

# *Connecticut Debate Association*

## **Extemporaneous Cross-Examination Debate**

<http://ctdebate.org>

The Connecticut Debate Association (CDA) is the premier high school debate league in Connecticut. We have sponsored a regular program of competition for over 30 years. Our debate format is cross-examination policy debate, but we change the resolution for each tournament and limit research like college parliamentary debate.

### **Why Debate?**

Debate helps students to develop speaking, listening and analytic skills. It places a premium on quick thought and precise expression, similar to skills needed for the CAPT and SAT reading and writing sections. Many noted public figures are former high school or college debaters: Al Gore, Senator and Presidential candidate; Lawrence Summers, former Chairman of the National Economic Council and former President of Harvard; Lawrence Tribe noted constitutional lawyer; Oprah Winfrey, noted television personality; and James Dean, the actor.

CDA provides a complete debate program close to home at low cost. CDA can also be an adjunct to competing in other leagues and using other styles of debate. CDA members participate in national high school tournaments sponsored by Yale, UPenn, Harvard, Princeton, Columbia and elsewhere. Teams from the CDA have won or placed at the Yale Invitational, Yale Osterweis and UPenn Liberty Bell Classic parliamentary debate tournaments. Many CDA members also participate in model congress, model UN and mock trial competitions.

### **CDA Membership**

Operating under the auspices of the Connecticut Association of Schools, the CDA is open to any high school in the State, public or private. We have over 45 member schools and averaged over 400 debaters at each of our regular tournaments in 2016-17. Dues are \$250 for the 2017-18 school year and entitle members to attend all regular tournaments with as many debaters as they care to bring at no additional cost (subject only to space limitations and their ability to find judges). Dues paying members may also vote at the Spring and Fall coaches' meetings to elect CDA officers and set CDA policy.

### **CDA Tournaments**

The CDA holds tournaments one Saturday each month from October through March, followed by State Finals championship tournament. Debaters qualify for State Finals by their performance at the monthly tournaments. With as many as 500 debaters participating some months, we run tournaments at two or three schools on each date in order to have space for all. Each tournament has a varsity and novice division to accommodate different levels of skill and experience.

Schools register for tournaments online using [www.tabroom.com](http://www.tabroom.com), a site sponsored by the National Speech and Debate Association (NSDA), which we also use to run the tournament itself. Tournament day opens with check-in from 8-9AM. At 9AM the debaters receive the resolution to be debated—the topic changes for each tournament—and a packet of research material. They have an hour to prepare before the first round. Each two-person team will argue in favor and against the issue over the course of three rounds. During the preparation hour, we hold a workshop for new judges. There are two rounds of debate before lunch, at 10AM and 11:30AM. Lunch is at 1PM and the third round begins by 2PM. The top two varsity teams compete in a public final round at

3:30PM. The awards ceremony follows the final round at 5PM, and we break at 5:30PM. We have been successful at keeping very close to this schedule and ending on time.

## **Extemporaneous Debate**

The CDA extemporaneous debate format is a modified form of cross-examination policy debate practiced at the high school level, but by changing topics each month we are closer in spirit to college-level parliamentary debate. Each team consists of two debaters, a first and second speaker. Each debater has a six-minute constructive speech after which they are cross-examined for three minutes by their opponents. The speeches alternate between the Affirmative and Negative. Each debater also has a four-minute rebuttal speech. A single judge decides the result of each preliminary round, and a panel of three to five judges decides the final round.

The debate resolution changes each month, announced the morning of the tournament. The debaters receive a packet of six to twelve pages of material with the resolution to help them understand the topic and develop cases and arguments. Debaters may also bring a dictionary, an almanac and a copy of the US Constitution. During the one-hour preparation period, debaters may work as two-person teams or in larger school groups.

Limits on research materials and preparation time favor students who are well-read in current events and public policy. The resolution topic is usually an issue current in the news and of lasting importance. For example, at State Finals in 2017 we debated whether Presidential Executive Orders should be subject to Congressional review. The CDA website has 20 years of past resolutions and 10 years of evidence packets for review and practice.

## **Starting a Debate Program**

A debate program requires a moderator or coach to organize the team. The coach will need to recruit and to train debaters, and to enlist adult volunteers to serve as judges. Depending on the school's policy, there may be transportation expenses to and from the tournaments in addition to CDA dues.

CDA coaches vary in experience from none to some to lots. A few are former debaters. Most are social studies or English teachers with no prior debate experience. Some teach an elective class in public speaking or a related subject that helps them build their team. Some also coach related activities such as model congress, model UN or mock trial. Experience in any of these areas tends to benefit both coaches and students.

Lack of debate experience is not a barrier to coaching. Debaters do much of their learning from each other in competition. A coach's most important job is organizing the team and getting them to the tournaments. Stronger teams benefit the entire league by proving models for newer debaters. The CDA website provides extensive material to help new coaches and debaters. Veteran coaches are available to provide advice and mentoring.

## **CDA Volunteers**

The CDA depends on volunteers from the member schools for its success. The Board consists of an Executive Director, an Assistant Director and at least five at large members. These and other coaches help run the tournaments. We rely on member schools to host our tournaments. This provides an opportunity to show off your facility and repay the generosity of others.

## **Contact CDA**

For more information, visit the CDA web site at <http://ctdebate.org>. For inquiries, send an email to [ejrutan3@ctdebate.org](mailto:ejrutan3@ctdebate.org).