

The Final Round¹

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Connecticut Debate Association

Farmington High School

October 12, 2013

Resolved: All schools in the United States should be required to teach to a common academic standard.

A Note about the Notes

I've reproduced my flow chart for the Final Round at Farmington High School augmented by what I remember from the debate. The notes are limited by how quickly I could write and how well I heard what was said. I'm sure the debaters will read them and exclaim, "That's not what I said!" I apologize for any errors, but I hope debaters will appreciate this insight: what a judge hears may not be what they said or wish they had said.

There are two versions of the notes. The one below is chronological, reproducing each speech in the order in which the arguments were made. It shows how the debate was actually presented. The second is formatted to look more like my written flow chart, with each contention running across the page as the teams argued back and forth. It's close to the way I actually take notes during the debate.

The Final Round

The Final Round was between the Hamden team of Henry Hansen and Colette Kroop on the Affirmative and the Simsbury team of Kevin Gyrco and Matthew Shaw on the Negative. The debate was won by the Negative team from Simsbury.

1) First Affirmative Constructive

- a) Introduction
- b) Statement of the Resolution
- c) Definitions
 - i) Public schools, K-12
 - ii) Incentive to adopt standards at risk of loss of funding
 - iii) Teach to the grade level
 - iv) Teacher evaluations depend on educational results
 - v) Covering math, reading and standard writing skills, measured by a test
- d) A1²: Status quo fails to prepare students for life after high school
 - i) Mississippi has great test scores by state measures
 - (1) But SATs and ACTs near the bottom nationally

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² "A1" indicates the Affirmative first contention, "N2" the Negative second contention and so forth.

- (2) MS low state standards harm its students who lose the opportunity to learn
 - ii) We need to encourage schools to teach to a minimum standard
 - e) A2: Status quo ignores underachievers
 - i) Aff remedies address needs of underachievers
 - (1) Can individualize instruction
 - (2) Test all students at year end
 - (3) Hold back those who don't pass
 - ii) Require all learn the basics to advance
 - (1) Those who fail get extra attention
 - f) A3: Implementation would help close the socio-economic gap
 - i) Funding provides an incentive to comply
 - ii) Schools can apply for additional funds based on need
 - iii) Additional funds can be allocated within schools
- 2) Cross-Ex of First Affirmatives**
- a) Won't holding students back lower the graduation rate and increase the dropout rate? Graduation will just be delayed until they learn
 - b) Won't it discourage them and increase truancy? We want to teach to the grade and provide incentives so teachers will want students to pass
 - c) Don't schools get funding grants now? They don't have sufficient resources
 - d) What about other problems students have, like not getting breakfast, bad home situation, lack of internet access at home? That would be a different resolution
 - e) Don't these factors have a negative impact on education? If a child can't read it isn't because they are poor
 - f) What determines whether a school does poorly or well? School performance is an indicator of teacher performance
 - g) What do we do if the teachers don't perform? They could be fired, or we can apply for training grants.
- 3) First Negative Constructive**
- a) Intro
 - b) Resolution
 - c) I'll present the Neg case then reply to the Aff
 - d) N1: National common academic standards ("NCAS" or "CAS") will inhibit innovation
 - i) There is a pattern to the US educational crisis
 - (1) From 1920-1970 education improved steadily
 - (2) In the 1970's it plateaued, and we are still searching for a solution
 - (3) Nothing tried has worked
 - (4) The Aff plan is more of the same with no proof it will work
 - ii) Federal involvement will freeze education when we need innovation
 - (1) Teachers will teach to the test
 - (2) Students will be held back
 - (3) Teachers will be fired
 - (4) Like No Child Left Behind ("NCLB") it will encourage cheating
 - e) N2: NCAS fail to meet student needs
 - i) SATs/ACTs don't test higher order thinking skills
 - ii) We are in a post-industrial economy, finance not autos

- iii) Standardized tests measure lower skills
- f) N3: NCAS distract from the underlying issues
 - i) Real issues behind poor educational performance are social and economic
 - (1) MS is poor
 - (2) In CT, the worst schools are in poor areas
 - ii) Money to the schools isn't the answer
 - (1) Kids need breakfast, internet access at home
 - iii) Aff holding students back won't fix this

