seriousness of purpose and competence. In debates, nonverbal communication is likely to refer to positioning of a person in a room (in the center or to the side, in the front or the back), facial expressions, eye contact, posture, use of gestures, body movement, and dress. Nonverbal techniques can communicate quite a bit of information about the speaker and the message. They can show the speaker's emotions, identify the differences and points of agreement that a speaker may have with the audience or other speakers, and reveal the important issues of a speech. Here are general recommendations for nonverbal communication debate styles.

Body Positioning

Effective public speakers establish a line-of-sight with the audience. They use their body position, posture, and movement to attract and hold the attention of the listeners. This means that you should be front and center in a room, unless another location would make it easier for the audience to see you. Because classrooms, the location of the overwhelming majority of academic and contest debates, are already designed for easy line-of-sight from students to a teacher the space is already set for effective body positioning.

Good posture is also important. An effective speaker will not rock back-and-forth or side-to-side during delivery. (This will make the audience seasick!) You should stand with feet firmly on the floor, with your weight evenly balanced, and your knees slightly bent. Your shoulders should be pulled up and back, and your head should be lifted up. This is a comfortable, balanced, and confident pose, an ideal physical position for beginning a speech.

Eye Contact

Eye contact is the single most important means of nonverbal communication. Eye contact reaches out to an audience and pulls them in–it bridges the physical distance between the speaker and the audience. For a debater, looking directly at the debate judge enhances the speaker's credibility and increases the likelihood that the judge will be persuaded by the speaker's message Many people stop using eye contact when they are delivering a public speech due to anxiety or embarrassment. Other speakers rely too heavily on their notes, making the mistake of reading their speech, just to make sure that they get each word of the speech right. To be effective, however, a debater must maintain an effective connection with the judge and audience.

The majority of middle school debaters recognize the importance of eye contact during the presentation of a constructive (5-minute) or rebuttal (3-minute) speech. They do this quite naturally and do it well. If there is an "eye contact error," it occurs during the presentation and reply to Points of Information. Points of Information are interactive elements of a debate. A point involves a request of the speaker to yield time for a statement or question and an accepted point means that the speaker will reply to the point, There is a back-and-forth between speakers on the propo-

sition and opposition teams. Because of this, many debaters neglect to look at the judge during these exchanges. This is a problem for debaters – they are using Points of Information to convince the judge, not the opposing team! An effective debater should *glance* (just a brief look) at the opponent but direct both the point and the reply to the point to the judge. Keep in mind that the majority of eye contact should be used to persuade the decision-maker. It is the debate judge that will make the decision at the conclusion of the debate. Maximizing eye contact with the judge, not only in speeches but during points, will help persuade the judge of the correctness of your arguments.

Gestures

Many students, when they are first giving oral presentations, feel uncomfortable about what to do with their hands. Using gestures is a way to add movement to your presentation. This makes the speech a bit more dynamic and entertaining for an audience. It also helps a speaker appear more natural, as gestures are nearly universally used in general conversation. In addition, gestures can be used to help emphasize the important points of your speech. Controlling gestures, therefore, is an important skill for becoming an effective speaker.

Gestures include hand movements, which might be used to stress a word or idea that is important in your message. Gestures are like the organized movements of actors on a stage or dancers in a musical performance. The movement is planned and is done to help explain an idea or story. Gestures ought to be choreographed, that is, planned in advance of the speech and then used, in a well thought out and organized way, to support key features of the speech. You might, for example, point at the audience if you want to stress their responsibility to think or do something. A flick of your hand outward with palm down works well when you are saying negative words like "not" or "none." You might jab a finger, very slightly in the air to punctuate each word of an important conclusion. (For example, each of these words might get a quick and subtle jab as you powerfully and carefully sound out each word: "Now…is… the… time…to…act!")

If you deliver your speech from behind a lectern or podium, your gestures should be above or to the side of the furniture or else they will not be seen. If you do not have any obstacle, you should generally gesture within the frame of your body. Movement that is far from your body will make you appear to be out of control.

There are other concerns with gestures:

- Do not point at the audience or opponents too frequently. It is perceived as disrespectful and aggressive. (No one likes to have a finger jabbing at them.)
- Do not hold a pen in your hand. A pen, or a similar object in the hand, can be quite distracting.
- Avoid putting your hands in your pockets. This is often associated with being sneaky and, if you have keys, coins, or anything that will make noise, it will be a distraction to the audience. You cannot gesture with hands in pockets.
- Avoid gestures that are too simple or repetitive. It is not necessary to hold up a finger signaling "1" for your first point, or two fingers for "2," and an additional third finger for "3," and so on. It is better to say "My first point will be…" and save your gestures for more complex parts of your speech.
- Avoid constant movement with your hands and arms. It is appropriate to gesture but gestures, like your possessions, should be taken out, used, and put away when you are finished with them. Constant movement is distracting.

A common nonverbal gesture in debates involves heckling. Heckling is an appropriate interjection (a noise, verbal or nonverbal, made during another person's speech.) Applause is a common form of heckling. Middle school debaters are encouraged to heckle in a respectful and strategic manner. The most common heckle is to pound on a desktop in applause for a speaker at the beginning and end of her or his speech. This should be done by all of the participants in a debate. It is a sign of being a good sport and respectful competitor – it is the way of congratulating all the players in the contest for their effort.

In general, nonverbal and verbal communication should be combined to make a complete and dynamic presentation. For nonverbal communication, it should be used to show respect for teammates and opponents (e.g., heckling applause), relate to other people (e.g., eye contact, smiles), establish that you are a fair competitor (e.g., shaking hands with opponents after a debate), and add an element of persuasion to support arguments (e.g., gestures.)

Give Better Rebuttals

By Allison Westfahl, Claremont McKenna College

While they may be the shortest speeches in the round, the closing rebuttals are arguably the most important speeches in the round. Too many debaters (college debaters included) make the mistake of simply repeating what their partners have said in earlier speeches. This is often not helpful to the judge and puts the judge in the unfortunate position of having to "intervene" in the round. Unless the debaters tell the judge why they win the debate and which arguments are the most important, the judge will just have to use their personal preferences in choosing certain arguments over other arguments. This is not a desirable situation for debaters, as you have no way of knowing or predicting the judge's personal opinions on the issues you have discussed. An effective rebuttal speech can make it so that judges do not need to intervene when making their decision.

Just like every well-written essay has a thesis statement, every debate team should have a theme that *summarizes their overall position* in each debate. Before the round even begins, both teams should come up with a short, one sentence description of this theme. Your theme might be something simple, like "Outsourcing jobs will make people poor." It might be more complex, like: "The military draft is good because it will equalize military service across economic classes." Having a basic theme of your position in the debate will make the debate easier to follow for the judge since your team's position is very clear. Your theme will also provide the rebuttal speaker with some direction. No matter what happens in the debate, the rebuttal speaker can and should always refer back to the team's overall theme, in the same way that the conclusion of an essay relates back to the thesis.

In addition to emphasizing their team's theme, rebuttal speakers should *summarize* the important issues that came up in the debate. This does not mean repeating every argument. It means choosing the arguments that *matter* and focusing on them. And while debaters cannot bring up new arguments in rebuttals, they are encouraged to bring up new examples and evidence to support of arguments already made in the debate. Repeating every argument is not an effective strategy. It's more important to focus on the *big picture* and provide a detailed description of the key arguments in the round.

Perhaps the most important element of a rebuttal speech is *comparison*. Debaters often make the mistake of focusing too much on their individual arguments and not comparing them to the arguments advanced by the other team. This leaves the judge in a difficult position. For example, absent any comparison, a judge might be left to decide whether to vote for the proposition team and solve world hunger, or vote for the opposition team and prevent nuclear war. As this example demonstrates, the judge is forced to make an arbitrary decision based on his or her personal opinions. To avoid this, it is not only important to show that one's arguments are important, but that they are more important and/or more accurate than the opposing side's positions.

A final component that seems to be missing from many rebuttal speeches is a clear explanation of why a team has won. The goal of the rebuttal should be to demonstrate that the *debate is over*. Rebuttalists should explain why they have overwhelmingly won the debate. Since the judge is making the decision, debaters should not be afraid to *direct their rebuttals to the judge*. It is appropriate for rebuttalists to point out to the judge when the opposing team has not answered their arguments. It is okay for debaters to say: "They haven't answered this argument, so we win the debate, because…." Additionally, rebuttal speakers should explain why each key argument in the debate proves their position. Remember, it is the proposition's duty to prove the motion. After every main argument, the proposition's rebuttalist should explain how that argument demonstrates that the motion is true. Similarly, since it is the opposition's duty to disprove the motion, after each main argument the opposition rebuttalist should go on to explain why that argument disproves the motion.

Certainly we have all experienced debates where we've been frustrated by a judge's decision. And while it is tempting to blame judges for our losses, a more productive strategy is to improve our rebuttal speeches and practice giving rebuttals. Almost all judges try their best to make fair decisions in debate rounds, but when debaters do not compare their arguments and explain why they have won the debate in the rebuttal speeches, it is difficult for judges to reach a fair conclusion. So while mastering the rebuttal will not always eliminate this problem, it will dramatically increase debaters' chances of both winning debates.

Points of Information

By Candace Williams, Claremont McKenna College

In the hustle and bustle of preparation time, it is rare to see debators pre-planning their points of information (POIs) along with their speeches. This is a mistake that plagues even seasoned college debaters. Since points of information are measured in seconds rather than minutes, debaters feel that they are insignificant and that the outcome of the round depends only on their speeches. POIs, when successfully executed, can greatly influence the outcome of a round. This article will explain why POIs are important, how to successfully implement POI strategy into your debates, and POI etiquette.

There are many reasons why points of information are pivotal to any debate round. The first reason is that POIs give you the ability to make compelling arguments outside of your own speech. This ability allows you to quickly defeat arguments raised by the opposing side and draw the judge's attention back to your major arguments. This is an amazing feat that allows your side to control every aspect of the debate. The ability to assert your positions throughout the round allows you to be a dynamic public speaker. When you draw the judge and the opposing team's attention to your arguments, even when your team does not have the floor, the judge views you as an active and assertive participant in the debate. The judge identifies with your strong presence and associates with your apparent authority over the topic.

Points of Information: Etiquette

- Be respectful to the speaker
- Rise calmly and quietly
- Wait patiently for a response from the speaker
- Make sure your POI does not exceed 15 seconds

Another reason why POIs make speakers more dynamic is because they are perfect times for wit. Poignant themes and arguments, when expressed with humor, entertain the audience and make your ideas more memorable. Engaging the other side with a point of information helps your teammates. When you make a point of information, you cause the speaker to diverge from their main topics. This allows your partners to catch up with flowing and work on the next speech. POIs may also give your partners new ideas for their speeches. Planning POIs is an extension of research on the motion, writing your speeches, and anticipating opposing arguments. The first step in the POI strategy is to keep an ongoing list of arguments you hear during your debates. Even though the arguments that you past arguments, the next step is to use the information from these lists to create POIs. With your partner, use the lists to anticipate arguments that the other side will make. Come up with creative,compelling, and witty answers to these arguments. POIs can include statistics that disprove the opposition, rebuttal arguments, and arguments that turn the attention back to your side. You can also apply this work to build up your case during your speeches. The information can also serve as answers to the opposition arguments during the refutation phase of your speeches.

Next, you should turn your attention to how to present compelling POIs during a round. Although all members of a team should actively listen to the debate and give POIs, the two members who do not have to give a speech next should take up this burden so that their partner can write his or her speech. When you stand to give a POI, there is no need to say "Point of information!!!" unless the person delivering the speech is using a large amount of space and cannot see the other team, or unless the other team is ignoring your side. You should calmly stand without making any noise. If you jump up and make noise you are distracting the speaker. Reserve verbal applications for points of information to situations where the speaker is ignoring you or can't see you. Most speakers will accept two to four POIs. You should feel free to stand up calmly when you have a point to make.

It is seen as bad etiquette if your team constantly jumps up for POIs immediately after the speaker denies your point. It is a good rule to either wait 15 seconds after a speaker denies a point or wait until the speaker concludes his or her thought before you try again Most of the time, the speaker will call on the member of the other side who was quiet and was not a distraction. When the speaker takes your point, be sure that you speak no longer than 15 seconds. You will be out of order if your point takes too much time away from the speaker. Be sure that you actually have a valid point. Often, debaters are called upon to make a point of information and they do not have anything relevant to say.

Make your statement (whether it be an argument, example, or evidence) clear and concise. Ensure that, if you are asking a question, it is a clear question. Be bold, confident, and entertaining. This not only helps you make a strong and compelling argument, but it allows the debate to continue on your point since the speaker looks better if he or she

provides an answer. Answering POIs is a skill that every debater must learn. Each POI requires a different plan of attack. If the POI is an engaging argument or an attempt to rebut your arguments, you should attack these with arguments. Refer to other areas of your speech, state evidence that makes the POI a moot point, or create new arguments that respond to the POI. If the POI seems like an attempt to distract you if it has no substance or meaning, be sure to point that out in your response. Say something like "Even if what they say is true, it has no meaning in this debate because _____" or "They have made no claims, presented no reasoning, or given any evidence to make me believe that what they are saying matters in the course of this debate." Make sure that all of your responses to the POI are confident and brief. Do not let the other team distract you or make you stumble.

Points of Information: How to Answer

- Be bold and concise.
- Use POIs to your advantage: as a way to advance more arguments and take away arguments from the other side.
- Do not let the POI distract you or get you off topic.
- If a POI is not clear or does not matter in the debate, say that.

Generally, each speaker should take no less than two POIs. If a speaker denies all POIs it will seem like he or she is trying to hide from the other side. You want the judge to believe that you are an authority on the subject. Often, it is to your tactical advantage to take more than two POIs. If your team believes that you have a good position in the debate and that you have time to tackle the opposing side's issues, it is in your best interest to take many points of information. Since you have ample time to answer these statements, you can simultaneously advance your own arguments and directly rebut the other team. The judge will see that you are triumphing over the other side and dominating the debate.

POIs should be taken as seriously as the individual speeches. The POI preparation strategy actually facilitates all other aspects of debating. Your rebuttals will become stronger since you actively anticipate arguments. Your participation in the round will go beyond your individual speech. You will become a strong and confident speaker who captures the attention of the judge. You can enter complex arguments into the debate that the judge will take into account. POIs have a large impact on the outcome of a debate round.

Points of Information: Planning Strategy

- Keep track of all arguments you've heard in the course of your debating career. Use these lists to create POIs.
- Anticipate opposing arguments
- Make your POIs witty and insightful
- A POI can be a new argument, an insightful reference to an old argument, or evidence that makes the speaker's points invalid

How Impacting Arguments Helps to Win Debates

By Jenny Bindel

Almost every time debaters get feedback from their judges after debates the judge says something about needing to have more impacts (whether or not the judge uses this particular term). Some of you may be asking yourself- "what is this magical thing, impact?" And, more importantly, "how can I get some of it?" Luckily for you, it is easy to include impacts in your debates-and you will become better debaters by doing so!

The first thing to understand is that "impact" is just a term for the consequences of your arguments. Some people explain impacts as answering the question "who cares?" or "why does your argument matter?" Your argument can matter in the debate in at least two ways.

One way your argument might matter is by explaining a good or bad outcome of an idea in the debate. This type of impact would be like saying that if the United States does not intervene in some conflict, thousands of people will be killed. The consequence of nonintervention- the impact of that policy-would be the death of thousands of people. The second way that your argument could matter is to explain how your argument fits into the debate. You might use this on a topic like "Saudi Arabia is more of an enemy than a friend to the United States." If you made an argument about how Saudi Arabia has let the U.S. keep its troops in their country, the impact of your argument might be that you prove that the motion is false. You would explain this impact by telling how providing military assistance makes a nation a friend.

