

St. Croix Prep Debate Program 2020

Debate Handbook



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I. Introduction

Dear Student,

Greetings, and welcome to the SCPA Debate Program. Debate is a nationally recognized extracurricular activity that can earn you and your team local, state, and national recognition, as well as provide you with a strong addition to any college resume. Debate is a great activity if you enjoy solving puzzles, want your voice to be heard (instead of always being told to just be quiet and listen), or are interested in political, social, or philosophical issues. Through Debate, you will have the opportunity to develop skills that will help you in all avenues of life: increasing your confidence, reducing your anxiety, and giving you the knowhow to think critically about a wide variety of issues from a wide variety of perspectives. Most importantly, through Debate, you will learn how to think critically, which will have a positive influence on the way you approach school work and studying as well. Thank you for your interest in Debate, and I hope you enjoy your time as an important part of our team!

Each and every year of Debate at SCPA is a fun and exciting year. Students develop friendships while learning to excel in an activity most college graduates identify as the activity that helped them the most in preparing for college and the real world. This year will be an exciting and unique year, as together we blaze a new trail into online tournaments. While this can seem daunting, it is actually a lot less complicated than it sounds. It is my hope that this year, much as in years past, students that participate in our Debate Program will flourish and thrive in the new opportunities that online tournaments will provide, take advantage of the lessons and insights offered by coaches and teammates, and work hard to compete with the best teams in the state and the nation.

Needless to say, I am thrilled and excited for the chance to work with you this season as we build our team, build your skills, and build a community at SCPA that is passionate about public speaking. Thank you, and welcome to the team.

Sincerely,

Matthew Davis
Director of Speech and Debate
St. Croix Preparatory Academy
mdavis@stcroixprep.org

II. What is Debate?

The Debate Program is an MSHSL sanctioned event, much like athletic events, open to students in 7th through 12th grade. Debate challenges students to use their critical thinking skills to support or oppose a given topic area in a formally structured setting. Debate challenges students to research socially and politically relevant issues, prepare sound arguments for and against a given topic, and debate those positions against an opposing team, while trying to persuade a judge to vote for their side. The debate season lasts from September to December, with further opportunities for competition at the local, state, and national level beyond those dates.

Formal debate is an activity that provides a lifetime of important reading, writing, speaking, and thinking skills. Debate is such an important and relevant activity that many colleges view debate participation as an important consideration when determining college entry. Additionally, debate provides skills that will advance student skills in all academic areas, allowing debaters to become well rounded and proficient in all areas of academic study. Lastly, debate is a thrilling and fun activity that rewards students who learn the process early.

While participating in debate, you will have the opportunity to research a set topic, use your research to craft uniquely tailored arguments for and against the given topic, and participate in formal debates using those constructed arguments. There will be opportunities for each person to participate at an interscholastic debate tournament, but some tournaments have limited submissions, which are often left up to the coach's discretion. However, if you work hard, follow team policies, and perform well, you can succeed in becoming the top debater or team at SCPA, with the ultimate goal of earning a spot at the Novice State Championship Tournament.

If you are a first year debater, your primary focus will be to develop the skills of debating, which involve learning the format, learning the expectations within the debate, learning to take notes and prepare for speeches, and learning how to win a debate. Accordingly, the SCPA coaching staff will help you every step of the way so that you are more than adequately prepared for that first tournament of the year! As you progress from novice to junior varsity and varsity, you will have more and more freedom to explore complex political and philosophical ideas, learning to craft your arguments using the resources at your disposal. As you progress, consider utilizing the coaching staff as a mechanism for peer editing, honing specific delivery skills, and perfecting cross examination and rebuttal strategies. Always remember that our primary goal is to help you grow and succeed as a debater.

A. Policy Debate

Policy debate has its roots in the form of rhetoric known as ***deliberative rhetoric***. The goal of deliberative rhetoric is to persuade an audience to take a particular action some time in the near future. Likewise, policy debate pits two teams against one another with the goal of either persuading or dissuading a judge that a given agent (usually the United States federal government) should take a particular action some time in the near future. Policy debate is a competitive academic activity that strengthens a student's ability to rationalize and reason at a lightning fast pace, forcing students to develop their ability to think on their feet as they hear opposing arguments and responses. Students learn to analyze and evaluate technical approaches and a wide range of information on a given topic, while also being able to find the strengths and weaknesses in their own arguments and evidence and those of their opponents. Policy debate is a fun and exciting activity, meant for students who wish to engage in competitive political discourse with students from other schools. If you like solving complex puzzles and prefer working with a teammate, then Policy Debate is the right choice for you!

