



**Course Title: Ready Set Debate**  
**Subject: College-Preparatory Elective**  
**Discipline: Interdisciplinary**

## **Course Overview**

This course offers an introduction to the techniques of speech and academic debate, including oratory techniques, interpreting different genres of prepared material, preparing and presenting original material, conducting research, evaluating and synthesizing evidence related to policies and current events, structuring and evaluating arguments, understanding and following procedural rules, conducting an effective cross-examination, and working with a team.

The skills taught by participating in Ready Set Debate are applicable across popular debate formats, including Policy, Public Forum, Parliamentary, Lincoln-Douglas, Congressional, and others. In a unit on oratory persuasion, Ready Set Debate also exposes students to the techniques used in speech events including Humorous Interpretation, Dramatic Interpretation, Thematic Interpretation, Duo Interpretation, Oratorical Interpretation, and Storytelling.

Speech and debate are essential aspects of participation in democracy and in all other spheres where effective interpersonal communication and persuasion are required. Furthermore, speech and debate teach skills that directly promote academic success: rapid critical analysis of evidence and arguments, creation and interpretation of prepared material in different genres, clear and concise writing, effective oral communication in prepared and extemporaneous contexts, an ability to effectively question others and respond to questions, familiarity with a broad range of current events and academic disciplines, and more.

Students will have the option to test their skills outside their own class in periodic, optional online tournaments conducted with other Ready Set Debate students from around the country.

## **Sample Unit Overviews**

### **Organizing for Effective Presentation**

Students learn best practices for organizing a persuasive speech and maintaining organization through follow-up speeches. They become familiar with techniques for synthesizing evidence and building arguments. They learn strategies for effective note-taking, including commonly used debate abbreviations. Students organize arguments into a persuasive speech that is clear

and concise, present their speech, take notes on an opponent's persuasive speech, and develop a rebuttal to their opponent's speech for immediate presentation.

### **Sample Unit Assignment: Create a Constructive Speech**

Students are divided into teams and assigned to develop a constructive speech (opening arguments) for either the Affirmative or the Negative side of a debate resolution (typically a policy, value, or factual argument of current relevance). Coaches and teams discuss the resolution and establish an agreed-upon scope (a set of definitions and/or specifications that establish boundaries for the debate) and teams work together to find and organize evidence into arguments. Teams learn to group like arguments into subpoints, and learn best practices for ordering arguments. Coaches review resulting drafts with teams and discuss potential refinements for presentation.

### **Researching**

Students learn techniques for efficiently gathering, evaluating, and cataloguing evidence. They develop basic familiarity with study formatting, learn how to locate and read an abstract, and learn how to follow citations to original sources.

### **Sample Unit Assignment: Developing Evidence Cards**

Students are divided into groups and assigned contentions. Each team locates an appropriate piece of evidence to support their contention. With the guidance of coaches, teams translate the relevant portions of the evidence into a standardized evidence card format for easy reference during the debate.

### **Framework**

Students develop their understanding of the concepts of framework, criteria, and weighing mechanisms in debate. They learn how to integrate framework into a constructive speech, defend their preferred framework against competing frameworks, and maintain their framework through rebuttal and summary speeches.

### **Sample Unit Assignment: Delivering a Contention Using Framework**

Students are divided into groups and assigned contentions. Coaches and teams review a list of popular frameworks and explore ways that each team's contention could be defended using each of the frameworks. Teams each select their preferred framework and modify their contention to incorporate the framework.

## **Impacts**

Students learn how to deliver clear and convincing impacts as part of their constructive speech, and how to weigh their impacts against their opponents' impacts in their rebuttal and summary speeches. Special attention is paid to probability, timeframe, magnitude, scope, and reversibility as criteria for weighing impacts.

### **Sample Unit Assignment: Persuasively Weighing Impacts**

Students are divided into teams and each team is provided a prewritten contention tagline corresponding to either the Affirmative or the Negative. Coaches work with each team to help them flesh out and develop impacts for their contention. After a period of prep time, teams are paired with teams representing the opposing side of the resolution. Each team presents their contention and proceeds to weigh the impacts of their contention against the impacts of their opponents' contention.

## **Cross-Examination**

Students learn best practices for preparing and executing an effective cross-examination, as well as effectively responding to cross-examination questions. They learn strategies for developing cross-examination questions during the debate round, and for how to use cross-examination to increase the effectiveness of their rebuttal. Students develop a prepared cross-examination strategy and participate in cross-examination exercises geared toward enhancing different cross-examination skills.