The reason that judges talk about impacts being important is because impacts let the judge know what would happen if they lived in a world where the arguments of the proposition (or opposition) team have been put into place. If they are interested in preserving the lives of innocent people, and the opposition successfully argues that more innocent people will be killed during a U.S. intervention that will be saved, then the judge knows to vote for the opposition. Impacts also let judges know how you think your arguments should be considered in the debate. Without impacting your argument about Saudi Arabia above, the judge might not understand how offering military assistance makes a country a friend. By explaining how your argument proves that, you help the judge understand how you win the debate. In order to make sure that you include impacts in your debates, constructive speakers should always keep the "who cares" question in the back of their minds.

When making arguments, be sure to explain how people would be affected by those arguments. Also, be sure to explain how arguments prove that the motion being debated is true or false. Rebuttal speakers should focus on comparing, also called weighing, these impacts. When each side is talking about similar things, rebuttal speakers should explain to the judge why the outcomes of their arguments are better than their opponents. For example, if both teams are arguing about spending money, the proposition could argue that their plan would save more money than is currently being spent.

If both sides are talking about different things, rebuttal speakers should explain why the outcomes of their arguments are more important. For example, if the opposition is talking about saving money and your proposition case focuses on saving lives, the proposition rebuttalist can argue that we should care more about lives than money. By focusing on the outcomes of arguments and the role that arguments play in the debate, rebuttal speakers will sort out the important issues for the judge and explain why their side produces better consequences and should therefore win.

Hopefully these tips help to explain why judges care so much about impacts in debate rounds. By including the consequences of arguments in your debates you will make your arguments clearer and will more persuasive to those of us sitting in the back of the room at the next tournament!

Recruiting for Your Debate Program

You will find that it will be fairly easy to recruit students to participate in your school's now debate program. Middle school students love to argue, and will relish the chance to learn to debate. To recruit students for the program, your most important task will be to raise awareness at your school. We suggest that you use a multi-pronged strategy to get students interested and involved in the program. This might include any of the following strategies:

- Announce the new program over the public address system.
- Include program information, meeting times, and meeting location in the daily bulletin circulated at your school.
- Post recruiting flyers around the school to raise awareness and stimulate interest.
- Enlist other teachers to help you recruit likely students from their classes.
- Hold a public speaking contest at your school or in your classes to generate interest.
- Choose topics for debates at your weekly meetings that will stimulate interest, and promote those debates separately to generate interest and participation.

Resist the temptation to recruit only 8th grade students. You will need students from other grades as well, so you won't lose all your experienced debaters when they graduate. One of the best ways to perpetuate a strong team is to build peer instruction networks where more experienced students will help to teach their less experienced counterparts.

Also, you should resist the temptation to recruit only from your school's gifted and talented classes. Students who are not successful in traditional educational settings may excel in debate. Some of the most successful debaters are often the least successful students.

Organizing for Your Club Meetings

After an initial organizing and orientation meeting or two, you will find that your meetings largely organize themselves. Once the students learn the format for debating in the parliamentary style, they will be able to have weekly practices and performances on a variety of topics. Students will also learn to work together to share information, research, and ideas when preparing for competitions. Of course, in the start-up phase of the club, you will have to work to teach the students how to debate in the MSPDP format:

The students do not need to be fully conversant with the parliamentary debate style to be able to debate; in fact, you may find that your meetings go more smoothly and you are able to build more interest among students if you slowly build up to having full debates. It will be important, particularly at first, to choose topics that are relevant and interesting to the students. Your debates and discussions will be more lively and informed if you choose topics of interest to the students. However, you should also choose some topics that require research and preparation – one of the great things about debate is that it provides an incentive for students to investigate new topics.

Your students can begin to debate right away, and you can have them debate in any one of a number of possible formats. Students should develop impromptu and extemporaneous debate abilities, so some club debates should be on topics that are announced 20 minutes before the debate is to commence, allowing students only a limited amount of preparation time. Other debates should be on topics that are announced a week or even several weeks in advance, so that students can have an extended period to research and prepare their presentations.

Activities for Club Meetings

There are many places online where you can find ideas for debate and speaking exercises to motivate and engage your club members. There are lesson plans and exercises in this booklet, on the MSPDP website (www.middleschooldebate.com) Also, you can find an online site containing exercises and debate games on the International Debate Education Association Web site: www.idebate.org.

Impromptu Speeches

Many teachers find it helpful to start club meetings with impromptu student speeches. Each student can draw a word, phrase, topic, or saying out of a hat. Students can have up to 5 minutes to prepare a 1-2 minute speech on their topic. This can also be a good way to end a club meeting.

A-R-E Practice

As a variant on the impromptu speech exercise, you can have students deliver short speeches where they make an argument using the A-R-E format (assertion, reasoning, and evidence). Students can draw a topic out of a hat or choose a subject of their own, and deliver a short 1-minute speech where they make an argument using the three-part model.

4-Step Refutation Practice

As another variant on the impromptu speech exercise, you can have students pick a topic or an argument out of a hat and deliver a short (1-minute) speech in which they refute the topic or argument using the 4-step method for refutation. (For more information on 4-step refutation, you can find the refutation handout in the Teaching Resource Center.) You can also have students do the above A-R-E exercise in pairs, where one student delivers the argument, and the other refutes it immediately after.

Note-taking Practice

Students need considerable help working on their note-taking skills. You can help students work on their note-taking and "flowing" skills by using a number of exercises. Some of these exercises are available in the Teaching Resource Center under "Taking Notes in Debates." You can also have students watch and "flow" a news program that you tape and bring to class, like the Nightly News Hour with Jim Lehrer.

Researching and Compiling Notes

You will find that a good bit of your club time will be taken up by researching and compiling notes on topics for upcoming tournaments or club debates. Students can work on topics in teams or small groups, and should be required to prepare notes or issue briefs to be shared with the rest of the class. As the tournament approaches, these briefs can be photocopied for everyone in the club and compiled in three-ring notebooks to bring to the tournament. A substantial selection of issue briefs is available in the Teaching Resource Center.

Practice Debates

Students need to practice to improve their debate skills. You may wish to have practice debates in club meetings to help students improve. While you have practice debates with groups of 6 students at a time, other students can be assigned to judge the debate. Those students can be asked to function as judges will – they should take notes, or "flow", the debate carefully and share comments after the debate. Students do not have to declare a "winner" to provide good feedback. After a practice debate, the whole club can talk about which arguments on each side seemed the strongest, and use this experiential learning to improve their issue briefs on the subject.

Sometimes, students will want to work on research or other projects while a practice debate is happening. Depending on your resources, students should be organized in whatever way you feel is best. For example, you might have two students judge a debate with you while another group of students works with computers doing research, and yet another group works on writing up issue briefs for presentation in class.

Practice for Points of Information

Students need to practice answering and asking questions, controlling the floor in debates, and interacting with others. You can productively integrate practice in the use of points of information into all exercises that you use in your club meetings. For example, the week before a club meeting, you can assign students to deliver short speeches (3-4 minutes) on simple topics. Then, while students deliver their speeches, you can open up the floor to points of information from the rest of the club. The speaker will have the ability to take or reject as many as she wants, but should take at least a few points. This tests the club's ability to make good points, and tests the speaker's ability to control the floor and answer points well. After each speech, have a brief discussion – did the speaker control the floor? Were the points good or bad? Did the speaker do a good job of answering the points she took? If you don't want to test floor management skills, you can also incorporate points after short student speeches. Have students deliver short speeches on issues you or they select, and then open the floor to questions for the speaker. This allows students to practice impromptu speaking and questioning skills.

Sample Letter To Parents

By Paul Bates, Townsend Junior High School, Chino Hills, CA

The State of Debate

Dear Families, 12-5-03

This Saturday, December 13th, your child will be participating in the second tournament of the season, The Frisbie Invitational, being held at Frisbie Middle School located at 1442 N. Eucalyptus Ave. in Rialto. This event is being hosted by the Inland Valley Debate League and the Claremont Colleges.

The District is providing transportation and will pick us up at Townsend at 8:00 in the morning. Please sign the attached APPLICATION TO RIDE ON SCHOOL BUS TRIP form. I know that some parents are planning to drive out to enjoy the action. Please be reminded that parents are not allowed to take their children at the event's conclusion due to District liability issues. If this is a concern, please speak to our principal, Melody Kohn, to discuss a waiver. This must be done prior to Saturday.

The schedule will be basically as follows:
8:00 - Registration
9:00 - Round One
10:00 - Round Two
11:00 - Round Three
12:00 - Lunch
1:15 - Round Four
3:00 - Round Five
4:15 - Awards
4:45 - Busses depart

If we depart at 4:45, Transportation tells us we'll return to Townsend by 5:30. As for food, students need to bring a hefty lunch that will keep them going strong throughout the day. Healthy minds need serious nourishment, so better to bring too much than too little. There will also be munchies available for purchase.

The Debate Team will be meeting every day after school this week in preparation for the competition. The meetings will run until 3:30 (Monday - 2:30). I know that a few children may not be able to attend all of these practices, so attendance at every meeting is not mandatory. Rather, it is a chance for students to gather together to glean ideas and strategies in order to get the most out of tournament competition. I encourage you to explore the topics at home while enjoying a meal, during the Laker commercials, whenever opportunity strikes. The more comfortable the children are with the material, the more fun they'll have when it's crunch time.

Please contact me at 591-2161 or stop by Suite 313 if you have any questions.
****

X_____ X_____
Parent Signature Student's Printed Name

Malcolm X said:

"Standing up there, the faces looking at me, the things in my head coming out of my mouth, while my brain searched for the next best thing to follow what I was saying, and if I could sway them to my side by handling it right, then I had won the debate – once my feet got wet I was gone on debating. Whichever side of the selected subject was assigned to me, I'd track down and study everything I could find on it. I'd put myself in my opponent's place and decide how I'd try to win if I had the other side; and then I'd figure out a way to knock down those points." (1965)

Join the Garfield Debate Team

Meets Thursdays at 2:30 in room 105. Ask Paulette Thompson for more information.

Lead or follow?
Command or obey?
Active or passive?
Stand or kneel?

You Decide.

Join the
Garfield Debate Team

Meets Thursdays at 2:30 in Room 105. Ask Paulette Thompson for more information.

Smarter.
Louder.
Faster.

Debater.

Join the
Garfield Debate Team

Meets Thursdays at 2:30 in Room 105. Ask Paulette Thompson for more information.

Web Sites to Help You Teach Your Students to Use the Internet

Cool Lessons: http://www.coollessons.org/
A great site with a bunch of links to documents designed to help you teach Internet researching. Many of these lessons come with pre-made templates to help students take notes.

Four NETS for Better Searching: http://webquest.sdsu.edu/searching/fournets.htm
This site contains a good rubric (NETS) for teaching students how to do efficient and effective research using Google.

The Quality Information Checklist (QUICK): http://www.quick.org.uk/menu.htm
This site contains a clever quiz to help students evaluate web sites and the information they contain.

IMSA Web Evaluation Wizard: http://wizard.imsa.edu/evaluate
From the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy, an interactive web wizard for the evaluation of web sites. Probably too many bells-and-whistles to use in the average classroom, but still instructive for exploring evaluation procedures.

IMSA Web Lesson Plans: http://wizard.imsa.edu/teach/lessons/ms.html#Fleser
Many great lesson plans available for free that help you teach information literacy as a component of diverse classes.

MAN: http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/teachers/wa_teachers/index.cfm
The Media Awareness Network, based in California, provides this site. The free content is good, designed for teachers, and contains lots of great links.

Middle School Web Use: http://www.lburkhart.com/middle/search_tips.htm
Here, Linda Burkhart provides links and tips for productively organizing middle school students for effective Web use.

Innovative Teaching Newsletter: http://surfaquarium.com/newsletter/internet.htm
This is a great page that lists various activities and links for teaching students how to do online research.

UC Berkeley Library Page: http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/Evaluate.html
This page is designed to help college students learn to evaluate Web sources and effectively research online. It is the kind of resource that you could productively begin using at an early age.

Guide to Judging

Times and Duties of Speakers

First Proposition Speaker
Makes a case for the motion for debate. Provides assertions, reasoning, and evidence (ARE) in support of the motion. May offer a specific interpretation of the motion.
5 minutes

First Opposition Speaker
Presents arguments against the case presented by the other team. Uses direct and indirect refutation to undermine the case and show why the other side's position is wrong and dangerous.
5 minutes

Second Proposition Speaker
Supports the case presented by the first proposition speaker. Should answer all arguments made by the previous speaker. Should bring in new ideas to bolster their side's position.
5 minutes

Second Opposition Speaker
Extends upon partner's arguments against the case. Continues to refute proposition's arguments. Should bring in new ideas to bolster their side's position.
5 minutes

Opposition Rebuttal
Continues to refute proposition's major points. Should explain how, given the arguments advanced in the debate, the opposition wins the debate.
3 minutes

Proposition Rebuttal
Refutes the arguments advanced and extended by the opposition side. Extends partners' arguments. Shows how, given the arguments advanced in the debate, the proposition wins the debate.
3 minutes

Responsibilities of the Judge

How to Judge a Debate

Judging is hard work. This sheet is meant to refresh your memory and serve as a brief guide for judging. For more information, there are longer judging guides available on our website: www.middleschooldebate.com.

Things to remember when judging

1. **You're responsible for timing the debate.** The debaters rely on you for time signals. Remember that in the 5-minute speeches, you must signal the beginning and end of **protected time**, or time in which the speaker is protected from points of information offered by the other side. Signal by slapping a table or desk **after 1 minute has passed and when 1 minute remains.**

2. **Take notes on a flowsheet.** Because debates are about the interaction between arguments, students must respond to the arguments made by the other side. To track this, you must use a flowsheet.

3. **Leave your opinions at the door.** The only facts known in the debate are what the teams bring forth. It is not the job of a 13-year old to change a judge's lifelong belief.

4. **Don't fill in for speakers.** Judges should not "fill in" what they believe a speaker was going to say, should have said, or probably meant. **ALL THEY SAID IS ALL THERE IS.**

About Points of Information

A point of information is a request to the speaker that holds the floor to yield some of her time (up to 15 seconds, give or take) to a question or comment from the other side. The speaker decides to accept or reject points, as they come from her time.

Points of information are only allowed in the middle three minutes of the 5-minute speeches. There is no rule about how many should be offered, or how many must be taken. Proficient debaters display control of the floor. It is bad practice for a speaker to reject all points. It is also bad practice for the speaker to accept all points, if that means she loses control of her speech.

Because points of information are considered to be part of the debate, the judge should take notes about them.

5. **Proposition teams may reasonably interpret, or "shrink" the topic.** Remember that a debate is like a trial: the prosecution does not offer every possible way that the defendant might be guilty ("He did it with a gun, and a knife, and a bazooka, in the car, and the yacht, and the ballroom..."); similarly, the proposition team does not offer every possible proof of the motion, just **a proof** of the motion. This means that (for example) "child" may be defined as being between the ages of 8 and 16, but probably not as a juvenile cactus in the the Arabian Peninsula.

6. **Reveal your decision.** You are required to reveal your decision and give constructive feedback to the students. You should also share "speaker points" with the students.

7. **About speaker points.** In addition to assigning a win and a loss in a given debate, you must give each student an individual score. **Use the rubric on the back of this sheet to assign points**. Remember that speaker points are **not** the same as points of information, and that the team that gets the highest speaker points does not have to be the team that wins the debate.

8. **No new arguments in the rebuttals**. Students should not make new arguments in the rebuttals. A new argument is defined as an argument with no foundation in the previous debate. New examples to support existing assertions are fine. Judges should simply ignore new rebuttal arguments.

ARE- The components of an argument: Assertion, Reasoning, Evidence.

4-Step Refutation- A method for refuting arguments: "They say..." "But..." "Because..." "Therefore..."

