

SSIA Debate Club Tournament

Date: Saturday morning, January 16, 2010

Location: tbd

Debate Topic: The Seattle Public Schools should require students to wear uniforms.

Participation: Please email sandynielsen@schoolsinaction.org with any changes in your child's ability to participate in the tournament. A single change on the day of the event will delay the tournament for all participants.

Debate Rounds

There are two Rounds in the tournament. Student teams will be assigned the Affirmative for one Round, and the Negative for the other. Teams will not know the order of their assignment prior to the tournament, but all teams are prepared in class for debating the Affirmative and the Negative. A team will debate against one team in Round One, and a different team in Round Two.

Classroom Description

In each Round, two teams (two students per team) debate while family members observe and a judge times the debate sections and scores. Each student sits at a desk next to his/her teammate, and their opposing team sits at another desk a few feet away. Both teams face the judge and family members. The judge sits at a desk centrally facing the teams. The students' family members or other observers take chairs behind or to the side of the judge, primarily facing the students. When each student speaks, he/she will either stand between the two team desks, facing the judge, or sometimes a makeshift podium will be created between the two team desks for students to use.

Team Roles

In a debate, one team is called the 'Affirmative' (or Aff), and the other is called the 'Negative' (or Neg). The role of the Aff team is to propose a plan which affirms the resolution (the topic that each school studied in Debate Club). The role of the Negative team is to defend the status quo and oppose the resolution.

In the first speeches, students read a team-prepared argument with evidence. The next speeches and the cross-examinations are more extemporaneous as each team poses questions and answers questions, and responds to the opponents' argument and strengthens their own team's argument.

Structure of a Debate Round

Each debate consists of four constructive speeches, four cross-examination periods, and two rebuttals. They are ordered as follows (see Order of Speeches and Code to Your Debate for more details):

First Affirmative Constructive (1AC), Cross-examination (Cross-ex), First Negative Constructive (1NC), Cross-ex, Second Affirmative Constructive (2AC), Cross-ex, Second Negative Constructive (2NC), Cross-ex, Affirmative Rebuttal (AR), Negative Rebuttal (NR)

Each student in a debate round has one constructive, one leading cross-ex/one answering cross-ex. One student on each team will also have a rebuttal. The affirmative opens and closes the debate round, similar to courtroom trials. This is done because the affirmative has the 'burden of proof.' Each constructive lasts 4 minutes, cross-ex is 2 minutes, and the rebuttals are 3 minutes long. Each team takes an affirmative and a negative role, one in each round. So if your child's team is assigned the affirmative in Round One, the team will be assigned the negative in Round Two, and vice versa.

If a Round ends early

There are time limits for each speech in a debate, but some speeches will not utilize the entire allowed time and that debate may end before others. Even if a debate ends early, students and their families must go to the gathering location following each Round. Students will receive their second room assignment and may begin Round Two as soon as both teams are present.

Judges

Some judges for the SSIA tournaments have debate experience, some have debate judging experience, and some are novices. Prior to the tournament, all judges receive training developed by the Seattle Debate Foundation. The judges evaluate teams and speakers based on the quality of their arguments, evidence utilized, and presentation skills such as tone, organization, eye contact, body language, and etiquette.

Similar to other student activity organization volunteer positions such as sports referees, there is a subjective element and each judge will only see four teams. As in any sports game, while you may not always agree with the referee, or in this case the judge, good debate etiquette includes maintaining a positive attitude, accepting a judge's score without arguing, and refraining from any negative comments about the judge or the outcome. Parents, please help us model this behavior for our students.

Awards Ceremony

After Round Two, students and families return to the gathering location and wait while the final scores are being tabulated. Once those are ready, announcements will begin. Each student will receive written comments regarding their debate as provided by the judges. Students will not receive their numerical scores. The top teams and the top individual speakers will receive medals. Each Debate Club student will receive a Certificate of Participation.