4) Cross-Ex of First Negative

- a) Are there testing standards today? Yes, NCLB
- b) So there are standards? Yes, standardized tests
- c) Do you think students can't read because they don't have breakfast? Yes, and keeping them back in first grade won't help
- d) Isn't there a social promotion problem now? They get advanced help now
- e) Targeted help? Yes
- f) Why are the underachievers? Various social and economic reasons: single parent household, high crime rates. It's not the students, it's the social system.
- g) Are you saying the poor can't succeed? The odds are stacked against them. CAS won't solve that.
- h) Is there room for innovation in addition and subtraction? We've tried lots of things since the 1980's, moved away from rote memory
- i) If you add 5+5 and get 11 is that innovative or just wrong? It's a mistake
- j) Are we restricting teaching methods? There are no resources

5) Second Affirmative Constructive

- a) Intro
- b) Resolution
- c) Aff then Neg
- d) First, in cross-ex we asked about standards and innovation
 - i) There are standards now, on a state by state basis
 - ii) Under the Aff, those standards would be set by educators, not politicians
 - iii) They would be national, so MS and MA would follow the same ones
 - iv) It's unprofessional of the US not to have common standards
 - v) It's important to end social promotion
- e) A1: Fewer than 50% of high school grads go to college
 - i) 25% of those take remedial courses
 - ii) We have an education problem that is fixed by the resolution
- f) A2: Aff targets students who lack skills
 - i) Ending social promotion encourages proficiency not shame
 - (1) E.g., we had a debate team member who couldn't read well
- g) A3: Neg agrees this is an issue
 - i) Aff makes resources available: school breakfast, after school help
- h) N1: Innovation can occur in arts, not the core
 - i) Aff isn't targeting electives
 - ii) Electives are the classes where students try the hardest
- i) N2: The Aff targets underachievers
 - i) We provide extra funding and hold back those who fail

- j) N3: This is just untrue
 - i) My father was poor, slept in a doorway, often didn't have breakfast, got a good education
- 6) Cross-Ex of Second Affirmative**
 - a) You said that less than 50% of those who graduate from high school go to college? Yes
 - b) Isn't that due to the cost? No. They fail out or don't matriculate
 - c) If you hold a student back, they repeat the class? Yes
 - d) So class size will rise? That depends
 - e) Won't larger classes reduce the resources available to each individual? No
 - f) How? Do some of the students get lost? No. There is no direct relation between class size and quality
 - g) Won't costs rise? That's your conjecture, not a fact.
 - h) How can crowding not increase costs? Not that many will be held back. Right now in CT you have to pass CAPT
 - i) Don't most pass in MS too? That's due to low standards
 - j) How will the teacher be judged under the standards? That isn't our problem
 - k) But teachers will be let go? That depends on the school system
 - l) But students will be held back if they fail a grade? That depends on the school system.
- 7) Second Negative Constructive**
 - a) Intro
 - b) Resolution
 - c) The key issue here is that the Aff plan doesn't improve education
 - d) A1: We agree there are problems in US education
 - i) Aff doesn't address real problems, which are not due to standards
 - ii) Schools across the country all teach about the same thing
 - iii) Consider MS? Is it teaching, tests or really poverty. N3 say poverty
 - iv) In cross-ex we asked why less than 50% graduate from college
 - (1) It's most often due to costs
 - (2) And if they aren't prepared, it isn't due to lack of standards
 - e) A2: "hold back" places a gun to a students head
 - i) Poor students have no incentive to return
 - ii) Graduation rates and attendance will fall
 - iii) Neg says focus on real innovations
 - iv) Students held back will increase class sizes and costs
 - f) A3: N3 explains why Aff will not close the socio-economic gap
 - i) CAS distracts from real problems: urban decay, home life
 - ii) Breakfast is a serious school problem
 - iii) We have plenty of standards now
 - g) N1: Teachers won't experiment under Aff plan
 - i) Standards are confining, and national standards will be worse
 - ii) Aff plan is a re-hash of NCLB
 - h) N2: Tests used by Aff have biases
 - i) Non-English speakers especially harmed
 - i) N3: I've already commented how this relates to A1 and A3