### **Sample Unit Assignment: Moving From Constructive to Cross-Examination**

Students are divided into teams and provided with prewritten constructive speeches corresponding to either the Affirmative or the Negative. Coaches work with teams to help them develop prepared cross-examination questions. Teams are paired with teams representing the opposing side of the resolution. Each team presents their constructive speech and, after a period of prep time, conducts and receives cross-examination.

## **Rebuttal**

Students learn the five steps to an effective rebuttal: addressing disagreements on framework, addressing issues or observations from cross-examination, completing a line-by-line rebuttal, recapping contentions, and returning to framework. Through a series of exercises, students develop their understanding of the most effective rebuttal strategies for different frameworks, and they learn how to incorporate impact-weighing into their line-by-line rebuttal.

### **Sample Unit Assignment: Line-By-Line Rebuttal**

Students flow a prerecorded constructive speech and develop an extemporaneous rebuttal speech based on their flow. Special attention is paid to signposting, appropriate ordering of responses, and appropriate time spent delivering and explaining each response.

**Summary** Students learn the four steps to an effective summary: reviewing framework, recapping contentions, weighing impacts, and providing voters. Through a series of exercises, students develop their understanding of the most effective summary strategies for different frameworks, and they learn how to incorporate impact-weighting into their summary. They learn ways to distill the winning issues in the debate into a series of succinct voting issues.

### **Sample Unit Assignment: Translating Winning Impacts Into Voters**

Students are divided into groups and are provided with a prewritten scenario in which they are representing either the Affirmative or Negative and have already completed the debate through the end of their rebuttal speech. Coaches help groups evaluate the impacts weighed on both sides of the debate in the scenario and distill those impacts into 3-5 succinct voters.

### **Presentation Techniques**

Students build their awareness of different aspects of presentation style that can enhance or detract from a speaker's persuasiveness. Through a series of exercises, students develop their eye contact, gestures, cadence, vocal variety, volume, and enunciation. Strategies to enhance perceptual dominance are discussed.

### **Sample Unit Assignment: Using Gestures**

Students are provided with prewritten constructive speeches and present them with the goal of incorporating physical gestures into their presentation style. Coaches observe and provide constructive feedback on how to improve.

### **Oratory Persuasion**

Students learn the key rhetorical techniques used in popular speech events including Humorous Interpretation, Dramatic Interpretation, Thematic Interpretation, Duo Interpretation, Oratorical Interpretation, and Storytelling. Coaches and students discuss how these techniques could be leveraged to enhance the persuasiveness of a debate speech. Students participate in a series of activities geared toward increasing their comfort with using different rhetorical techniques to enhance their persuasiveness.

### **Sample Unit Assignment: Storytelling as a Rhetorical Strategy**

Students are each provided with a prewritten constructive speech. Coaches help the students reflect on how a story could be added to the speech to grab the attention of the judge(s). Students use research techniques to find a true story and integrate it into the prewritten constructive.

### **Signposting/Roadmapping**

Students learn how to signal organization to the judge and their opponents by signposting (using verbal markers of organization) and roadmapping (briefly outlining the organization of the speech at the beginning). Through a series of exercises, students explore best practices for signposting and roadmapping, and learn how to incorporate these practices into their own speeches.

### **Sample Unit Assignment: Laying Out a Roadmap**

Students are divided into groups and are provided with prewritten rebuttal speeches that do not include roadmaps. With the help of coaches, students develop written roadmaps for the speeches and deliver them for the class. After all groups have delivered their roadmaps, coaches and the class reflect on the aspects of an effective roadmap.

### **Tournament Preparation & Judge Interaction**

Students learn the key steps for preparing for and performing at a tournament, including working as a team, assigning team roles based on each member's strengths, understanding the structure of the tournament, understanding judge paradigms, tailoring strategies to best appeal to different judges, and interacting well with the judges in round.

### **Sample Unit Assignment: Tailoring Your Strategy to the Judge's Paradigm**

Students are divided into groups and provided with prewritten constructive speeches and paradigms for hypothetical judges. Coaches and groups discuss how the constructive might be rephrased or otherwise modified to more effectively appeal to the judge. Teams are provided with prep time to modify the provided constructive speeches. Coaches review the modifications and provide constructive feedback.