

# Why Debate?

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## **Analytic Ability**

The ability to investigate complex problems and propose workable solutions is a vital skill. Debate requires students to think about multiple perspectives in preparation for some of today's most demanding academic and business environments.

## **Written Skills**

When assessing a wide range of information and thoughtfully consolidating work for advanced papers and research projects, experienced debaters routinely proceed with ease over their academic counterparts. Debaters learn to prepare eloquent, concise, and rigorously tested presentations.

## **Academic Performance**

In addition to laying the groundwork for success at tournaments, debate provides students a platform for the most rigorous academic success attainable. Winning performers apply their skills in their academic courses and go on to achieve at the highest levels of their chosen professions. Whether learning to finish difficult projects or simply completing assigned tasks with greater ease, speakers & debaters tend to rise to the top.

## **Research Experience**

Few high school students gain a grasp on academic conversations at the level of competitive debaters. The work performed during a single year of nationally-competitive high school debate can exceed the research required for a master's thesis. From reading law reviews and current events to surveying some of the brightest minds in philosophy, politics, and economics, the research experience one gains in high school debate is simply unparalleled by other activities. Interpretation students investigate countless forms of literature and explore the complexities of performance theory at its finest, doing so well before many of their peers.

## **Public Speaking**

Debate provides a safe environment for students to test a myriad of viewpoints. Through improved organization, logical analysis, and formal argument, competitive speakers learn to present ideas in ways their inexperienced peers find difficulty. Students in forensics adopt an approach to life-long learning and advocacy that translates across all academic disciplines and business environments.

## **College Admissions**

Colleges increasingly require students to show commitment to academic activities outside the classroom. Admissions officers and college administrators routinely suggest that activities like debate greatly strengthen the applications they see.

## **Social Skills**

Debate gives students the opportunity to travel across the country representing their schools. Through tournament participation, summer workshops, and working with teammates, we build life-long friendships. While studies demonstrate the measurable improvement in academic skills, one cannot underestimate the growth students experience in confidence, maturity, and community engagement.

Above all – debate is FUN!

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## Don't Just Take Our Word For It

"I think debating in high school and college a most valuable training whether for politics, the law, business, or for service on community committees such as the PTA and the League of Women Voters. A good debater must not only study material in support of his own case, but he must also, of course, thoroughly analyze the expected arguments of his opponent. ... The give and take of debating, the testing of ideas, is essential to democracy. I wish we had a good deal more debating in our institutions than we do now. "

—*John F. Kennedy, fmr. President of the United States*

"As I look back upon my own experiences, when I try to single out from among the long line of college students some one group which shall stand forth as intellectually the best - best in college work and best in promise of future intellectual achievement - I cannot draw the line around my own favorite students of philosophy, nor the leaders in mathematics, nor those successful in biology; nor could I fairly award the palm to the Phi Beta Kappa men who have excelled in all their subjects. It seems to me that stronger than any other group, tougher in intellectual fiber, keener in intellectual interests, better equipped to battle the coming problems are the college debaters - the students who apart from their regular studies, band together for intellectual controversy with each other and with their friends from other colleges. "

—*Alexander Meiklejohn, fmr. President of Amherst College and Dean of Brown University*

"Those four years in debate were the educational foundation of everything I did. And I don't mean that in some simple form... I'm saying the finest education I got from any of the institutions that I attended, the foundation of my mind that I got during those four years of competitive debate: that is, 90% of the intellectual capacity that I operate with today; Fordham [University] for college, Fordham for the Ph.D., Harvard for Law School – all of that is the other 10%."

—*John Sexton, President of New York University*

"No college freshman can project 25 years to decide what he needs to learn – subject matter is easily forgotten in today's world, the knowledge explosion makes constant learning an inevitability. But all adults today need to be able to communicate with clarity, to articulate ideas, to reason, to separate key facts from the barrage of ideas we all are exposed to every day. No single activity can prepare one better than debating – the ability to think on one's feet, to form conclusions rapidly, to answer questions logically and with clarity, to summarize ideas are all processes which forensics activity develop and develop."

—*Helen Wise, fmr. President of National Education Association*

"A Wall Street Journal report did specifically highlight a 'consistent trend' that dedicated participation in debate has significantly increased the success rate of college applicants at all schools that track such data. State and national award winners have a 22% to 30% higher acceptance rate at top tier colleges, and being captain of the debate team 'improved an applicant's chances by more than 60% compared with the rest of the pool,' according to the report. This is significantly better than other extracurricular activities that tend to recruit from the same pool of students. Colleges and universities today are looking for critical thinkers and articulate communicators who will become active citizens and leaders of tomorrow."

—*Minh Luong, Assistant Professor at Yale University*

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## For Further Reading

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