B. Lincoln-Douglas Debate

Lincoln-Douglas debate is a style of debate that focuses on ***judicial rhetoric***, or persuasion that argues for or against a proposition of value. Propositions of value challenge debaters to consider the merit of a given action or idea. Lincoln-Douglas debate derives its name from the historic debates between Abraham Lincoln and Steven A. Douglas over the ethics of slavery. Likewise, high school Lincoln-Douglas debate emphasizes logic and philosophy. Lincoln-Douglas debate – often referred to as LD debate – pits two individuals against one another with the goal of persuading a judge or panel of judges that their argument and the philosophical basis for their argument is superior to that of their opponent when related to a given topic. Lincoln-Douglas debate is a challenging intellectual activity, one where a student's time and thoughtfulness are rewarded with success in the activity itself and in life. Perhaps you favor philosophical discussions and working through problems independently. If so, then Lincoln-Douglas debate is the right choice for you!

C. Team Practices

Debate requires a sizeable amount of foundational skill-building, meaning that as a first-year debater you will need to learn the technical skills of debate. This usually involves several practices and some outside reading. However, the more practices you attend, the more quickly you will become comfortable with the format, and the sooner you will be ready to debate at the tournament level.

With this in mind, it is my goal as your coach to hold more required practices throughout the month of September, with practices tapering off as the season shifts into full throttle. What this means is that there will be three practice sessions per week during September, and it is highly recommended that first year debaters attend all three. Once we get to the first tournament, debaters can then assess if they still need the full three practices per week or if they are comfortable enough with the format to drop down to two per week. All debaters are required to attend at least two practices per week, or they will forfeit their opportunity to debate at the next upcoming tournament.

One consideration to keep in mind is that Policy debate is a team format, which means that you will need to coordinate your practice schedule with your teammate. If you cannot make this work, then you will be asked to find a teammate that can accommodate a similar schedule.

Lastly, students are expected to follow instruction and abide by appropriate SPCA behavioral standards while at practice. This year, we are in a unique circumstance regarding practices, as a hybrid format will make in-person practices more difficult. For this reason, I have decided to host practices online, via Zoom meetings. The link to each day's Zoom meeting/practice will be sent out to all students, and those that wish to attend will be able to do so. For these reasons, the daily practice schedule will have two openings, to hopefully accommodate for students with unique schedules. If you are not able to make any of these practice times work, please contact me, and we can hopefully work out an alternative practice schedule. The online practice schedule will follow this structure throughout the months of September and December:

PRACTICE SESSIONS (September through December):

Monday Practice Session #1: 5:15pm – 6:15pm

Monday Practice Session #2: 7:15pm – 8:15pm

Tuesday Practice Session #1: 5:15pm – 6:15pm

Tuesday Practice Session #2: 7:15pm – 8:15pm

Wednesday Practice Session #1: 5:15pm – 6:15pm

Wednesday Practice Session #2: 7:15pm – 8:15pm

Thursday Practice Session #1: 5:15pm – 6:15pm

Thursday Practice Session #2: 7:15pm – 8:15pm

D. Tournaments and Materials

*****Special Note for 2020: see the Online Addendum at the bottom of this section**

1. Wear appropriate clothing. Men should wear dress slacks, long-sleeved dress shirt, and a tie, with dress shoes and socks as a finishing touch. Women should wear an appropriate skirt or dress slacks, a modest blouse, and dress shoes with socks or leggings. Denim clothing is not acceptable, and do not wear your school uniform.

2. Be on Time. Transportation is provided by the SCPA Debate Program for those tournaments that are outside of a twenty-mile radius of SCPA. No matter where you are expected to meeting (at SCPA or at the tournament site) you should always plan on being there five to ten minutes before the designated meeting time.

Also, when you are at the tournament, you should always arrive at your round promptly when the rounds are posted. Always be attentive to see if other debaters are gathering around the postings board, this is usually a good sign that it is time to find out your room number and skedaddle.