PUBLIC DEBATE PROGRAM: Judging Rubric for Individual Speakers – 2012

highschooldebate.org/middleschooldebate.org

Score	Description	Argumentation	Refutation	Structure	Presentation
59 and lower	**This rubric supplements format and judge certification training and other judging guides.** **59 should be reserved for students who are unsuccessful as debaters as well as otherwise uncooperative, mean-spirited, or disruptive during a debate. This is a most unusual circumstance. Lower points often exclude debaters from awards. If a judge gives a student a score lower than 60, she/he is indicating that the debater, based on this one performance, should be ineligible for any individual or team tournament award.**				
60-64	Clearly below average for an experienced debater. This score may be slightly below average for a new or anxious speaker. Lower markings simply indicate that a student has yet to master any of the core elements of debate. A lower score does not indicate a 'failure' on the students' part. It is simply an evaluation of the debate.	Does not use the A-R-E (assertion–reasoning–evidence) format for arguments. Offers assertions with little reasoning. There is little or no evidence to support arguments. The speaker has likely copied arguments from other sources (notes, teammates) but does not understand the issues. Does not amplify partners' arguments.	Does not reply to the overwhelming majority of major points from the other side. Repeats her own arguments without expanding them or comparing them to the arguments from the opposing side. The result is that there is little 'clash' in the debate.	Disorganized. Does not have a narrative structure to the speech (introduction–body–conclusion). Arguments are not clearly distinguished from one to another. Does not reply to opposing issues in an orderly way, making the speech difficult to follow. Does not use the allotted speaking time.	Distracted, anxious and halting in delivery. Makes little eye contact – excessive use of notes inhibits establishing a connection with the judge. Mumbles or has numerous vocal pauses: 'umm,' 'you know." Disrupts the effectiveness of partners' speeches (interruptions, excessive passing of notes). Either accepts or rejects *all* POIs.
65-69	This is a below average performance for an experienced debater but may be a more common 'average' score for beginning debaters. The speaker is modestly successful in one major performance element (public speaking, organization, argumentation, refutation, interaction such as POIs and heckling) but is ineffective in other major elements.	Does not generally use the A-R-E format, although there may be an exception for a few arguments. Uses little evidence such as contemporary and historical examples, statistical information or expert testimony. Has inconsistencies, logic gaps, or one or more fallacies in major arguments. Little integration of issues from teammates.	Does not clash with or reply to the majority of arguments from the opposing side. This debater is more apt to repeat previous ideas rather than develop, analyze or compare them. The speaker does not use advanced refutation techniques, for example, evaluating opportunity costs and opponents' underlying assuptions.	The full speech is not well organized, although one or more individual points may be appropriately organized. Lacks an attention-getting introduction and a powerful conclusion. Difficult to follow for a significant amount of time. Unclear when moving from one point to another. May use full speaking time, but ineffectively allocate time to key issues.	Loses clarity for sustained periods. Poor eye contact and infrequent use of gestures. The speaker does not sound confident or convincing. Rarely attempts a POI and is distracted by POIs from the opposing team. Does not work effectively with teammates or participate in positive or negative heckling.
70-74	This is a near average performance for an experienced debater and a slightly above average performance for a new debater. The speaker is inconsistent – some speech elements are done well and others are unsuccessful. The speaker may be somewhat unclear about her role, succeeding but leaving opportunities for the other side to exploit.	The speaker clearly understands argumentation but only occasionally uses A-R-E. The speaker is also likely to confuse reasoning and evidence, offering only one of the elements rather than both. The speaker does not make effective argumentative POIs or heckles. Significance established for only 1-2 issues. May struggle to identify the debate's major issues.	The speaker is much more likely to discuss her/his own arguments than answer an opponent's arguments in a direct and forceful way, although there is some refutation of limited effectiveness. The speaker offers more general refutation rather than a combination of general and specific counters. May compare some competing issues but does not do so consistently.	The speaker has a basic structure (introduction, body, conclusion) but strays from it during the presentation. The speaker is likely to be able to organize her/his own arguments but loses structure when trying to address opponent's points. The speaker gets distracted or slows the pace too much when confronted with POIs/heckles. Could allocate time more effectively.	Speaks clearly but there are noticeable pronunciation or other verbal errors that are sufficiently distracting for the audience or disrupt the natural flow of the speech. The speaker makes POIs but they are generally obvious questions, not carefully considered or analyzed arguments. Does not attempt or succeed at effective heckling. Good but not outstanding nonverbal communication.

Score	Description	Argumentation	Refutation	Structure	Presentation
75-79	An average to above average performance. The speaker is competent and does some things well but is just as likely to make errors. This is a good speech – the speaker is capable and confident, although style and substance may be inconsistent. The speaker knows her role and tries to accomplish it.	The speaker follows the A-R-E form consistently, although some assertions lack sufficient reasoning and many lack strong evidence. It is more likely that the speaker repeats reasoning as evidence. Competently identifies and compares obvious major issues but does not develop nuance or complexity.	Understands her own positions but spends too much time repeating those ideas rather than developing them. Unlikely to establish qualitative (matter of degree) and quantitative (number affected) significance. Unlikely to compare with opposing views. Uses direct refutation well but offers little advanced refutation.	Organized and generally effective. Attempts a narrative structure but is not able to consistently adhere to it at one or two points of the speech. Loses some clarity integrating opposing arguments. Uses time effectively – the speech is balanced with an appropriate mix of arguments and refutation.	Speaks in a clear, comprehensible way. Effective nonverbal communication (eye contact and gestures). Style is competent but not supremely confident. May speak in a monotone. Attempts 1-2 POIs and gives reasonable but unspectacular answers to POIs. Attempts effective heckling.
80-84	This is a solid, clearly above average performance. A consistently good debate speech. The speaker appears to be comfortable, eager to participate and confidant. Inconsistencies in the performance are likely to be minor distractions. Sufficiently strong presentation that an ineffective reply will be a serious risk for the opponents.	Makes effective arguments throughout the speech. Using the A-R-E format, the speaker consistently applies reasoning and, more often than not, also presents evidence to support issues. Appears prepared to discuss the important issues of the debate. The speaker uses argumentative POIs and heckles, although only once or twice.	Maintains her own or team's positions, supplementing them with thoughtful analysis and examples. Has more difficulty with the opposing team's arguments but is able to effectively refute most of the major arguments of the other side. The speaker primarily uses only direct refutation (simple disagreement) but is effective.	Simple, effective narrative structure for own arguments but has some difficulty integrating multiple counter-positions into speech. Uses speaking time effectively – uses the full amount of time and appropriately allocates time to the important issues. The speech is sufficiently organized so that listeners not taking notes could follow it.	Speaks in an engaging manner – clear but only occasionally highly entertaining and powerfully persuasive. Confident and credible. Concise POIS have clear relevance to the debate. Occasional verbal pauses ("ummm…") do not distract. May be ineffective or confusing at 1 or 2 notable times. Strong eye contact.
85-89	This is an extraordinarily fine speech from a consistently strong debater. Most listeners would say it was 'outstanding.' Confident and capable – this speech is an effective model for new debaters learning public speaking and debating. May offer innovative approaches to presentation and argumentation.	The speaker is able to establish clear positions that demand a sophisticated reply. The speaker uses A-R-E with highly effective reasoning and consistent application of different varieties of evidence. Explains and analyzes evidence. Establishes qualitative and quantitative significance for all issues.	This speaker uses direct refutation and advanced refutation techniques, including opportunity cost evaluation, strategic agreement, and turn/capture of opponents' positions. Outstanding expressions of significance and impact assessment with opposing side's major arguments.	Logical organization that is easy to follow and flow. Likely to have effective intro and conclusion. Able to organize own positions and opponents' into a well-integrated speech. Can use all speaking time but may not because of efficiency. May use non-linear structure without losing clarity.	An animated speaker able to present a clear and convincing case. Persuasive and credible. Excellent integration of public speaking skills, including non-verbal skills and verbal ones. Strong public speaker in all but one notable respect. Strong POIs and replies to POIs. Infrequently distracted by the other team.
90-94	Near brilliant. This is an outstanding debater delivering a highly successful speech in ALL respects. Would be a rousing speech for a general audience and a substantive presentation for an audience of field experts.	Not only is the speaker able to make powerful arguments, but does so on the spot. The issues are detailed and complex, with substantial evidence to support sound reasoning. Evidence is detailed and well analyzed.	Understands how arguments interrelate. The speaker investigates inconsistencies among opponents' claims. Identifies and exploits opportunity costs and underlying and hidden assumptions.	Strong narrative or clever alternative structure. Persuasive introduction and conclusion. Speech is sophisticated and yet easy to follow and understand. Seamlessly integrates arguments from both sides.	Effectively uses rhetorical devices like humor, effective pausing and vocal inflection to add substantial depth to the speech. Thoroughly engaged – the speaker attempts many clever POIs. Highly effective heckling.
95 and higher	A MAGNIFICENT performance. Difficult to identify any error. A 98-100 is flawless – a combination of Winston Churchill, Barbara Jordan, and Denzel Washington. Maybe one speech in years will score this highly.	Sophisticated understanding of issues and strategies. Develops arguments with multiple causes and consequences. Clever impromptu argumentation. Uses different types of evidence and introduces and analyzes more evidence as the debate develops.	Integrates advanced refutation into argumentation, using ideas from opponents to advance the speaker's own side. Uses POIs and heckling as opportunities for powerful refutation. Accounts for or has an outstanding reply to every important opposing point.	Develops a clear, well-organized (effective narrative or other structure) and efficient speech. Despite argument complexity, nearly any listener could follow the speech. Speaker is capable of restoring order to even a confusing debate.	Has exceptional subject knowledge, delivered in a highly entertaining and informative manner. Brilliant verbal and nonverbal skills, including eye contact, volume, pace, clarity, and humor. Speech would make an ideal demonstration.

Judging Debates

The Middle School Public Debate Program
Judge Certification Manual

Updated 11/2012

Middle School Public Debate Program

Guide to Judging Debates

How to Judge

Introduction

Debate is different from simple disagreement. In debate, students are trying to persuade a third party (sometimes many third parties, if there is a panel of judges or an extended audience, although Public Debate Program debates are judged by a single person). In competitive debates, the judge is the person who is responsible for deciding who

Room	Proposition	Opposition	Judge
1	Desert Springs ABC	Frisbie DEF	B. Walters
2	Townsend GHI	Canyon Hills JKL	K. Couric
3	La Contenta MNO	Northview PQR	T. Brokaw
4	Nicolet STU	Eliot VWX	P. Jennings

wins and loses a debate. The judge also assigns a range of points to individual debaters or teams of debaters.

After the debate, the judge tells the debaters how she voted (for the proposition or the opposition team – there are no ties). The judge tells each students their individual scores, telling each student one thing they did well and one thing they need to work on. The judge will also explain her decision on the paper ballot. These ballots are distributed to the participating teams and their coaches at the conclusion of the tournament.

When you judge a debate, you must choose a winner. It is important to remember that the team that wins the debate may not always be the better debate team – instead, they were the better debate team *in the debate that you watched*. Even the best world-class debate teams have critical slip-ups every now and again. You should try to be fair and judge each debate based on its own merits, rather than on speculation, past performances in debates, or other factors including your own opinions about the topic and students' arguments.

It is easy to be intimidated by the enterprise of judging debates. You may feel unprepared or under-experienced, especially compared to the debaters, who may seem very professional and experienced. In reality, you are (no matter what your experience level) perfectly prepared to judge a debate. Even if you have never seen a debate before, you can still render a thoughtful and informed decision based only on your engaged participation. Public Debate Program debates are meant to be entertaining and accessible to judges and audiences of all experience levels, so even if you are a novice judge, you will fit right in. You will also learn to be a better judge as you watch and judge more debates. You have to start somewhere, so don't be intimidated. All you have to do is make the best decision you can make.

First Proposition Constructive- 5 minutes
First Opposition Constructive- 5 minutes
Second Proposition Constructive- 5 minutes
Second Opposition Constructive- 5 minutes
Opposition Rebuttal- 3 minutes
Proposition Rebuttal- 3 minutes

Though your decision is by definition correct, some decisions are still better than others. Debaters have a tendency to be opinionated. Judges also hold opinions. In fact, everyone is

opinionated about something. Holding opinions is normal, healthy, and in the interest of building lively communities. There is, however, a difference between having opinions and forcing them on others at the expense of reasoned debate and discussion. We recommend that when you judge you make an effort to maintain an open mind about the arguments and examples used as evidence in the debate. Open-mindedness is not so much an issue of surrendering convictions as it is a matter of respecting the debaters' opinions and efforts. It is important to remember that middle school debate is switch-side debating. That means that, on occasion, you may have the opportunity to watch debaters defending a side contrary to what they (or you) might otherwise agree with.

What do we mean when we say that some decisions are better than others? A good decision is one that relies on a consistent, fair method of deliberation. In order to judge fairly, you need to keep a few things in mind:

1. *Take extensive notes on your flowsheet*. The debate is decided based on what debaters said. If you do not write down what they say, you will not be able to make a fair decision. Do not write down your interpretation of what they said, or the gist of what they said, or what they probably meant by what they said. Write down what they said. As much of it as possible. Good judges take extremely thorough notes.
2. *Identify your biases* and resist them rather than surrender to them.
3. *Apply reciprocal standards* for evaluating arguments. In other words, don't identify an error made by one team and hold it against them when the other team or teams makes the same error. Make your judging standards relevant and fairly applied to all debate participants.
4. *Presume that the debaters are acting in good faith*. Resist the temptation to read intention into their perceived mistakes. If a debater makes a factual error in the debate, she may not know that she is wrong. Do not assume, for example, that she is being deceitful or is in some way trying to put something over on you.
5. *Be patient*. The debaters may, during the course of a given debate, do a good many things to annoy or otherwise irritate you. They are probably not doing these things on purpose.
6. *Give debaters the benefit of the doubt* about their choices – they may not make the choices or the arguments you would make, but that is okay. Debates are an opportunity to create a place where bright critical thinkers can imagine, analyze, and innovate. If you do not give them the benefit of the doubt, you could end up stifling their creativity or substituting your sense of creativity for theirs.
7. *Do not pre-interpret the topic*. Debaters get a topic for debate and then it is *their* task to interpret that topic. It is *their* interpretation that gets debated. When you hear the topic, you might think that the topic should be interpreted a different way. Do not impose your opinions about this issue on debaters. If they do not choose to interpret the topic in the manner you would have interpreted it, that should not be relevant to the outcome of the debate.

Good decisions are reached fairly with appropriate and adequate deliberation on the issues and arguments that are presented in the debate.

How should you conduct yourself in a debate? We have already told debaters that they should not treat the judge as if she were merely a passive info-receptacle propped up at the back of the room with a pen and a ballot. Just as the debaters should conduct themselves appropriately towards the judge, so too should you conduct yourself appropriately towards the debaters. The following is a list of "Don'ts" for aspiring and experienced debate judges:

1. Do not talk about how the debate is going during the debate. Although you are a participant in the debate, your role should be primarily nonverbal until after it is finished.
2. Do not penalize debaters who speak in accents other than your own. Take into consideration that for some debaters, English may not be their native tongue.
3. Do not usurp the role of the judge for personal whim (e.g., "you must use the words 'x, y, z' in the course of your speeches"; or "Tell an joke and I will give you extra points"). The course and content of the debate is not yours to dictate.

4. Do not arbitrarily manufacture rules (e.g., "Points of information must be in the form of a question," "New examples are prohibited in the rebuttal speeches.").
5. Do not write on the ballot during the debate. This practice conveys a disregard for the competitors and for the integrity of the process. It also makes students feel as if you have already made a decision. Wait until after the debate to make your decision and wait until after the debate to write the ballot.
6. Do not ignore the rules to suit your own preferences.
7. Do not use marginalizing and discriminatory rhetoric or practice (anti-Semitic commentary; sexual harassment; voting against participants for fashion, hairstyle, body piercings, etc.). This rule should go without saying.

This list of "Don'ts" may seem long, but it all boils down to a few basic suggestions: Be respectful of the debaters and be fair in your conduct and evaluation of the debate.

Although all judges should follow the rules and try to be fair, there are as many ways of judging debates as there are ways of debating. Judges should work to cultivate their own styles and methods of evaluating debates. They should work with debaters to create a learning community that will benefit everyone. This section covers the two decisions judges make after debates: Assigning a winner, and assigning individual points.

