

**Fairfax Collegiate
2026 Summer Program
Middle School Debate Course Syllabus
Rising Grades 7-9**



Course Description

Research, write, and persuade.

Debate daily, learn debating rules and etiquette, and craft arguments and rebuttals.

Students in this course express their viewpoints with clarity and confidence. They sharpen their reasoning, speak persuasively, and engage respectfully with opposing perspectives. With frequent practice debates and exercises, students grow into thoughtful, poised debaters.

Students study the structure of formal debates and learn how each team member contributes to a successful argument. They practice building affirmative cases, crafting rebuttals, taking organized notes, choosing precise language, and responding tactfully to opposing points. Through daily debate exercises, research activities, metaphor work, and presentations, they gain experience with evidence-based argumentation and persuasive speaking.

Families receive a video of the final debate students participate in. Students leave the course with stronger critical thinking skills, greater confidence in public speaking, and a deeper understanding of how to argue effectively and respectfully.

Learning Objectives

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| Course Goals | Formal Debate Argumentation: Students learn how to argue their point of view and tactfully rebut the opposing point of view in a formal debate. Quality Research Techniques: Students learn how to conduct research in preparation for a debate. Utilizing Evidence: Students learn how to create an argument with evidence to support their assertions. |
| Course Topics | Introduction to Debate: Students learn the rules of a formal debate and the role of each team member. Speaking Publicly: Students develop public speaking skills to gain comfort in argumentation. |

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| | <p>Affirmative Argumentation: Students learn how to use sound reasoning and good evidence to argue their point of view in a debate.</p> <p>Argumentation Against Opposition: Students learn how to tactfully respond to the opposite point of view in a debate.</p> <p>Taking Effective Notes: Students learn how to take notes during a debate, so they can produce stronger rebuttals.</p> <p>Word Choice: Students learn how certain words and phrases can impact the meaning of their arguments in a debate.</p> <p>Research: Students learn techniques to conduct quality research on a given topic for use in a debate.</p> <p>Classical Metaphors: Students learn how to use metaphors, particularly those relating to Greek mythology, to strengthen an argument.</p> <p>Research Presentation: Students learn how to present the research they have found concerning a particular topic.</p> <p>Final Debate: Students use the skills they have learned throughout the session to participate in two formal, full-length debates.</p> |
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Course Schedule

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| Class Meeting 1 | <p>Introduction to Debate: Students are introduced to each other and learn the format and timing of a formal debate, under the Middle School Public Debate Program.</p> <p>Public Speaking: Students learn techniques to make them comfortable with speaking in front of an audience.</p> |
| Class Meeting 2 | <p>Affirmative Argumentation: Students learn how to use sound reasoning and good evidence to argue their point of view in a debate.</p> <p>Debate Exercise 1: Students participate in their first debate exercise, where they debate a relevant topic using the skills they have learned.</p> |
| Class Meeting 3 | <p>Opposing Points of View: Students learn techniques to tactfully question arguments from the opposing side of a debate.</p> <p>Roles of Team Members: Students learn about the role each member of a debate team plays within a debate.</p> <p>Debate Exercise 2: Students debate a relevant topic using the techniques they have learned, particularly focusing on rebuttal skills and the use of points of information.</p> |
| Class | <p>Taking Notes: Students learn how to use specialized flow charts to keep track of the arguments by</p> |

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| Meeting 4 | <p>debaters.</p> <p>Criticizing an Argument: Students learn how to criticize the opposing side's argument in a debate in a non-offensive way.</p> <p>Persuasive and Emotional Words: Students learn various words and phrases that can impact the effect of an argument in a debate.</p> <p>Euphemisms: Students learn about how to use politically correct language in a debate to avoid offending others.</p> <p>Debate Exercise 3: Students participate in a debate using the techniques they learned that day, with a particular emphasis on word choice and note-taking.</p> |
| Class Meeting 5 | <p>Effective Research: Students learn how to conduct good research on a particular topic for a debate.</p> <p>Final Debate Overview: Students learn about the two debates they will participate in on the final day of the program.</p> <p>Debate Exercise 4: Students debate a relevant topic using the techniques they have learned throughout the week.</p> |
| Class Meeting 6 | <p>Metaphorical References: Students learn how to use metaphors to enhance the effect of their arguments.</p> <p>Impacts: Students learn how to assess the impact their proposed argument may have on society, and how these impacts relate to a debate.</p> <p>Debate Exercise 5: Students hold a debate using the techniques they have learned, with particular emphasis on the impacts of their arguments.</p> |
| Class Meeting 7 | <p>Presentation of Research: Students present the research they have collected for the final debate topics.</p> <p>Debate Exercise 6: Students debate a pertinent topic to practice the techniques they have learned throughout the session.</p> |
| Class Meeting 8 | <p>Final Debate Preparation (Topic 1): Students gather their research and prepare arguments and rebuttals in preparation for one of the final debates.</p> <p>Debate Exercise 7: Students debate a pertinent topic using the strategies they have learned throughout the class, in preparation for the final debates.</p> |
| Class Meeting 9 | <p>Final Debate Preparation (Topic 2): Students gather research, and they prepare arguments and rebuttals for the second debate on the final day of the session.</p> <p>Debate Exercise 8: Students participate in a final debate exercise to review the strategies they have learned throughout the session.</p> |
| Class Meeting 10 | <p>Final Debate 1: Students participate in a debate which they have prepared for throughout the week.</p> |

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| | <p>Final Debate 2: Students participate in a second debate, which they have prepared for throughout the week.</p> |
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