8) Cross-Ex of Second Negative

- a) Isn't social promotion a problem? It doesn't inflate graduation rates
- b) What should we do about it? You need teacher/student interaction to identify real needs
- c) So you would never hold anyone back? Not based on an arbitrary test
- d) Doesn't the status quo hold students back? Yes
- e) Has it increased the class size? You are advocating holding a lot more students back
- f) Shouldn't students be held to standards? Yes, but not by your approach
- g) Doesn't having standards mean some will fail? They may only fail some classes. The point is Aff holds back based on a test
- h) Why shouldn't failure to meet the standard be enforced? Because it doesn't address the real problem
- i) Why aren't more resources a remedy to a lack of resources? They aren't focused on the problem. And you assume everyone who asks will get them and the standards are the heart of the decision.
- j) Aren't there mentally disabled students in some classes? [time]

9) First Negative Rebuttal

- a) Intro
- b) Aff offers problems and solutions that don't match up
 - i) There is a solvency gap
- c) Underperforming schools
 - i) Aff would test and hold back
 - ii) Neg believes in individualized attention
 - iii) Aff would hold back many more students than are held back now
 - iv) You can't individualized and one-size at the same time
- d) Money won't solve the problem
 - i) Individual problems track with poverty and home life
 - ii) Aff money goes to schools, not families, text books not better homes
- e) Disadvantages
 - i) Aff plan would lower innovation
 - (1) Everyone would focus on high stakes test
 - (2) Encourages rote repetition, minimum skills
- f) Status quo is not perfect
 - i) CAS won't fix it

10) First Affirmative Rebuttal

- a) Intro
- b) I never eat breakfast!
 - i) I take 3 AP courses
- c) The Aff prerogative
 - i) Plan need not be the best or be perfect
 - ii) Class sizes may rise some
- d) Consider what happens under the Negative
 - i) Poor readers as Seniors in high school
 - ii) It's the fault of the educational system, not social/economic status
 - iii) Education must provide basic skills or students can't function in society

- iv) Passing them on like diarrhea serves no purpose
- v) A3 closes the gap discussed in N3
- e) Reading, writing and arithmetic are the basic need

11) Second Negative Rebuttal

- a) Intro
- b) Aff must show net benefits to children to win the debate
- c) Aff says plan doesn't have to be perfect
 - i) That's true, but plan doesn't improve education
 - ii) A2 holds underachievers back
 - (1) Pressure to teach to test
 - (2) Large class sizes and costs
 - (3) Emotional impact
 - iii) Therefore teachers will teach to test and be unwilling to move beyond
 - iv) Pass or fail is a false choice
 - (1) Focus should be on teaching , not on tests
 - v) Aff repeats NCLB flaw
 - vi) Teachers feel regime is imposed from outside
- d) Socioeconomic issues are the real problem
 - i) Violence in the home, domestic abuse
 - ii) Aff makes fun of these problems
 - (1) 1st Aff not eating breakfast a choice
 - (2) For many it's a real problem

12) Second Affirmative Rebuttal

- a) Intro
- b) Resolution
- c) Student Needs
 - i) We need standardized tests to assess skills
 - ii) Students who fail need to be held back
 - iii) CAS don't impose on teaching technique
 - iv) Aff asks simple questions
 - (1) Is the student proficient?
 - (2) Did the teacher teach?
 - v) There is nothing wrong with teaching to the test
- d) Benefits
 - i) Aff holds students responsible
 - ii) End social promotion if they don't have the skill
 - iii) Even the best teachers may not be able to teach some students
 - iv) We aren't changing the fact that standards exist
 - (1) We are changing who creates them
 - (2) We are changing who they apply to and how
- e) Socioeconomic Gap
 - i) Aff wants to create an educated society
 - ii) Aff prerogative shows plan is better than status quo
 - iii) Aff fixes the social promotion problem
 - iv) Aff fixes problem of low standards
 - v) We don't have to fix every problem