Deciding Who Wins

Of course, the critical question is this: how *do* you decide who wins the debate? The best answer is that you should decide the debate based on the criteria offered by the debaters in the round. Every debate is about different issues, is conducted differently, and thus should be decided on its own merits. Different teams will offer different kinds of arguments. You will have to decide whether or not the proposition team has made a case for endorsing the motion for debate. The opposition team will make arguments about why the proposition team's case is inadequate or dangerous or otherwise misguided. You will have to evaluate the merits of these arguments and decide whether the proposition team's rejoinders are adequate and satisfactory.

During the course of the debate, debaters may offer different criteria for your decision. They may even address you directly, saying that your vote should or should not be based on a particular argument set or on certain kind of arguments. They are not trying to order you around; rather, this is common practice. They are trying to assist you and influence you in your decision making process.

Be open-minded and fair to both teams.

Do not decide the debate based simply on the *number* of arguments won by each side. You will also need to evaluate the qualitative significance of each argument on the overall outcome of the debate. Take this common scenario: The proposition wins an advantage conclusively, while the opposition wins a disadvantage conclusively. Who wins? You can't decide based on the information we have given you. To answer this question, you need to know the relative significance of the advantage and disadvantage. This relative significance can have both quantitative and qualitative aspects. You may be tempted to decide based simply on the "biggest impact." For example, you may decide to vote for the proposition team because they claimed to avert a war, while the opposition team was "only" able to prove that the proposition team's proposal would cause the deaths of hundreds of children.

You also need to take into account questions of risk and probability when deciding who wins in complicated debates. In the above example, your decision would doubtless change if you decided, based on arguments advanced and won by the opposition team, that there was a very low probability that the proposition team's plan would be

able to avert a war. However, this does not mean that you should interject your own risk calculation into the debate at this point. The debaters may have *weighed* the round for you – they may have made the best case as to why their arguments outweigh or are more important than or more instrumental to the decision than those of the other team. If the debaters do compare arguments to each other, you need to take that into account.

One common mistake that judges make is voting for the opposition team on the basis of "partial solvency" arguments. A partial solvency argument is an argument advanced by the opposition team that says the proposition team's case will not solve the problem *completely*, or that the harm or existing problem is not *quite* as bad as the proposition team claims it is. These are good defensive arguments for the opposition team, but they should *almost never* be reasons to vote for the opposition team. The only thing these arguments prove is that the proposition case is not as good as it was claimed to be. Big deal. It is rare indeed that arguments advanced in debates turn out to be just as triumphant as their authors predicted they would be. The proposition team can still win if their case can be shown to be *comparatively advantageous*; that is, if they can show that it is, on balance, better by some increment than the present state of affairs.

Don't vote based on your personal opinion on the topic. Sometimes, when the topic is announced, you may read it and think that you know what the debate will be about. Often, the proposition team will choose a case that may be different from one *you* would have chosen. You may also have strong opinions about the subject matter of the topic. Perhaps you are a committed opponent of the death penalty and have to judge a debate about this subject. You may find that your personal presumption lies with the team that opposes the death penalty, but do not hold the other team to a higher burden of proof. The teams do not have to persuade you *personally* of the correctness of their position; *the debaters are debating each other and not you.*

Track arguments on your flowsheet as they proceed and develop through the debate so you can evaluate the debate in the fairest way possible. Some judges make the mistake of deciding the debate more or less solely on the quality of the final rebuttal speech. This is a mistake because the proposition rebuttal needs to be evaluated both as a response to the opposition block's arguments and as a summation of the proposition team's final position. When deciding the debate, you need to figure out if the proposition rebuttalist *dropped*, or failed to answer, any opposition arguments. You then need to decide how to weigh those conceded arguments in the context of the other arguments in the debate.

Often you will have to consider dropped, or conceded, arguments and decide what to do about them. Some conceded arguments will not impact your decision. Others will. If an argument is conceded, it means you must assign the full weight of that argument to the side that argued it. This concession phenomenon should not mean that if a team concedes some arguments, they should automatically lose the debate. All arguments are not created equally. Some arguments can be safely ignored.

Other arguments may be introduced in the debate, only to have the team that introduced them later back down on their original claim. This is smart debating and is not a reason to look askance at a team. It is common practice for opposition teams to argue a wider variety of arguments in their first speech than in their subsequent speeches. This tactic is called argument selection and is good debate practice. Do not penalize teams for not extending all of their arguments through the entire debate.

Debates are decided based solely on the *substance* of arguments. Some students will be more or less effective orators than others. This is scored separately in individual points, covered in the next section. We score these separately because even a very poor speaker may be able to win a debate. Consider that debate is a little like a trial. In a trial, the prosecution makes a case to prove the charge against the defendant. Even the most eloquent lawyer could fail against a mumbling know-nothing defense attorney if they are able to prove that their client was out of

the country during the time of the crime. One side may win a debate even if they get lower scores than the other side. Questions of style are left to individual scores.

Speaker Points

In addition to deciding the winners of the debate, you will have to fill out your ballot and assign points to individual debaters. *Speaker points* are a measure of performance by individual debaters. Competitions give awards for team performance as well as speaker awards, which are trophies given to individuals based on their aggregate point accumulation during the course of a tournament. Points are assigned on a hundred-point scale using the official Public Debate Program rubric.

You may choose to assign a *low-point win*. A low-point win is a circumstance where the team that won did not get the highest points. This circumstance arises occasionally, when judges feel that one team did the better job of presentation, but did not win based on the arguments. *Remember: the total number of points does not decide who won the debate.*

Using the Speaker Point Rubric

The rubric is based on what we've learned over the years about effective educational assessment. It is periodically updated, so the rubric in this book may not exactly match the one you receive at a tournament, but the concepts will remain the same. Always check with the tournament director to ensure you are using the current version of the rubric. It is a *content-based rubric*. This makes it different from a *norm-based* tool. Grading based on norms seeks to find an average performance and assign all students relative to that average. Scoring in debates does not work this way. In theory, all students can aspire to receive a perfect score, as scores are assigned based on what it is that students actually do in a given debate, rather than some hypothetical comparison to all of their peers. Since topics, sides and opponents change, norm-based scoring is unreliable and therefore unfair in debates.

Although the scoring range is from 1-100, notice that scores of 59 and lower are strongly discouraged. Those scores are reserved for students who are both bad at debating and mean to their opponents. Scores this low are extremely unusual. If you assign a score below 60, tournament officials will likely stop you for an explanation, as it indicates a potentially serious problem.

Scores at the top of the rubric are likewise extremely rare. This is because debating is so extremely challenging and it is extraordinarily difficult to give a performance that will score in the 95-100 range. To give a score this high is to assign our program's most prestigious award. It only happens every few years.

The rubric has six columns. The first column indicates the score range discussed in a given row. The next column offers a general description of that score range. The following columns are argumentation, refutation, structure and presentation. These are all equally weighted and you should assign scores accordingly. A student might be in the 70 zone for presentation and argumentation, but in the 60 zone for refutation and structure. That student should receive a score in the middle, around a 65.

You do not have to turn in the rubric after debates – students already have copies of it. This is to help them improve. The Public Debate Program thrives on *transparency and accountability*. This is why judges are asked to reveal and explain their decisions and grading. Students will consult their copies of the rubric to "find themselves" on the chart. We encourage them to look at the rows above their score to see how they can improve.

It is extremely important to assign students their "true score." Sometimes judges hesitate to give scores on the low range of the scale because they are worried about hurting students' feelings or because they are simply so impressed with students' performance that they want to say "good job!" But it is very common to assign scores on the low end, especially for new debaters.

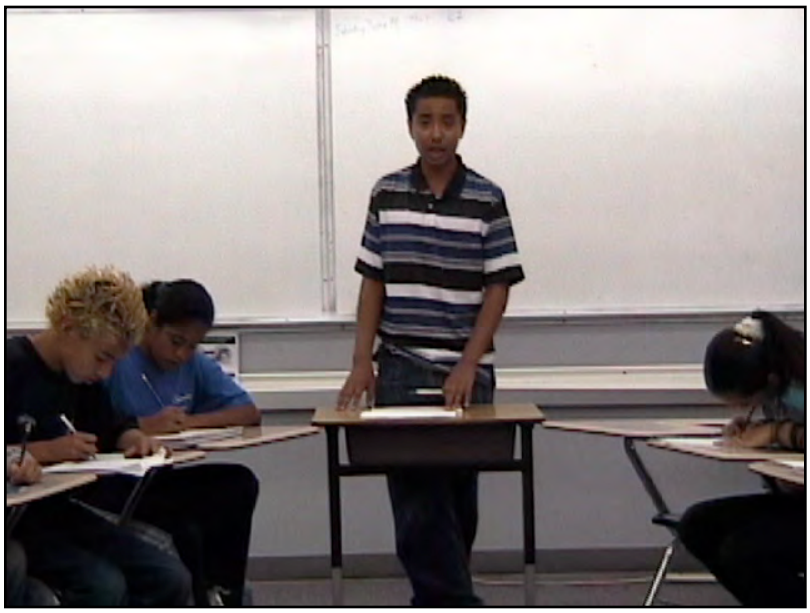
"Point inflation" has individual and social costs. Assigning higher scores hurts students rather than helping them. Students get a false sense of their own skills and are unlikely to work as hard to improve. There are also social costs – if students randomly draw judges who assign higher scores, the awards at the end of the tournament will be unfair as they are biased by the effects of random judge assignment rather than the result of hard work by students.

The rubric can be intimidating because of its sheer volume of words. Quite obviously, judges should read it before use. As you judge more debates, you will become more familiar with the scoring ranges and their rationales. **Avoid the temptation to judge based on the first column**. Some new judges will default to the "description" category because it is simply easier and quicker. This is not an effective or correct way to assign students' scores. Relying on the first category also means that judges skate closer to the language of "average," "below average," and "above average," which is precisely the kind of norm-based assessment the rubric is designed to correct.

Each student receives their own score. Two or more students may receive the same score in a debate, sometimes for very different reasons. As a reminder, scores do not determine the winner of a debate.

Taking notes in debates is called *flowing*. For debates, all students and judges use a graphic organizer called a *flowsheet*. A flowsheet is divided into columns representing different speeches in a debate. Traditional note-taking strategies are not effective for debating or for fairly judging a debates. This is because debates are about the relationship between arguments and their give and take (thus the word *flow*) during a debate.

At the end of this manual, you will find a blank flowsheet. Notice that there are six speeches in a debate but only five columns, labeled by speech. That is because there are two opposition speeches in a row. These speeches function like a unit, responding to the points of the second proposition, extending on the points of the first opposition and summarizing the debate. In addition, the proposition rebuttalist will respond to these speeches as a unit. This means that judges and debaters takes notes for these speeches in the same column. Sometimes you may need more space to take notes; simply flip over your flowsheet and continue in the same column on the other side.



On pages 15-16 you will see completed flowsheets. They are from two experienced judges who watched the same sample debate. Note the differences in style. Each judge has worked to write as much as possible (both flowsheets continue on the reverse sides, not reproduced here). Note that the flowsheet on page 15 has some numbers on each column. These are speaker points, but remain from a prior scoring system that the Public Debate Program no longer uses.

The flowsheet is your record of the debate. Nobody will look at it but you, so it is okay to use shorthand and cursive writing that might be hard for others to use. In theory, you should be able to use your flowsheet to reconstruct the debate afterward. This means is should be thorough and accurate. Here are a few guidelines for effective flowing:

1. **Write down as much as possible.** Sometimes judges are tempted to write their interpretations of what students said, or what students "meant," but this is incorrect. Remember that the debate is judged based on what students actually said, not on your interpretations. Try as much as possible to record what they actually said so that you can make a fair decision. At other times, judges only write down what they think is important. Again, this is a mistake. What you think is important is not necessarily what the students see as important, particularly as the debate goes on. If the rebuttal speeches focus on an earlier argument you saw as irrelevant so did not transcribe, you will be unable to make a fair decision. When in doubt, err on the side of writing everything down.
2. **Use abbreviations where you can.** Every judge and debater develops their own set of abbreviations. Instead of writing out the word "money," use a dollar sign. Instead of writing out "not," use a circle with a slash through it. Abbreviations will help you get more information down as students proceed.
3. **Use visual connectors to show interaction of ideas**. In debates, students respond to each others' ideas and extend on their team's lines of argument. It is essential to note those connections on your flowsheet. The best way to do this is by using circles and arrows, as in Figure XXX. When a student refers to an argument from an earlier speech, pull it across the flowsheet to the current column using visual connectors.
4. **Put arguments next to the ones they go with.** One of the major differences between the flowsheet in Figure XXX and the one in Figure XXX is that Figure XXX has many very long arrows. This is because students addressed previous arguments in a new order and the judge wanted to note connections. Although it is essential to note connections, making very long arrows can be confusing and hurt your ability to track the ebb and flow of ideas in a debate. As a rule, it is good to hew more closely to the strategy in Figure XXX. Instead of transcribing the speech as it happens and weaving a complicated network of arrows, that judge has put refutation or extension ideas vertically near the ideas they relate to. This makes it easier to see points of clash. It will also help you see when arguments have been conceded, because there will be blank space next to them.
5. **Flow points of information in the column of the speaker who holds the floor, noting responses where appropriate.** Notice that in both of the completed flowsheets judges have indicated items in brackets in some speeches. These indicate that the speaker took a point of information. Points of information are part of the debate and should be part of its written record. When a speaker accepts a point, simply make a bracket and note the statement or question from the other side. Then close the bracket and note the speaker's answer. Some judges track the number of times that a student attempted POIs by making hash marks in the appropriate student's column, while others simply remember or use a different notation system.

Like any skill, flowing takes time to master, but it is easy for most judges to immediately pick up. The key is to write as much as possible so that you can make a fair decision. This way you are also a good role model for students learning the essential skill of note-taking.

After the Debate

Once the debate is over, you should thank both teams for their participation and invite them to step outside the room while you make your decision. This way they can meet each other and let off a little steam and you may decide in peace. You should take no more than 5-7 minutes to decide the debate and assign points. Although your

ballot asks you to write a rationale for a decision, it is enough to simply write a sentence or two now; you will have time in a few minutes to finish your written decision.

Once you have decided, invite the students back into the room. You should use your timer and have no more than five minutes to speak to the students. Simply begin by telling the students who you voted for and why: "In this debate, the XXX team won because of XXX." Then turn to the other team: "You would have won the debate if you had XXX." Then, addressing each student by name, tell them their score. For each student, you should tell them one thing they did well and one thing they should work on. Five minutes will pass quickly.

One common mistake judges make is to use "I language" after the debate. Judges will say "I was convinced that…" or "I was persuaded…" or "I agree that…" but this is not good practice. Sometimes when we talk to students our instinct is to "soften the blow" of a decision by saying that this was "just" the decision that we made. This way of framing your decision actually stands in the way of helping students learn how to lose debates. Sometimes when judges use the first person pronoun often during their explanation, students leave the debate thinking something along the lines of "That judge voted against me because of their opinions" rather than taking your decision and advice to heart. Try to phrase your comments to students in authoritative, declarative sentences. For example, instead of "I found this argument persuasive because…" say "This argument was good because…."

Another common mistake that judges make is offering rationales that could suit any debate. Judges may say "The proposition won this debate because they had better arguments and proved their case." This is not a good reason for a decision. It could be true of any debate, no matter the topic and specific content. It is important to mention specific ideas when judging a debate. You might say "The proposition won this debate because they showed that the benefits of homework outweighs its costs. Their strongest argument was…" Mentioning specific ideas and showing students how you evaluated them helps debaters improve. It also anchors your decision in a debate, helping to prevent you from sliding down the dangerous road of personal preference.

Writing Your Ballot

When you are done, you must return to the tournament administrator with your ballot. Do not delay the tournament – if you wish to continue talking to the students, tell them you will speak to them after your ballot is completed.

