



Stevenson - Daniel Wright Debate Program: 2016-2017

Why?

We are Stevenson students who participate in the SHS Congressional Debate club. To provide DW students with a valuable learning experience, and to prepare DW students for the competitive yet rewarding world of high school Congressional Debate, we established this program two years ago; the program has been an incredible success.

What is Congressional Debate?

Unlike other forms of debate, you act as a Representative in Congress. Students will debate the merits of student-made bills in rooms of roughly 20 people. Debate revolves around 3 minute speeches given in support of in opposition (PRO v. CON) of each bill. Congressional debate isn't about yelling at your opponent, it's about articulating an argument that incorporates elements of presentation, logic, evidence, and awareness of public affairs.

What is a bill? What are bills about?

A bill, just as in the congressional sense, is a proposed law which the chamber must debate. Prior to each tournament, 12 bills (submitted by students at the last tournament) are released: 4 in economics, 4 in foreign affairs, and 4 in public welfare. The bills are different between tournaments, but at any given tournament, the 12 bills debated are the same for every school and every chamber.

How does debate work?

Before beginning debate, the debaters will decide a "docket" - an order to debate the bills. The time limit for debate on each bill is one hour, so usually only 6 to 7 bills will be debated throughout the tournament. Each one hour cycle will begin with a debater giving a 3 minute PRO (support) speech for the bill. He or she will then engage in two minutes of questioning with debaters who may disagree with his or her points. Then, another debater will give a 3 minute speech CON (against) the bill, and face two minutes of questioning afterwards. This pro-con-pro-con cycle will continue to repeat itself throughout the one hour the bill is debated. Debaters usually don't give more than one speech on a bill, but they usually do participate in questioning against a speaker more than once.

What is a PO (presiding officer)?

The PO is a student debater who has volunteered to sit out for one session and "run" the chamber. This includes calling on speakers, questioners, and keeping time during each speech and questioning period. The PO does not judge or score speeches.



What's in a speech?

A speech usually contains a clever introduction to get listeners' attention, along with two or three clearly stated points (contentions) as to why the chamber should vote pro or con. Each contention is supported by evidence from news articles or research studies, logic that explains why that contention is true, and an explanation of the impact of that contention. Additionally, good debaters will utilize refutations that address the faults of the opponent's reasoning and logic.

How does questioning work?

Questioning lasts a total time of 2 minutes. The debater who just spoke remains standing while the PO calls for questioners to stand. The PO then calls on two people who are standing. Person 1 will engage in "crossfire" with the debater for one minute. Crossfire means that both the questioner and the debater can speak at once. It is a chance to show off direct interpersonal skills. Then, the PO will bang his or her gavel. Person 2 (the second questioner) will stand and engage in the same format of crossfire as the first questioner.

Who judges / scores? How do awards work?

In high school congressional debate, two adult judges will sit at the back of the room and score each speaker during each session. Speakers are scored on their speeches from 1 - 6, with 6 being the best score. At the end of each session, each judge nominates two speakers in the chamber he or she feels did the best job. At the end of the day, all nominated speakers' names from each pair of judges during each one of the 3 sessions are written on the whiteboard in the chamber. Everyone in chamber votes. At the awards ceremony, the first place award for the chamber is given to the person with the highest speaking average (his or her name would not be written on the whiteboard even if he or she were nominated many times). The second and third are the two highest voted nominated speakers.

This might seem like a lot of information, but this is really everything you need to know about congressional debate. We will regularly review these terms and procedures at meetings in the future. From here on, all you need to do is refine your skills speaking, refuting, using logic, and doing evidence - and that is the primary purpose of this debate program.

Any questions?

First meeting: **Wednesday, November 2nd from 4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. at DW, Room 218**

Webpage updates: www.dw.d103.org/dwdebate

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