3. Respect Room Etiquette. Never enter a room before the judge has arrived. If the light is on in the room, it is okay to peek inside and see if the judge is already there, but it is otherwise common courtesy to wait outside of the room until the judge has arrived. The primary reasoning behind this is that tournaments don't want students in the room messing around with the teacher's stuff. So, of course, don't mess with the stuff in the room. Leave the room in better shape than it was when you arrived.

4. Don't goof off. Remember, you are representing SCPA, your team, your coach, and yourself. When other debaters, judges, and coaches see you, they see SCPA, so do your best to act professional, as if any of these people could be your future employer.

5. No phones in a round. Most judges will allow debaters to use their phones as a timer, but that is the only time you should use your phone during the round. In fact, it is a good idea to put your phone on airplane mode before you enter the room.

Online Addendum: Due to the online nature of this season's tournaments, students are expected to attend a pre-tournament team meeting the morning of the tournament, so that your coach can be sure that all participating students are in attendance. If you do not attend the pre-tournament meeting, you will be dropped from the tournament. Students will be expected to have access to a computer with video/audio capabilities, as this is how debates will be held online. If you have any questions or concerns about this unique experience, please let me know.

Required Materials:

1. Time-keeping device
2. Organizational System (accordion filing system is preferred)
3. At least two colors of pens
4. Legal Notepads (usually you will want at least two)
5. Highlighters
6. All of your speeches, prepared arguments, and evidence

III. NSDA, Lettering, and Leadership Opportunities

The National Speech and Debate Association

One of the new aspects of our Speech and Debate program will be an option for students to become members of the National Speech and Debate Association (NSDA). This organization's primary goal is to help speech and debate participants earn the recognition they deserve. Member students accrue points for each event they attend and/or round in which they compete. These points allow students to attain varying levels of national recognition, while also earning those students certificates and seals of recognition for their achievements in Speech and Debate. Additionally, students who are members of the NSDA are eligible to attend district qualifier tournaments with the chance to qualify for the National Speech and Debate Tournament. Becoming a member of the NSDA is a rewarding experience and highly recommended for all students.

Lettering

There are five primary ways for a student to letter in the Debate Program:

1. If the student is a member of the NSDA, they will receive their Letter in Debate when they have acquired 250 points from debate tournament participation.
2. A student can earn a Letter in Debate by placing in the top six debaters in varsity at two or more tournaments.
3. A debater can earn a Letter in Debate by qualifying for the MSHSL State Tournament or the NSDA National Tournament.
4. Coach's discretion will be used in certain cases to award additional letters.

IV. Judges

We are always looking for parent judges to help out at tournaments. One of the biggest costs for a tournament (aside from transportation) is judging fees, so if your parents are interested in judging for one or more tournaments, they can help recoup some of your participation fees in the process. Parent judges can earn \$75 for each tournament that they judge, so please let your parents know that this is available, and I will be sure to provide them with the necessary judging material and training.

SCPA Debate: Participation Form

Student Name: _____ Grade: _____

Parent Name: _____ Parent Email: _____

Parent telephone/emergency contact number: _____

Medical Alerts: _____

I am interested in competing in: Lincoln-Douglas Debate Policy Debate

I have _____ years of experience in my desired area of interest.

Days and Times available for practice (circle all that apply):

Monday: Session #1 (5:15pm – 6:15pm) Session #2 (7:15pm – 8:15pm)

Tuesday: Session #1 (5:15pm – 6:15pm) Session #2 (7:15pm – 8:15pm)

Wednesday: Session #1 (5:15pm – 6:15pm) Session #2 (7:15pm – 8:15pm)

Thursday: Session #1 (5:15pm – 6:15pm) Session #2 (7:15pm – 8:15pm)

I understand and accept the guidelines, rules, and requirements asked of me as a member of the SCPA Debate Program. I recognize that my participation in Debate tournaments is contingent on the following: paying the activity fee on SchoolPay, participating in team practices, completing the necessary preparatory work, and following the behavioral expectations of our school. I understand that I am a representative of SCPA, and I will do my part to advance a positive image of myself, my team, and my school.

Student Signature: _____

Parent's Signature of Acknowledgement: _____