When you return your ballot, the administrator will check it and enter your result and scores. They will give the ballot back to you so that you can complete your written rationale. It is important to do a good job of writing a ballot. Students and their teachers will see these after the tournament is over; the ballot is a teaching opportunity for students that also helps you to learn to judge.

One of the most important aspects of a debate is the feedback students receive from a judge. Debaters look forward to and value the comments judges make on their ballots. In order to help students improve and understand the reason for the judge's decision, a judge needs to provide useful comments, a thorough analysis of the round, and the reason for their decision. Although you will give an oral critique of each debate, writing comments on a ballot will help coaches understand what happened in debates, and help students remember what happened in debates.
Although there is no formal structure for ballots, there are certain key elements that every good ballot should include. The reason for decision, comments directed to specific debaters, and comparisons of arguments made during the round are especially useful to debaters. Make sure to point out things each team could have done better

and recognize things that they did well. Encouraging debaters to improve and to continue competing is just as important as providing critique. Below is a list of things to do and not to do when preparing a ballot.

Ballot Checklist:

- Be thorough
- Provide a reason for decision
- Tell debaters what they did well and what they could do to improve
- Discuss and compare arguments made during the round
- Provide a thorough analysis of the debate
- Use constructive criticism
- Write neatly

What Not to Do:

- Do not "flow" on the ballot
- Do not leave the ballot blank
- Do not leave out your reason for decision
- Do not list arguments without commenting on them
- Do not write illegibly or use too many abbreviations

In order to help you understand how to structure your comments and what type of information to include, we have provided examples of two very good ballots. These are actual ballots given to students at tournaments.

The first ballot clearly states the reason for decision in the first sentence, going on to give some advice to both teams and each individual speaker. In the second sample ballot, the judge takes a slightly different approach, exploring the arguments both teams made in depth, explaining how they played out against each other in the debate and finally comparing them as the students have argued. Each style is good and helpful to students. As a judge, you will develop your own style for writing ballots.

Sample Ballot 1

IN MY OPINION, THE TEAM THAT WON THE DEBATE WAS THE (CIRCLE ONE) **PROP** **OPP**.

SIGNATURE: Rebecca Peacock AFFILIATION: CMC

PLEASE USE THE SPACE BELOW TO INDICATE YOUR **REASON FOR DECISION** AND TO PROVIDE HELPFUL COMMENTS TO THE DEBATERS. I voted for the proposition today because they were able to tell me why the status quo had health care problems that the resolution would begin to solve for, while the opposition did not fully explain why the current health care system was good enough and why government funding to other programs was more important. Both teams need to work on explaining their points more, then they would speak for a longer period of time, and countering the other team's points.

Prop #1: Good volume and clear speaking, you need to explain your points more - why is the current health care system bad?

Opp #1: Good clear speaking and off-case points. You need to counter the proposition's arguments!

Prop #2: Good extensions, however don't let points of information dominate your speech and address the ~~propos~~ opposition's arguments 18

Opp #2: Good explanations and extensions of your team's points, →

but why are they better than universal health ~~care~~ insurance and the problems that universal health insurance brings worse?

Opp #3: Good summary of points and eye contact. You need to emphasize why what you represent is better.

Prop #3: Good summary ~~on~~ and good job beginning to counter ~~your ted~~ the opp's arguments. You also need to tell me why your side is better.

Sample Ballot 2

PLEASE USE THE SPACE BELOW TO INDICATE YOUR REASON FOR DECISION AND TO PROVIDE HELPFUL COMMENTS TO THE DEBATERS.

This is a low-point victory:

The prop won 3 uncontested points:

1. 60% of those executed are innocent
2. blacks are executed disproportionately to whites
3. The U.S. should set an example for other nations

The opp won 2 points, though not strictly:

1. The death penalty will deter crime (though how much life imprisonedwill deter lessens this)
2. The guilty that are executed get what they deserve (example of Westerfield was used)

* For the record the opp came out on the favorable end of two other issues:

1. The biblical debate on an "eye for an eye"
2. Tax $ issue though it was never really quantified

The 3 uncontested points, on balance, outweigh the points won by opp. Nothing the opposition said justifies the deliberate execution of innocent people by the government.

Notes on Audiences

As its name implies, the Public Debate Program is designed to teach students to debate in front of audiences. Because debates are fun to watch, most of the debates you judge at tournaments will have audiences. Sometimes these will be quite small - students from the host school, or a few parents. Sometimes you might have several dozen spectators in a debate. Judges and debaters are not permitted to restrict viewing of a debate unless a spectator is disruptive.

Audiences are permitted to use supportive heckles only during debates. They should, at the very least, support the speakers as they take and leave the floor. They are not permitted to cue students. If you suspect that this kind of behavior is happening, gently remind the person in question that it is not allowed. Usually it is an overexcited parent or sibling who does not intend to skew the outcome of a debate.
If an audience member is disruptive, the judge may call a debate to order simply by saying "Order," or "Order, please." This is normally sufficient to stop audience disruption (and, on occasion, exceptionally loud talking by one team among themselves while the other team is speaking).

Although audiences are encouraged to watch debates, they are not permitted to dispute the decision of the judge. In fact, they are not to talk to the judge at all after debates. Sometimes even comments that seem like friendly questions ("I was just wondering how you felt about this particular argument...") are thinly veiled pretexts for criticism. We wish it were otherwise, but the fact is that parents and often coaches can sometimes take the competition element of a debate tournament too seriously for their (and their students') own good. If someone tries to engage you about your decision, it is appropriate to gently remind them that you are not allowed to discuss your decision with others after the debate.

There is a procedure in place for disputing judge conduct or decision-making. A judge's decision is final, but from time to time coaches and parents may wish to provide feedback on judges to the tournament. They should not speak to the tournament director, but should speak to the coach of their affiliated school. The coach will then speak to the tournament director.

On occasion, the tournament director might approach a judge to offer some constructive support to improve judging practice. This is normal and helpful for most judges, who should not take it as anything other than help improving their craft.

Using the Sample Flow sheet

Taking notes in debates is called "flowing." All judges must flow on a flow sheet. On p. 18 of this manual, you will find a sample flow sheet from part of a hypothetical debate about school uniforms. Notice that the flow sheet is divided into columns. Each column is labeled for a speech (or speeches- more on that in just a second) – "1PC" is the first proposition constructive, "1OC" is the first opposition constructive, "2PC" is the second proposition constructive, "2OC" is the second opposition constructive, "OR" is the opposition rebuttal, and "PR" is the proposition rebuttal. "2OC" and "OR" are in the same column because the speeches are back to back and function as a kind of unified front for the opposition.

Students and judges use each column to keep track of arguments made in that speech. Let's say that the proposition team makes a brief case for student uniforms. They might advance three basic arguments:

- Cost. Many students can't afford to look sharp every day for school, and students get embarrassed if they don't have the latest fashions.
- Uniforms aren't as distracting, and will help students focus on their classwork, not their clothes.
- Uniforms reduce violence, because students can't wear gang clothes or gang symbols.

As the first proposition speaker makes their case, everyone else should take notes on their flow sheet.

Then the first opposition speaker refutes the case. She might begin by bringing up the issue of freedom of expression. She could say that uniforms are a bad idea because students need to be able to express their individuality in schools. Then she would move on to answer the arguments made in the proposition's case. On the "cost" point, she might say that uniforms are expensive, too, particularly since people have to buy a bunch of them at once. On the "distraction" point, she could say that there are always things to distract students, and that districts have dress codes in place to deal with distracting clothing. Finally, on the "violence" point, she could say that dress codes already prevent gang clothing, and that uniforms won't reduce the gang problem because students who want to be in gangs will be in them whether or not they have to wear uniforms.

Then the second proposition speaker has to answer the opposition's arguments while rebuilding and extending on the proposition's case. The flow sheet will help her do this, as she knows what arguments she has to answer and extend upon. She should begin by answering the freedom of expression argument by saying, for example, that students have many ways to express themselves, and that clothes are a shallow and unimportant method of expression. Then she can move on to rebuild her team's case. To extend on the "cost" argument, she should probably reiterate it briefly before beginning her refutation: "We said that many students can't afford to keep up with the latest trends, and that's embarrassing. Now, they said that uniforms are expensive to buy, but they're cheap compared to the latest pair of Nikes or Hillfigers, and that means that poorer students won't be made fun of for their clothes." She could repeat this process by moving through the other opposition arguments and rebuilding her case.

So you can see how this process works. Arguments are refuted, extended, and compared through the debate. Every speech, therefore, has a rebuttal component. There should be new arguments as well, but only in the constructive speeches. A blank sample flow sheet is available at the end of this booklet, and on our website.

1st Proposition Const.	1st Opposition Const.	2nd Proposition Const.	2nd Opp/Opp Rebuttal	Proposition Rebuttal
Students should have uniforms	Hurts freedom of expression – students need to express individuality.	1. Students have other ways to express themselves. 2. Clothes not important for expression – too shallow.		
1. Cost – many can't afford expensive clothes; are embarrassed.	Uniforms expensive too – must buy a lot at once.	Students can't keep up with trends – Nikes. Even if uniforms expensive, clothes are worse. Also, poor students won't be made fun of.		
2. Not as distracting, so students can focus on classwork.	1. Always things to distract students. 2. Dress codes address the problem.			
3. Reduce violence – students can't wear gang symbols or clothes.	1. Dress codes already stop gang clothing. 2. Uniforms won't help-they join for other reasons.			

SAMPLE MIDDLE SCHOOL PUBLIC DEBATE PROGRAM BALLOT

ROUND#:_____ LOCATION:_____

JUDGE'S NAME:_____

******Judges- Please rank debaters on a scale of 1-30 points.******

PROPOSITION TEAM:_____	**OPPOSITION TEAM:_____**
1ST:_____ POINTS:_____	1ST:_____POINTS:_____
2ND:_____ POINTS:_____	2ND:_____ POINTS:_____
3RD:_____ POINTS:_____	3RD:_____ POINTS:_____

IN MY OPINION, THE TEAM THAT WON THE DEBATE WAS THE (CIRCLE ONE) **PROP / OPP**.

SIGNATURE:_____ AFFILIATION:_____

PLEASE USE THE SPACE BELOW TO INDICATE YOUR REASON FOR DECISION AND TO PROVIDE HELPFUL COMMENTS TO THE DEBATERS.

Frequently Asked Questions for the Classroom Teacher And Debate Coach

Q: How much time will this require?
Q: What should we debate about?
Q: Is this limited to English?
Q: How much money will this cost?
Q: How can I use these ideas for students who read below grade level?
Q: Does debate teach writing?
Q: How do I grade debate?
Q: During a debate, what do I do with the other students in class?
Q: Is this limited to my GATE students?
Q: What kind of students are good debaters?
Q: How does debate help students with standardized tests?
Q: What should my students wear to competitions?
Q: What do my students need to know before the event?
Q: How do I prepare my students for competition?
Q: What will the topics be like at the tournament?
Q: Can my students use notes while they are speaking?
Q: How can my students keep track of the time elapsed during their speeches?
Q: Will I be expected to judge at the tournament?
Q: But I don't know how to judge a debate!
Q: How will judges decide who won the debate?
Q: We'd like to train more judges. How do we do that?
Q: How do we get a program started at our high school? We have some 8th graders who are nervous that they won't be able to debate next year.
Q: How do I learn to run a tournament?
Q: We seem to be having a hard time winning debates on the proposition side. What are some ways our students can win more when they are defending the proposition?
Q: Does this mean that we will be cheated of our tirelessly researched arguments for the opposition?
Q: So, wait a minute. Is it true in a debate that the proposition "defines" the parameters?

Q: How much time will this require?

A: The competitive debate coach should plan two weekly 1-hour meetings. The meetings should be fast paced and should provide modeling and instruction on how to compose arguments for topics. Additionally, the students should have ample opportunity to practice debate. Just like anything, practice makes permanent. The classroom teacher can

plan to allow 2-3 days preparation time and one day per debate. The time allocation depends on the depth and complexity of the topic. The classroom teacher can cut preparation time as the students experience more debates.

Q: What should we debate about?

A: This booklet contains a plethora of topics successfully debated by middle school students. Your topics can revolve around current events and/ or literature. However, make sure each topic debated is balanced and researchable. Stay away from topics that contain more emotion than substance. It is suggested that you start with basic topic like: "The death penalty should be banned in the United States." Many topics can be derived from situations developed in novels and short stories as well. Richer debates will be attached to a reading rather than relying on a student's prior knowledge.

Q: Is this limited to English?

A: Debate is not limited to English classes. Many MSPDP teachers encourage other teachers at their school to use debate in their classrooms. Students can debate about topics relevant to the Social Studies curriculum, science instruction, and even mathematics. Even though the skills taught in debate meet many of the Language Arts content standards, these skills can also be productively reinforced across the curriculum. Furthermore, skills such as causal reasoning and distinguishing fact from opinion (highlighted in the Historical and Social Sciences Analysis Skills for 6-8) are met through debate practice.

Q: How much money will this cost?

The Middle School Public Debate Program does not require money for implementation. Having debates in class is free. If your school wishes to attend competitions and participate in league events, the costs incurred are primarily (and often exclusively) transportation costs. If a school goes to 6 tournaments, there may be 6 buses. If there are other schools in your district are MSPDP schools, you can make cost-sharing arrangements for shared transportation to lighten the financial load and maximize opportunities for students. Many schools host tournaments to raise money for their own debate participation. While event attendance is free, schools sell concessions to make money for the debate program, and can make up to $700 or so in this manner. Other schools have been very successful in getting community sponsorships and other fund-raising initiatives through to enable participation.

Schools form leagues to share the costs of trophies for competition. The Inland Valley Debate League (the pilot MSPDP league) asks schools to pay dues: $300 yearly for each school. Schools attend all league competitions for free with up to 30 students per event. The league apparatus is modeled on California's high school speech and debate league structure.

Q: How can I use these ideas for students who read below grade level?

A: One of the stumbling blocks of literacy education is that we often convey technical literacy (diagramming sentences, etc.) but do not teach functional literacy (which includes a strong oral literacy component). Debate participation can help accelerate literacy development in low-literacy populations. There is substantial research that suggests students' language development may be limited to the level of their oral and aural literacy and comprehension development. Debate also creates an incentive structure to students to read above grade level in their research and preparation for competition and classroom debates.

Q: Does debate teach writing?

A: Most certainly. Debate reinforces the importance of organization, evidence, and editing within one's writing. The teacher will see immediate progress in the students' ability to outline, respond to literature, and compose persuasive compositions. Additionally, debate provides a forum for students to practice research abilities.

Q: How do I grade debate?

A: Debate embodies each of the major categories of the Language Arts California Standards: Reading Comprehension, Writing, Literary Response, Listening Skills, and Oral Language. The products of a debate cycle include, but are not limited to: persuasive essay, arguments derived from researched articles, oral presentations, and flow chart(s). Prior to debating, a good idea is to have the students produce, as a group, a persuasive essay that integrates research that represents the side they are defending. This essay can be graded with your school or district writing rubric. The oral presentation can be assessed with a simple oral rubric. The flow chart may be assessed as a credit/ no credit assessment. Either quality notes were taken or they were not taken. Last but not last, included is a group assessment rubric. Although this is not a standards-based assessment, the value of working effectively with others is of prime importance. At the end of the debate cycle, each of the group members assesses one another in twelve different social skills. This is one of the more meaningful pieces of feedback for the students as it comes from their colleagues.

Q: During a debate, what do I do with the other students in class?

A: It is hard to have debates in large classes with all students paying attention throughout. This is why whole-class type debate formats may be most effective. In a debate elective using the MSPDP, however, students who are not debating may work on their own or in groups, or be assigned as evaluators. The other students in class have a responsibility to maintain a flow chart of each of the arguments presented during the debate. The audience may also be used to decide what side was more convincing during the debate. The audience must justify their vote with evidence from their flow chart. They can also be asked to give their own version of speeches made in the debate, write essays explaining their decision, or to function as "coaches" for each side.

Q: Is this limited to my GATE students?

A: No! Although GATE students may make great debaters, many are overcommitted and can't add another activity. Our experience with programs that limit debate to GATE students is that those programs are not as large as others, do not have as much success as others, and do not generally last as long. Your best option is to make the program open to all interested participants and to try to track down the orally gifted students in your school.

Q: What kind of students are good debaters?

A: Many coaches have made the mistake of only recruiting students with high grades and loud talkers. A strong debate team has a mixture of personalities. Many of your best debaters are underachieving students that are bored with the school system. The easiest place to start is your classroom. Conduct a few strong oral based activities in your class and you will immediately find talent. You can find many diamonds in the rough in discipline office and retention classes. Generally, the underachieving GATE students are also an asset. Last but not least, recruit from your special education population. For many of these students, their oral language skills act as tools of survival.

Q: How does debate help students with standardized tests?

A: Data across the country suggests students struggle with writing, critical analysis, and interpretation questions during standardized assessments. Each of the aforementioned skills are constantly used in the debate process. Many fail to look at the number of skills (all of which are measured by standardized tests) involved in the process of preparing for a debate. Chances are these skills will "stick" better to a debater due to the fact they see firsthand the connection between these skills and their success as a debater.

Q: What should my students wear to competitions?

A: Your students should wear whatever they are most comfortable in. Since for most of you this event is an authorized field trip, students need to follow the dress codes of your school district. Students should be neat, but are not required to wear suits or other dress clothes.

Q: What do my students need to know before the event?

A: Your students need to know the order of the speeches in the debate, the time limits for those speeches, and what to do during those speeches. You might distribute a one-page sheet that the students can use to prepare.

Your students also need to know the basic roles of the proposition team and the opposition team – they should be able to explain that the proposition's job is to make a case for the motion for debate, while the opposition's job is to refute the proposition team's case.

Your students should know what points of information are, and should be able to demonstrate how to attempt to make a point of information (rise and say "Point of information," or "On that point," or something similar). Students should be able to demonstrate how to accept a point of information ("Yes, I'll take your point"), and how to reject a point of information ("No, thank you."). Students should be able to make points of information within the 15 second time limit after being recognized. Students should also know how to answer points of information ("That's a good point, but we've already addressed that concern," or "Thank you for your point," or "We disagree with that point, and let me explain why," or similarly answering the issue raised in the point of information).

This means that students should understand the rules of the event. The best way to ensure that students understand the rules is to have them debate several times on different topics.

Finally, students should have had practice preparing for debates during limited time. Use the announced topics before every event and have "mini-debates" with abbreviated time limits and no points of information (try 1 or 2-minute constructive speeches and 30-second rebuttals). Teach students how to effectively use their pre-prepared notes to prepare for debates.

Q: How do I prepare my students for competition?

A: Students will need to have done research in order to be prepared. As we've said, topics are likely to be related to current events or educational issues. This means that students will have to know something about current events. They should probably read the newspaper. One way to use this effectively in the club is to assign students to keep track of or research a specific issue and then report on it every week in the club. One student could keep track of whether or not we should invade Iraq, for example, and could have to give a 2-minute oral report every week to the rest of the class. Other students could take notes and keep them in a debate notebook. This will allow for effective information-sharing as well as fulfilling public speaking practice.

When the topics are released for the upcoming tournament, organize students to prepare "issue briefs" to share with the rest of the team. These briefs can include a fact set, some vocabulary words, and arguments for and against the motion for debate. Encourage students to keep a debate notebook with this information and other notes to help them prepare for debating during the year.

You will be able to work with your teams during their designated preparation time before each debate, but since there will be more of them then there will be of you, it will make things easier if you have already discussed the issue and you can just refer them to their notes.

It is very important that students have practice in impromptu and extemporaneous speaking before the event. This will allay their anxieties about not knowing the topics ahead of time. If you practice with classroom games, however, they will gain confidence and be eager for the chance to use their new skills.

Q: What will the topics be like at the tournament?

A: All of the topics will be chosen by middle school teachers like you. The MSPDP packet and website includes a list of topics used at past tournaments. Topics will not be arcane. They should be topics that debaters will be prepared to debate if they have some knowledge of current events, the world around them, and issues relevant to their lives as students.

Q: Can my students use notes while they are speaking?

A: Yes. They can use notes that they prepare during the 20-minute preparation time before the debate. They should also take notes during the debate so that they can track the course of arguments and appropriately organize their speeches. Students need to know how to use a flowsheet to take notes.

Q: How can my students keep track of the time elapsed during their speeches?

A: Students can bring small kitchen timers with them to debates to time themselves, if they wish. Judges will be expected to keep time for students and give hand signals that show 4 minutes remaining, 3 minutes remaining, 2 minutes remaining, etc. Judges will also slap the table after the first minute of every constructive speech and before the last minute of every constructive speech. This slap signals the end and beginning of "protected time." As you have already

read in the MSPDP packet, the first and last minute of every constructive speech is called "protected time" because it is time that is free from attempts at points of information.

You should bring a stopwatch or other timing device to help you keep time while you are judging (see below).

Q: Will I be expected to judge at the tournament?

A: Yes. You will judge a few debates after you are trained and certified. Judging debates is one of the best ways to train students. During the course of a competition, students are able to get constructive feedback from many individuals with many points of view. Judging and critiquing debates is also one of the things that makes debate events so collegial – everyone is helping out all of the students, maximizing education for everyone involved.

Q: But I don't know how to judge a debate!

A: That's why you will be trained and certified. Most importantly, however, you are also a professional educator who knows a lot about what students are capable of and what they need to succeed. Teachers are our most capable judges.

Q: How will judges decide who won the debate?

A: Usually the judge will decide based on the criteria that the debaters establish in the round- for example, if the debaters agree that what we need to do is try to save lives, than the judge should decide whether the proposition's proposal saves more lives than the present system. If the debaters agree that we are trying to preserve liberty, then the judge decides based on whether the proposal preserves more liberty than it hurts. Rarely, however, do debaters agree on decision criteria. If the subject for debate was "This House would sacrifice liberty to promote security," then the proposition team would most likely argue for restrictions on freedom to improve security -- let's say that they might propose a system of national identification cards. They would argue that this proposal would keep us safe from terrorists and the like. Then the opposition would probably say that this proposal would be bad because it invades privacy.

How would you decide who wins? It would be tough, unless the debaters explicitly compare their arguments to each other:

"The risks of terrorism are so great that they are more important than the incremental loss in privacy. Therefore, even if they win this argument, we should still adopt our policy."

or

"We've argued that these identification cards won't work to help us prevent terrorism. All they will do invade our privacy and help the government intrude into our lives. We shouldn't adopt this policy."

So it is up to the debaters to set up decision criteria in the debate. If they don't, it is difficult sometimes for judges to know who to vote for. But they should just remember that they should vote for whichever side won the debate based on the arguments advanced in the debate. Judges should not vote on who won the MOST arguments, for example. Neither should they vote on who was the funniest, or best dressed, or any other specious criteria. Judges should take seriously the arguments made by the debaters and try to identify which team won which arguments, and then compare those arguments to each other.

Judges should also avoid personal bias about the topic. The job of the judge is to evaluate student performance, not to say what is right or wrong about the topic.

Judges should disclose their decision after the debate and explain who won the debate and why they won. They should keep comments brief but constructive. It is very important that all judges offer at least one constructive comment to each debater. Judges will also fill out ballots where they should explain the reasons for their decision at length and offer additional comments to the debaters they saw.

Q: We'd like to train more judges. How do we do that?

A: Use the judging manual and have your parents and teachers gain their certificate at a training or at a tournament. Most of you already have experience judging, and should be able to do most of the training yourself. But of course we are always ready to help.

Q: How do we get a program started at our high school? We have some 8th graders who are nervous that they won't be able to debate next year.

A: If there is not a program at your high school, there are some things your team can do to help this process along.

- Parent involvement. Never underestimate the power of parents. Parents who wish to see a debate team at your high school can contact Kate Shuster for information about how to lobby the school. They can also contact the principal directly to express their concerns, organize letter-writing campaigns with other parents, and otherwise work to build a constituency for debate at the high school.
- Identify a teacher. If you or someone you know knows a teacher at the high school who might be interested in teaching debate, you may refer that person to Kate (or vice-versa), so that she or he can get more information about coaching debate at the high school level. There is often an existing high school league that schools can easily join at a relatively low cost. The MSPDP will help interested schools and teachers build high school programs to meet their school's needs.
- Organize 8th graders who wish to continue debating. Help students stay in touch with each other once they get to the high school. This will allow them to argue for a debate team once they get to the high school.
- Put on a demonstration for the high school. The MSPDP will help you organize to demonstrate debate at the high school. This can help build a constituency for debate among existing high school students.
- Use the CCDO as a resource. We have many years of experience lobbying school and district administrators for their support of debate. We want to support you, your parents, and your students in their debate endeavors.

Q: How do I learn to run a tournament?

A: Read the manual for MSPDP Tab, our official tabulation software. It is available at www.middleschooldebate.com/tabulation. You can also download the software on that site and practice with it. The software was designed for teachers with no specific experience who wish to learn how a debate tournament works and how they might administer a tournament. You should also download and read the MSPDP Tournament Director's Manual, available on the website.

Q: We seem to be having a hard time winning debates on the proposition side. What are some ways our students can win more when they are defending the proposition?

A: Since most motions for debate ask the proposition to defend a change from the present system ("Human cloning should be permitted in the United States," "The United States should invade Iraq," and so forth), it is sometimes harder to win on the proposition than it is on the opposition. This makes sense – after all, it is often harder to build something than to tear it down – particularly for middle school students. A few tips may help you better prepare your students for their debates on the proposition side.

First, to win debates on the proposition, you need to make a specific case for your side of the motion. Usually this means you need to show that there is a problem, propose a solution, and show that the solution will fix the problem. Many of your students are making more general arguments for the motion, which is a good start but can be productively refined. You may want to teach them to propose a plan when the motion warrants such a thing. A plan is a specific proposal for change.

Consider that some of the topics we use are pretty broad. Even a topic like "Human cloning should be permitted in the United States" is broader than it may seem at first – permitted by whom? For what purposes? As some of your students found out at Frisbie, there is even substantial debate about what we mean when we say "human cloning." Does this mean cloning whole humans? How about parts of humans? How about individual cells?

In addition, there are dozens (or perhaps thousands or more, if you consider all of the possible permutations) of arguments for human cloning. The proposition team cannot make all of these arguments in their allotted 13 minutes of speaking time, much less defend them against opposition attacks.

All of this means that the proposition team should have a specific interpretation of the motion for debate. The proposition team cannot fairly be expected to defend all possible examples of policies on human cloning in the United States and all of the possible arguments for these policies in their 13 minutes unless (and maybe even if) they receive training as auctioneers.

Consider what happens in a criminal trial. If someone is on trial for murder, there are many different ways to go about prosecuting that individual. A clever lawyer will select from among those options the best case that has the best evidentiary support. They will not offer all of the theories that prove why that person is a murderer. They will select a specific case and make it. Selecting multiple cases and presenting them at once may undermine the possibility of a conviction because it gives the defense more grounds to argue and create doubt. In other words, she (the hypothetical prosecutor) will narrow the arguments to those that best support a conviction.

So what does this look like in practice? You may want to use it as an outlining lesson, where I is where you show there's a problem, II is where you propose the solution, and III is where you show that the solution is a good thing. This outline might look something like this:

I. Existing bans on human cloning are bad because they prevent the use of human cloning to save millions of lives. Human cloning is necessary to produce organs for transplantatation. Millions of people die in the U.S. every year because there are not enough organs available to transplant. This is a senseless waste of life.

II. Because of these problems, human cloning should be permitted in the United States. Specifically, the National Institutes of Health should establish standards for the production of organs for transplant.

III. If the U.S. lifts the ban on cloning, it would be able to regulate human cloning and save millions of lives every year. Also, if the government regulates cloning, this will be better than letting cloning occur on the black market or in unsafe environments.

That's a brief outline for a case. Of course, you would need more than that. You would need evidence, examples, and ideas. But you get the gist of it – it's a specific case for the motion for debate.

You could make another, similar case for this motion – a case for allowing human cloning to facilitate stem cell research. The case could claim that allowing this research would save millions of lives because it would cure Alzheimer's disease.

Why should the proposition team make a specific case for the motion? One reason is so they do not have to defend all possible cases that could be made for the motion, as I've already said. There are hundreds of possible cases for any topic. Some are bad, or counterproductive, or nonsensical, or just plain foolish. The proposition should not have to defend all of these cases. They should be able to pick. Also, picking and developing a specific case helps to build argument skills. One skill a student should learn is to select from the possible interpretations one that would make the best case. Students, in other words, should learn how to pick good arguments.

What makes a good case? A good case utilizes the best evidence and examples. It tries to establish that there is a consensus for agreeing with the motion. It proposes a debatable plan and argues that the judge should agree that the proposal is a good idea. The specific case is a proof of the motion for debate. It is not the proof, and it may or not be the best proof, but it tries to prove the motion for debate.

Now, what if the motion does not call for a change in policy? Take two of the topics from this semester: "Television is a bad influence," and "Peer pressure is more beneficial than harmful." These topics are also best

proven by a specific case, just one that does not feature a proposal. Should your teams prepare to deliver all possible arguments for the benefits of peer pressure? Of course not. They should pick some and debate them.

Multiple examples and the consensus of opinion make for a good case. On the opposition, one example can sometimes be enough to win a debate. On the proposition, you will win more debates if you present a consensus of evidence and examples.

Q: Does this mean that we will be cheated of our tirelessly researched arguments for the opposition?

A: No. It just means that students will have to engage in argument anticipation, another important debate skill. Argument anticipation is just what it seems like: the ability to anticipate the arguments that may be made by the other side. Development of this skill will help your students win more debates. It's like chess – if you think a few moves ahead, you can better plan your opening strategy.

Some arguments might apply to a variety of cases on a given topic. For example, the opposition might argue that human cloning would allow creation of a "slave army" (a popular argument at the 2002 Frisbie tournament, judging from my reading of the ballots) But, the proposition could say, stem cell research would not lead to a "slave army" because it would be regulated. Of course, if the opposition team were really serious about linking their "slave army" argument to the proposition team's plan, they might say that sure, this might sound like a good idea, but regulations would be easily circumvented to allow "slave armies" to be created. Oho, the proposition team might say, but if that's the case, then the existing ban would be circumvented anyway, so this "slave army" argument isn't a reason to reject our case, as it could happen with or without the plan. And then we'd be having a debate.

Sound tricky? Not especially. What having a specific case does is ensure that there will be "clash" in the debate. Some of you have heard me be somewhat evangelical on the issue of clash. Clash is what makes debates good. Without clash, we have dueling oratories and no way to decide debates since arguments don't relate to each other. This is why one of the first things we teach debaters is how to engage in refutation. Opposition arguments should relate to the specific case for the motion that the proposition makes. (Some of you may say- "But wait a minute, we prepared to debate human cloning, not stem cell research." Good comment. I'll answer that one next.)

The concept of a "link" is one you may want to teach your students. As proposition teams begin to present specific proposals or plans, opposition teams will need to develop their causal reasoning skills to come up with more sophisticated arguments to beat these proposals. The "slave army" example shows that often, opposition teams are trying to show that the proposition team's plan causes something bad to happen. That consequence is said to link to the proposal in a causal way.

Q: So, wait a minute. Does proposition "defines" the parameters?

For example, if the prop says weapons of mass destruction are guns and knives, the opp can't talk about chemical weapons, etc. or if the prop says cloning only applies to organs the opp can't discuss cloning humans?
A: Well, yes and no. The proposition team interprets the motion for debate. As I've already argued, the proposition team cannot be fairly expected to defend all possible cases that could be made for the motion. So they interpret the motion, providing a case for debate. The opposition must clash with this case. They can do so with direct refutation – that is, refuting directly the claims made in the proposition's case. They may also provide indirect refutation, by bringing up issues that were not discussed in the propositions case but which are nevertheless relevant to the disposition of the debate.

For example, in the previous FAQ, we walked through the first bit of a school uniforms debate. In that debate, the opposition brought up the argument that school uniforms will hurt freedom of expression. This issue was not discussed by the proposition team, but the opposition nevertheless brings it up as an example of a problem created by adopting school uniforms. This argument is an example of indirect refutation of the case. The "slave army" debate above is another example. The proposition team tries to limit the debate to discussing organs, but the opposition team wants to convince the judge that cloning will eventually get out of hand no matter how many regulations you try to impose. So it's not a matter of what the opp can and cannot discuss. Instead, it's a matter of how well the opposition has anticipated possible arguments that could be made for the topic. It is also a matter of how well the opposition can make their "generic" arguments against the topic apply directly to the proposition's case.

MAY 2006

Middle School Public Debate Program

Results, 2005-2006 Family Survey

FAMILY MEMBERS REPORT ON THE MIDDLE SCHOOL PUBLIC DEBATE PROGRAM

The Middle School Public Debate Program (MSPDP) encourages co-curricular and extra-curricular debating in the middle grades, using standards-aligned materials developed specifically for middle school students. It is the largest initiative of its kind in the world, serving thousands of students in class and competition each year.

Throughout the 2005-2006 school year, the Middle School Public Debate Program conducted a survey of parents and family members of middle school debaters in our program. With the end of the debate season, we are pleased to share the results of this survey. For more information about the MSPDP, or to read more about our parent survey, please visit our website: www.middleschooldebate.com.

DEBATE INCREASES VOLUNTEERISM AND IMPROVES ATTITUDES TOWARD SCHOOLS

Perhaps the most important finding from the survey was that **the debate program increases family volunteering at school and improves family attitudes toward their student's school. 77%** of respondents volunteer to support their student's debate team. Of those that volunteer, **58%** said they did not volunteer before their child joined the debate team. **83%** reported debate has improved their attitude towards their child's school.

DEBATE IS BENEFICIAL

Family members overwhelmingly perceive the benefits of debate participation. Here are some of the results from this portion of the survey:

- **92%** agree that their student has become more confident
- **93%** agree that their student is more interested in learning about the world and current events
- **94%** agree that their student reads the newspaper more often
- **94%** agreed that their student is more likely to see both sides of an issue
- 9**4%** agree that their student forms more thoughtful opinions
- **51%** agree that their student has improved grades in school
- **49%** agree that their student now reads more in general
- **30%** agreed that their student had fewer discipline problems at home and in school
- **56%** agree that their student has made friends from other schools

WHAT PARENTS ARE SAYING

"The rigor and knowledge demanded of students is amazing. Their abilities to understand these topics never cease to amaze me. I have learned so much and I have never enjoyed an extra-curricular activity more."

"Debate has helped my child gain awareness of a bigger world than her own and has challenged her to see that her opinions about the world are not the only valid opinions. This program has been a lot of fun and has challenged my child to grow in ways that typical middle school students rarely begin to."

"The debate program has been very valuable for my son. He has improved so much in his studies just by being on the debate team. He tries harder to keep his grades up. He is also much more confident and mature."

"Great program. It demonstrates that academics are cool."

WHAT PARENTS ARE SAYING

"It is an amazing program. It's nice to watch students work as a team to learn about current issues, as well as develop new friendships. They actually have fun and enjoy learning."

"This program has been very valuable to my child. He has become a more independent thinker, he is more well-spoken, and it has boosted his self-esteem. It is very rewarding to be able to discuss interesting topics with him."

"To see these kids develop the confidence and poise that will prove beneficial throughout their lives is inspiring."

"This is great. It's nice to watch students work as a team to learn about current issues and develop new friendships. They actually have fun and enjoy learning."

"It's a fabulous learning experience, and a great way to learn how to think on your feet."

"The debate team experience has provided my son with more self-confidence and he has gained knowledge in world events and topical subjects. This has been a fabulous experience for our family."

STUDENTS WORK HARD TO PREPARE FOR DEBATING

Family members reported that students work very hard to prepare to debate. On average, **students devote 10-12 hours a week during the debate season preparing to debate. This is the equivalent of attending an extra day of school every week for an entire year.** Based on parent reports, students primarily prepare by researching (1-2 hours/week), discussing topics with parents and family (2-3 hours/week), participating in team meetings and practices (2-3 hours/week), going to the library (1 hour/week), reviewing their notes (1-2 hours/week), and talking to teachers at their school and other professionals about debate topics (1-2 hours/week).

THE PROGRAM IS WELL DESIGNED AND ADMINISTERED

Respondents were asked about different aspects of the program's administration and design. **98%** said that the tournament and administrative staff are helpful and considerate. Family members thought that most debate topics were challenging (**98%**), and did not think that debate topics were too hard (**85%**). **99%** think that debates are exciting, and **97%** said that debates are interesting to watch. Family members think that debate judges do a good job: **94%** think that judges try to be fair, and **89%** think that judges make good decisions. On the issue of scheduling, **95%** said that tournament schedules were appropriate.

JUDGE CERTIFICATION BUILDS STUDENT-FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

The MSPDP is the only debate program at *any level* in the United States that requires judge training and certification. This training improves the quality and consistency of judging. In addition, it helps family members to work constructively with their students on academic projects. Although only **21%** of respondents were certified to judge, **91%** of those certified said their training as judges has helped them work with their student in preparation for debating.

DEBATE PARTICIPATION IS INEXPENSIVE FOR FAMILIES

The MSPDP relies on partnerships with schools to make debate participation feasible and relatively inexpensive. Family members were asked to estimate their reported out-of-pocket costs for participating in debate. Most were spending less than $50 for a year (**68%**) of debate, for an average of four full day debate tournaments, with a minimum of four debates per tournament per year.

Frequently Asked Questions for Parents

Q: Why should my child debate?
Q: What if there's no debate team at my child's school?
Q: How can I learn the rules for debate?
Q: When will tournaments be held?
Q: Where will tournaments be?
Q: How long will tournaments last?
Q: Will there be lunch at the tournament?
Q: How much will this cost?
Q: How can I help my child succeed in debate?
Q: What should my child wear to tournaments?
Q: What will the students debate about?
Q: Can I watch my child debate?
Q: Can I help my child at the tournament?
Q: Can I bring other members of the family to tournaments?
Q: Can I help at tournaments?
Q: What should I do if I disagree with the result of a debate?
Q: Will my child win an award?
Q: What if my child isn't successful?
Q: Can my child debate in high school?
Q: Will this help my child get into college?

Q: Why should my child debate?

A: Debate helps students develop speaking, thinking, and listening skills. Students who debate become more engaged in the world around them and develop sophisticated knowledge about a wide range of current events and complex ideas. Debate in the middle grades prepares students for success in high school, college, and beyond, while providing immediate benefits for academic success. Debate is valuable for gifted students and so-called "at-risk" students alike, helping students of all ages take active responsibility for their own learning in a challenging and dynamic atmosphere.

Q: What if there's no debate team at my child's school?

A: It is easy to start a debate team at your child's school. All that is needed is an interested teacher, a supportive principal, and materials available for free from the Middle School Public Debate Program. For assistance in starting a new program at your child's school, please contact MSPDP Program Director Kate Shuster at 909-607-9383, or by e-mail at kate.shuster@claremontmckenna.edu.

Q: How can I learn the rules for debate?

A: The complete, official MSPDP rules can be found in this packet or on our website, www.middleschooldebate.com.

Q: When will tournaments be held?

A: Different leagues have different tournament schedules. Most leagues have monthly tournaments from November until May. Tournaments are usually held on a Saturday, and last from 9 AM until 4 or 5 PM. Some leagues have tournaments on other days to accommodate religious conflicts. Ask your child's coach or a league administrator for a copy of the year's schedule.

Q: Where will tournaments be?

A: Tournaments are generally held at league middle schools, although they may also be held at high schools, colleges, or universities. A league schedules its tournaments up to a year in advance. Every league has a different schedule, so it is best to ask child's coach or a league administrator for a copy of the year's schedule.

Q: How long will tournaments last?

A: Tournaments are generally all-day affairs, although some events might be after-school competitions. A typical Saturday competition will usually run from 9 until 4:30 in the afternoon, and feature 5 debates, lunch, and an awards ceremony. If students sign up for a competition, they should stay for the entire competition. They should not leave half-way through.

Q: Will there be lunch at the tournament?

A: Most tournaments sell inexpensive lunch items (and sometimes breakfast items). The proceeds from these sales usually benefit that school's debate team, allowing their students to travel to tournaments. Debaters attending the tournament may buy their lunch (always less than $5.00) or bring lunch, if they wish. Students may also buy snack food during the day, or bring their own snacks.

Q: How much will this cost?

A: Not very much. That said, every school has a different fee structure. The Middle School Public Debate Program itself is designed to be quite inexpensive. Generally, schools pay dues to their league of only $75 for new schools and $200 for returning schools. These dues cover trophy costs for tournaments. Every school that pays dues is eligible to attend every league tournament with as many as 30 students per tournament, space permitting. Schools must also find ways to finance transportation to tournaments and pay for other club expenses, such as team shirts. Every school has a different way of paying for these participation expenses. You should ask your child's coach if there will be any costs associated with participation.

Q: How can I help my child succeed in debate?

A: Many suggestions for helping your child succeed in debate can be found in this packet. For specific suggestions related to your school's practices and events, consult your child's coach.

Q: What should my child wear to tournaments?

A: Students should wear whatever they are most comfortable in. Most students wear a club uniform (polo shirt or T-shirt) or wear "dressy casual" clothes. For most students, tournaments are authorized field trips. This means that students need to follow the dress codes of your school district. Students should be neat, but are not required to wear suits or other dress clothes.

Q: What will the students debate about?

A: Topics for competitions are chosen by teachers and students. Teachers and students submit topic suggestions to the league president(s) a month before a competition is to be held. The league president(s) then select a group of diverse

topics and release topics to the league's teachers. Topics range from easy to difficult, and all require research and preparation. To see a list of recent topics, click **here**.

Q: Can I watch my child debate?

A: Yes! Many dozens of parents regularly attend middle school debate tournaments, and enjoy watching their children deliver brilliant performances in challenging debates. You are welcome to attend tournaments and watch debates. Be sure to ask your child whether it is okay to watch them – some children are made very nervous by having parents watch, while others say they perform better when their parents watch!

Q: Can I help my child at the tournament?

A: Almost certainly. Check with your child's coach to see how you can help, if at all, at the tournament. Make sure you work *with* the coach to make the tournament a big success.

Q: Can I bring other members of the family to tournaments?

A: Yes, you may bring other members of the family to tournaments. Many students invite grandparents and even friends to tournaments to watch debates and participate as audience members. The competition is a fun event, and relatives are often very impressed by the cleverness and talent exhibited by student debaters. As a caution, young children should be old enough to listen quietly to debates, or should not be taken into the rooms where debates will happen.

Q: Can I help at tournaments?

A: There are many ways that parents can help at tournaments. One big way you can help is by learning to judge debates. Even if you never serve as a judge at a tournament, you should consider learning to judge or going through your league's judge certification training program. If you learn the skills associated with judging debates, you can help your student debater better understand the kinds of decisions judges make and how to better communicate with judges. To learn more about judging and judge training, read the information about judging in this packet or on our website, in the "resources" section.

Q: What should I do if I disagree with the result of a debate?

A: Occasionally, parents can be frustrated with judges' decisions in debates they observe, until they learn to judge and find out that the process is quite difficult. Judging is more of an art than a science. Whatever you do, do not argue with judges at tournaments. As an audience member, your role is to listen quietly. It is normal to disagree with a judge's decision, particularly in a debate that your child loses! However, arguing with the judge will not make things better and will not help your child learn how to communicate with others. One challenge of debating is learning to communicate with different kinds of people in different situations. Not all judges see things the same way. In fact, two judges can watch the same debate and make entirely different decision. If you feel that you need to talk to someone to learn more about a judge's decision or to voice a concern, talk to your child's coach.

Q: Will my child win an award?

A: Yes. All participants receive certificates from Claremont McKenna College commending them for their participation at the event. Public speaking and debating requires extraordinary courage, and the MSPDP program recognizes all students for participating in a competition. Beyond the participation awards, it is not certain if your child will receive additional awards. At tournaments, three kinds of awards are given out: awards for individual excellence, called "speaker awards," awards for performance as a team, and awards for performance as a school. Speaker awards are given based on total speaker points given to students during the tournament (For more on speaker points, please see the "Judges" page). Team awards are given based on total wins as a team. Ties are broken based on cumulative team speaker points. School awards are given for overall performance as a school and average performance as a school.

Q: What if my child isn't successful?

A: All children are successful. The program is designed to teach public speaking and argumentation skills. Public speaking itself is an act of courage, and students are successful if they acquire skills, not if they get awards. Even the most brilliant children have off weekends. Your child may come home from a tournament and be sad because she did

not do as well as she had hoped, or because she did not win a trophy. It is normal for your child to be sad when this happens. A tournament is an exhausting, intense, and demanding event. Students have a lot of fun at a tournament, but also put a lot of work into preparation and practice. If students are unhappy at the results of a tournament, this sadness is no different than what they might experience as a result of not winning other competitions in school or athletics.

Q: Can my child debate in high school?

A: Yes. If your child's high school already has a speech and debate program, this will be as simple as signing up for that club. If your child's high school does not yet have a speech and debate program, Claremont Colleges Debate Outreach staff will be happy to help you start a new program. If there is not a program at your high school, there are some things your team can do to help this process along.

✓ Demonstrating that there are at least 3 schools interested in participating in the league, with teacher sponsors at each school.

✓ Agreeing to develop a plan for judge training and certification.

✓ Committing to follow MSPDP rules in competitions, including requiring judge certification and disclosure of decisions.

✓ Involving teachers in topic selection.

- **Parent involvement.** Never underestimate the power of parents. Parents who wish to see a debate team at your high school can contact Kate Shuster at the MSPDP office (909-607-9383) for information about how to lobby the school. They can also contact the principal directly to express their concerns, organize letter-writing campaigns with other parents, and otherwise work to build a constituency for debate at the high school.

- **Identify a teacher.** If you or someone you know knows a teacher at the high school who might be interested in teaching debate, you may refer that person to Kate (or vice-versa), so that she or he can get more information about coaching debate at the high school level. There is often an existing high school league that schools can easily join at a relatively low cost. The MSPDP will help interested schools and teachers build high school programs to meet their school's needs.

- **Organize 8th graders** who wish to continue debating. Help students stay in touch with each other once they get to the high school. This will allow them to argue for a debate team once they get to the high school.

Q: Will this help my child get into college?

A: Maybe. The best thing your child can do to get into a good school is to take challenging classes and get good grades in them. Extracurricular activities matter. Participation in debate shows admissions officers that you are serious about developing the kinds of research, communication, and motivation skills you will need to succeed in college.

Support Your Student Debater: Advice for Parents

Parents can really help students who are learning to debate by facilitating research, discussion, and practice at home. This page contains suggestions to help you assist your child in learning the art of debate. Basically, you can help your child most by encouraging her to read and learn more about the world and about current events. You can help her learn to discuss and debate issues by encouraging conversation on current events as part of family life. Remember that your child will not be able to pick which side she will represent in any given debate. This means that she will need practice arguing persuasively for both sides of many issues.

Be careful to learn about how your child is expected to debate so your help is complementary to the teaching provided by your child's coach. If you are interested in coaching your child or other children at tournaments, make sure you speak to your child's coach first to make sure any help you provide doesn't interfere with plans the coach has for the tournament. Work closely with your child's coach to make sure all students are getting as much help as they can to succeed. And remember that your child is not debating on her or his own -- your child is on a team, and so all students must work together to succeed.

If you are interested in volunteering to help your child or to help your child's debate team, consult your child's coach to see what you can do to help.

Ideas for At-Home Practice

- **Keep Up With the Upcoming Debate Topics**.
  Every month during the competitive season, your child will receive the topics for next month's tournament. Ask your child or her coach for a copy of the topics, and keep them posted on the refrigerator or another public place in your house. This way, you can be aware of the upcoming topics and they can be a subject for conversation in the house.
- **Do Your Own Research.**
  When you can find the time, write down a few arguments or ideas about each topic. You might even read an article or two about the issues for debate, so you will be able to give ideas to your child or ask her about different aspects of each topic. This doesn't mean you should do exhaustive research, but even a little thinking about the issues will help your child get the benefit of your ideas and experience.
- **Subscribe to a Daily Newspaper.**
  One of the best ways you can help your student debater is to subscribe to a daily newspaper and read it with your child. Access to a newspaper will help your child keep up on current events and understand different perspectives on those events.
- **Watch the News Together.**
  If you devote a half hour to watch a news program with your child, you will be able to discuss the events in the news with a common context. Ask your child what she thought about the stories and the arguments being made on both sides of controversial issues.
- **Dinnertime Conversation.**
  Having conversations with your debater about current events will help your debater develop a firm understanding of the topic. Challenging, even interrupting, your debater with arguments from the opposite side will keep your debater on their toes.
- **Practice.**
  The only way to improve as a debater is to practice. There are two five-minute speeches in a debate, concluded with one three-minute speech. Having your debater practice in front of a small audience will be helpful for their development. Encourage your child to deliver practice speeches for you or other members of the family. Be supportive of their growth and practice – it can be very intimidating to speak in public, particularly in front of family members.

- **Facilitate Their Research.**
  There is also a lot of research required for debating. Helping your child have access to the Internet can be very helpful. A trip to the local library or watching programs such as "60 Minutes" will assist as well.
- **Watch "Prime Minister's Questions."**
  This program is broadcast weekly on C-Span. It is the best example of debating on television. Every week, for an hour, British Prime Minister Tony Blair answers questions from members of the House of Commons. It is a funny and interesting program with lots of great examples of excellent debating and speaking. Currently, the program is on C-Span every Sunday at 9 PM Eastern Time (6 PM Pacific Time). To watch past programs or to check the television schedule, go to www.c-span.org.
- **Host a Debate Work Session**
  Many students wish to work with members of their team after school or in the evenings. You can help students by inviting your child's partners over for a "work session" at your house so they can continue practicing and preparing for debate.

Go To Tournaments

If you can spare even part of a Saturday, consider going to a debate tournament to observe debates and help your school's debate team. Even if your child says they are made nervous if you watch them debate, they still may appreciate it if you make the effort to attend. Some debaters may even find that they like having you as an audience – often, parents are much more nervous than their children! If you do go to tournaments, check with your child's coach to see how you can help, if at all, at the tournament. Make sure you work *with* the coach to make the tournament a big success.

Learn to Judge

Even if you never serve as a judge at a tournament, you should consider learning to judge or going through your league's judge certification training program. If you learn the skills associated with judging debates, you can help your student debater better understand the kinds of decisions judges make and how to better communicate with judges. Many parents are frustrated with judges' decisions in debates they observe, until they learn to judge and find out that the process is quite difficult. Judging is more of an art than a science.

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If you're interested in having students participate in competitive debate, but you're not sure you have the time or ability to create a debate league, you might consider having an intramural debate tournament. In this article, parent Karen Sandler shares her experience organizing a tournament at her child's Maryland middle school.

Intramural Insanity

By Karen Sandler

photos by Nora Sandler

"Mom, I wish there was a debate club after school," my daughter said to me some time just prior to entering seventh grade last year. Our middle school, T.W. Pyle, in Bethesda, Maryland, has an amazing after school activities program that was already in place. Kids can sign up for an array of activities from juggling and chess to horseback riding and robotics, to name just a few. Some of these are classes offered by outside vendors for a fee. Some might be run by a teacher who happens to have an outside interest while still others are run by parents, like me. Living in suburban Washington among more lawyers per square mile than just about anyplace else on the planet, a debate club in our school seemed like a no-brainer. The only problem is that I'm neither a lawyer nor a former debater.

I'd received emails over our network soliciting volunteers with ideas for clubs, so I figured I'd help get the ball rolling, find an enthusiastic teacher sponsor and then gracefully melt into the background. I volunteered. No enthusiastic teacher sponsor materialized, and I suddenly found myself "coaching" debate. The first day, nearly 50 kids showed up in a room designed for 25. It was pure bedlam. By the end of that first year I was down to about seven great kids who just loved to go to the library, research topics and argue about them. On any given week, maybe five would show up.

The PTA sponsors felt that debate was a great success, but I felt as though we had simply floundered around all year. I had been searching for other schools to compete with and was amazed that in our county (Montgomery), one of the wealthiest and most academically successful in the country, there were no other middle school debate clubs to be found.

Early on this year I got a call from another parent at our "rival" school down the road. They wanted to model the program and beef up their after school activities overall. She and I began meeting and had similar goals. We wanted to debate each other. Unfortunately, by February, her club was falling apart and she was down to two students and decided the work required was not worth it. I seemed to be hovering between 15 to 10 kids on any given week out of about 20. Nonetheless, since the promised debate with our rival school wasn't going to happen, I had to do something to focus these kids on debate.

I had been grappling with format since the very beginning. I considered trying Student Congress but had been unsuccessful at recruiting kids from our high school debate team to help. Occasionally I would go back to the internet and do searches on middle school debate to see if I could find any clues.

When I stumbled onto www.middleschooldebate.com earlier this year, I thought I had entered Valhalla. At last I had found the answer to all of my needs. And best of all, Kate Shuster led me to a local resource in Colin Touhey and Carlos Varelas at the DC Urban Debate League, who actually came to one of our meetings and introduced the kids to the Middle School Public Debate format. They also agreed to judge our first intramural tournament. Since we had no other school to debate, we'd just have to debate each other.

So many issues began to spring up that I hadn't anticipated. How should teams be formed? Let the kids decide or assign them? Just like sports, there always seem to be one or two kids who the others don't want to pick for their team or are too shy to assert their preference. Also, on any given week I'd have an odd number of kids, so forming teams was difficult. It had been my philosophy going into this endeavor that it was the kids' club and they should make as many of the decisions as possible. I've learned that for middle-schoolers that doesn't always work. I narrowed the topics down to five, and finally landed on two. Colin and Carlos were extremely helpful in dealing with some of these things, even down to the day of the tournament.

To prepare, the group went to the school's computer lab to do research for a couple of weekly sessions. The last week before the debate we tried some flowing exercises, in part to help the kids determine the speaking order for their teams. Those most averse to note taking might go first; those who were best might do rebuttal so they could sum up. While not necessarily the best way to decide, finding simpler criteria to resolve some disputes helped get us over that hump. I had the kids debate each other in their teams, alternating sides.

When the big day arrived, I expected 17 kids. Sixteen actually ended up debating, and to my surprise, a few of my less consistent debaters showed up, although they couldn't debate since they hadn't prepared or couldn't stay to the end. Our club usually meets from 2:45 to 4:00 in the afternoon. I sent out emails and permission slips so that the kids could stay until 5:30, and then we planned to go to a nearby pizza restaurant to celebrate our first ever tournament. I solicited parents to help drive us there and also hoped some would come and watch. I also emailed administration and faculty to encourage them to come.

Since our team numbers were odd, my biggest concern was giving every one a chance to debate at least once and then figuring out which kids would be able to debate twice. Colin and Carlos helped me solve this one by adding one "alternate" to each of four teams, so that there were four to a team. This way more kids got to debate twice, while only four kids got to go only once. As it turned out, the alternates were some of our strongest – and most mature – debaters who were most flexible about the last minute change in plans. I'll be sure they all get to debate twice next time.

The kids really got into the competitive spirit of the debates and it became very clear what we need to work on. A few need extra help with speaking skills, but mostly we need to focus on the ARE, especially connecting the reasons for the assertions with relevant evidence. I think the kids are much more aware now of the value of flowing and we'll also emphasize that.

In the end, the principal and an assistant principal showed up. Kids from the school newspaper arrived trying to interview me while I was frantically moving chairs around, and a good number of parents showed up. I think all of the debaters were pleased and proud of their performance, as they should be. Colin and Carlos gave great feedback and the kids really took notice. My goal is to have events every month to six weeks. Hopefully the word around school now will be that debate is way cool!

Next Step: Forming A League

Leagues are critical for the expanded opportunities available to MSPDP teachers, students, and parents. Once schools come together to form a league, students can participate in regular competitions for a modest cost and accelerate their learning as well as their debating skills.

Students love competitions. They are intensely academic events where all students can practice and develop their abilities in a constructive and supportive learning environment. Tournaments are also productive social environments -- students meet and talk about important issues of the day with other students from all over their city, county, or area. The fun and active learning environment of a tournament gives students extra incentives to prepare, practice, and work hard at debating. All of this increases the benefits that students get out of debate.

Although it is possible to have a debate tournament featuring only students from one school (and many, many schools have school championships every year), tournaments are made even better if they involve multiple schools. This is where the league comes in.

A debate league is a collective organization of schools that come together to facilitate a schedule of debate competitions during the school year. Most middle school leagues have 5 or 6 Saturday competitions during a school year. The competitive season might start in November and end in April, with one competition held each month at a league school. Schools pay modest dues into a league treasury so that the league can buy trophies for tournaments. In exchange, schools get to bring contingents to league tournaments at no further cost (except, perhaps, transportation costs).

A League of Your Own

If you want to arrange to have competitions with other local schools, you should consider forming a league. A league is composed of a group of schools that share resources to have tournaments during the school year. The primary function of the league is to organize tournaments. To accomplish this, the league collects modest dues from its members. Most leagues have new schools pay $75 for their first year, and $200 for every year after that. The league treasurer sends out dues invoices and collects dues to deposit in the league's bank account. These dues are used to pay for trophies awarded at league competitions.

The league elects officers. These officers are normally teachers who also serve as debate coaches. The league president is in charge of the organization of the league, and is in charge of recruiting and helping new schools to participate in the league. The league president is also in charge of soliciting and setting topics for upcoming tournaments. A month before a tournament, she or he may send out a "call for topics" to league coaches. Coaches and students can then send in their topic suggestions. The president works to assemble a balanced and interesting set of topics for the upcoming tournament, and sends them out to league schools a month to two weeks before the tournament.

The league's secretary is in charge of talking notes during coaches' meetings, which normally occur during tournament competitions. She or he submits these minutes to all members, creating an official record for the league.

The league treasurer is in charge of collecting dues and paying trophy bills for the league. The league may decide whose job it is to order the trophies for competitions, or this responsibility may fall to the treasurer.

Once a league has formed for the purpose of having debate competitions, it should set a dues structure and a tournament schedule. Normally, league schools bid to host tournaments during the year. Since tournaments can be lucra-

tive for the host school due to concession sales, leagues may choose to rotate host schools on a yearly basis to make sure all interested schools have an opportunity to host a tournament.

If you are interested in forming a MSPDP league, contact MSPDP Director Kate Shuster at kate.shuster@claremontmckenna.edu or at 909-607-9383. She can help you with the league formation process and provide additional training and logistical support for your new league.

You will be asked to complete a **League Charter Application and Agreement** to demonstrate that you have a plan for your new league and that you agree to follow the MSPDP rules for league formation. This will include:

Next Step: Hosting a Debate Tournament

By Cynthia Torres-Nusse and Don Gordon, Walton Middle School, Compton Unified School District

Hosting a debate tournament at your school site provides a wonderful opportunity to share your debate team's activities with the school stakeholders; administration, faculty, staff, parents, and community, in an actual competition. To make sure the experience is a positive one for all, it is important to start planning the event as soon as a date is chosen and approved by your administration. Review with your tournament director what are league costs and responsibilities.

BRAINSTORMING

Sit down with paper and pencil and begin to list everything you've seen at successful and unsuccessful events. Don't worry about keeping them in any order. Just jot them down on paper while you have the ideas. Spend at least 20 to 30 minutes brainstorming what you liked at tournaments or events you've attended and what you didn't think was successfully done. You're not judging any one. You're recalling pluses and minuses you experienced.

CATEGORIES

Once you've brainstormed your initial list. Review the items on your list for common elements, eg. Food, Volunteers, etc. Sort related elements together under topic headings. Look at the items in each category and determine what needs to be done in that area.

VOLUNTEERS

Look for volunteers to help you on and off your school site; school site teachers and students, parents, friends, and community members. Use your categorized list to match up volunteers by interests and ability. Don't hesitate to ask early so people can schedule their calendars accordingly. Plan on how and where you will need your volunteers. Schedule group training sessions for those individuals who've never worked a tournament and will be heavily involved. Make sure to delegate responsibilities to persons who will handle the organization tasks of their area but still remain in close contact with you. Offer community service opportunities for students.

FOOD

Food is one of the most important items for a successful tournament. Review your options as you decide your menu with your committee. What works best for your school site? Where will it be prepared? Who will prepare, serve, and clean-up the meals? Breakfast isn't mandatory, but it helps set the tone for the day and is welcome by the visiting teams who might travel a distance to attend. Make sure you plan an area just for the judges and adults to eat and gather during the tournament.

JANITORIAL AND ROOM PREPARATION

Discuss the tournament's needs with your school site administration to make sure the site is prepared to receive guests throughout the school. Make sure all faculty and staff are kept informed of the upcoming tournament. Talk to each teacher to address his/her concerns about using the classrooms for debate. Many teachers have no idea what happens during a debate and how the classroom environment impacts the enjoyment of the participants and spectators.

PUBLICITY

The more people know about your event, the more successful it will be for your school. Find out what your school district requirements are for hosting an event on campus. Open the tournament up to anyone who wishes to attend. Work with your school site administration on a VIP list for your community. Use the tournament as an opportunity to educate and recruit.

MISCELLANEOUS

All good teachers borrow from each other. Don't hesitate to use what others have created or done. Have fun and enjoy the day. Remember the most important item is your Debate team.

Here's an example of a checklist that we used to communicate with our committees, staff, and volunteers.

Walton Wildcat Interleague Tournament Checklist – Update

Tournament Date: January 27, 2007 Location: Walton Middle School
Time: 6AM-6PM Number of Participants: Estimated 150 – 200 students
Tournament needs:

- Cafeteria, use as main meeting area for teams as well as lunch facilities
- Cafeteria access and banner for food prices
- Coaches and judges room, staff dining area off main cafeteria
- Power supply in cafeteria – for tournament organizers'computers, etc.
- Restroom facilities for students, parents, judges, and coaches (incl. cafeteria facilities)
- Campus maps with room clearly marked
  M. Pearson will modify current campus map for visitors
- Security, notify Compton Sheriff's department and CUSD school police
- Copier access
- Paper – need five different colors, approx. 3 reams ea.
  See Ms. Farrell for paper per Ms. Pearson
- Classroom access (23 available)
  Approved by Mr. Lyles
- Student workers (Community Service) and Student Worker Coordinator
- Training session for student timers (Led by Debate advisors)
  Student workers and training proceeding under Ms. Torres-Nusse & Mr. Gordon
- Banners – one for each competing school (Mr. Freeman's Art classes)
  Mr. Freeman in process of preparing misc. banners, will receive names of participating schools by Wed. 1/24/07
- Parking for cars and buses
- District representative – Invite Clusters, Superintendent, School Board, etc.
- City representative – City mayor
- School marquee – Welcome participants
- Timers and/or stop watches (10) for judges (not Radio Shack brand)
- Food – donated to prepare and sell on site to cover tournament costs (Mexican food sells well, plate with enchilada, beans, rice, drink $6), Complementary breakfast juice, milk, water, and doughnuts
  Lunch menu in progress under guidance of Ms. Bazan. Mr. Nahrwold will supervise on Saturday 1/27/07
- Invitation – to tournament for participants and District/City representatives
- Principal and/or Assistant Principal on site to welcome participants
- Recycle – set up to use for $

Prop. Rebuttal	
2nd Opp/Opp Rebuttal	
2nd Proposition	
1st Opposition	
1st Proposition	