

# **BERGEN COUNTY DEBATE LEAGUE CONSTITUTION**

(Revised: 9/99)

## **PURPOSE:**

The purpose of the Bergen County Debate League is to promote among the participants of the member schools the highest quality debating experience in a competitive, challenging, well-organized, and highly supervised series of annual tournaments. Coaches will seek to instill among all debaters a true spirit of fair competition, while enhancing the special skills of research, critical thinking, and argumentation to develop articulate and intelligent students and citizens of the community.

## **MEMBERSHIP:**

- \* Any high school in the Bergen County region is eligible for membership after approval by the member schools and payment of the annual dues.
- \* Each member school should participate in both varsity and junior varsity tournaments.
- \* The authorized coach, or an officially designated substitute, must accompany the school's team to all tournaments.
- \* Member schools are expected to host at least one varsity and junior varsity tournament each year.
- \* Coaches are expected to attend and participate in the planning meetings that are held at the beginning and the end of each season.
- \* All member schools are expected to attend and participate in the preparations for the year end Awards Ceremony and Banquet.

## **OFFICERS:**

President - shall be elected biannually by the coaches of the member schools at the year- end planning meeting, and shall preside over all ceremonies and meetings, and be the ultimate arbiter in the case of disputes.

Secretary - shall also be selected biannually by the member coaches, and shall be responsible for all league correspondence, as well as taking minutes at the coaches' meetings and distribution of them among the membership.

Treasurer - shall be chosen at the same biannual election as the President and the Secretary, and shall be responsible for billing the member schools for the annual dues, maintaining a suitable bank account of those monies, and disbursing same for expenditures incurred by the league in the course of its activities.

Statistician - a volunteer among the coaches, adept at maintaining clear and complete records, responsible for the accurate accounting of cumulative scores of all varsity and junior varsity debaters, and the assigning of awards to the appropriate debaters at the end of the debate season.

## **VARSITY TOURNAMENTS - Procedures:**

- \* Seven varsity tournaments will be held each year between the months of October and April.
- \* Monthly tournament sites will be determined by mutual consent of the coaches at the year-end planning meeting for the following year.
- \* A maximum of six teams from one school should participate in a varsity tournament, unless the coach of the host school gives special approval for more teams to debate.
- \* Each coach should call the coach of the host school at least several days before a tournament date to indicate the number of teams participating in a tournament.
- \* Before leaving one's own school for a tournament on the morning of a debate, the coach should call the host school to confirm the number of participating teams.
- \* Each participating school should provide one judge for every two teams in the tournament.
- \* Junior and Senior Honors students should be chosen judges. (Revised: 6/2/98)
- \* Judges must attend a pre-season clinic.
- \* The host school will appoint timekeepers for each debate, and the host coach will instruct them in the proper procedures.
- \* The host school will arrange for appropriate classrooms to be used for the debates.
- \* Varsity teams will debate four rounds, with two rounds as both the affirmative and the negative.
- \* The affirmative team will be responsible for writing the resolution on the blackboard in the classroom.
- \* Coaches will randomly schedule the pairings for the first two rounds of each varsity tournament.
- \* The third and the fourth rounds will be power-paired, with the top and the bottom teams randomly paired in the final rounds.
- \* Teams should not reveal the identity of their schools.
- \* Results should not be revealed until the end of the day.
- \* Appropriate prizes for both team and individual speaker achievements will be distributed by the coaches or an administrator of the host school at a post-tournament assembly of all debaters, judges, and coaches.
- \* In case of ties, duplicate prizes will be awarded to the individuals or the teams.
- \* Only one team prize will be awarded to a school.

- \* At the end of each tournament, each coach will receive ballots and aggregate scores for the tournament.
- \* The coach of the host school must forward the individual results to the league statistician as soon as possible after the tournament.
- \* The **President's Award** (formerly the Ethel Gamble Coaches Award, named for a League founder and a Paramus H.S. Debate Coach), will be awarded annually to a successful varsity debater who displays sound attributes of good sportsmanship and the best characteristics of a good team debater.

### **JUNIOR VARSITY TOURNAMENTS - Procedures:**

- \* Seven junior varsity tournaments will be held each year between the months of October and April.
- \* JV tournaments will be held after school and will consist of only two rounds of debate with every team being affirmative and negative for one round each.
- \* **Junior Varsity Tournaments shall begin no later than 4 PM.**
- \* Debaters who participate in two varsity tournaments may no longer debate at the Junior Varsity level
- \* With the exception of schools new to the League, or seniors new to their schools and the debate program, seniors may compete in Varsity tournaments, and may not participate on the Junior Varsity level.

(Revised: 6/2/98)

- \* Awards will be distributed to JV debaters who successfully complete two Rounds undefeated.
- \* Varsity judges or varsity debaters should be used as judges for junior varsity tournaments.

## GUIDELINES FOR JUDGES

### GENERAL POINTS:

- \* Judging is an integral part of debating; without judges there can be no debates.
- \* Judges should be impartial and have no preconceived opinions about the topic or the debaters.
- \* A judge should let the debaters debate, and not personally get caught up in the arguments.
- \* Judge **each debate** on what happens in **that debate**.
- \* Judges should be knowledgeable, objective, and have a strong interest in the process of debate.
- \* Judges should consider five major issues in the debate:
  - a. Topicality: does the affirmative's plan meet the requirements of the topic? Is it within the limits of the resolution?
  - b. Need: is there a need for the proposed change?
  - c. Inherency: can the present system solve the problem?
  - d. Solvency: will the affirmative plan solve the problem?  
The Affirmative Team does not have to prove that their plan will work; but must prove that it **can** work.
  - e. Desirability: do the advantages of the plan outweigh the disadvantages?
- \* "Fiat Power" provides that the plan of the affirmative team will be adopted provided that the affirmative gives convincing arguments for its adoption.
- \* The tone of the ballot is significant: be positive whenever possible, but be specific concerning criticisms, produce a ballot that will help the debaters learn.
- \* Distinguish between genuine aggressiveness and **obnoxious behavior**. Deduct one **point** for each incident of rudeness. A team that is consistently rude should lose the debate.

### SCORING:

- It is the judge's responsibility to decide which of the competing teams wins the debate.
- Your decision should be based on two basic considerations:
  - a. Who won the debate in terms of arguments presented?
  - b. Who did the better job of presenting the arguments?
- A deficient argument must be recognized and refuted by the opposing team.
- A judge should not give team points for a personal preference of debating style.

- A judge should give points for a debater's skill in analysis, clarity of organization, validity of arguments, and adequacy of refutation.
- For the negative team to be successful, they must "clash" with the opponents and argue against **the viability of the affirmative's plan**. If there is no clash, the negative team should be penalized.
- The first affirmative speech must include at least a 30-second summary of the team's plan.
- The affirmative team may choose an area within the topic on which they wish to debate. Their plan must be topical, workable, acceptable, and fundable.
- The negative team must prove to you that the affirmative's plan is deficient in one of these areas.
- The affirmative team must also demonstrate a problem with the present system, and that there is a need for a change, and that the status quo is not meeting resolving the problem; and must offer a plan which meets those needs.
- The negative team only has to demonstrate that the present system is working, and that there is no need for a change; or that the plan is not topical, workable, acceptable, or fundable.
- Both teams must support their assertions with reasonable evidence, which will determine the quality of their presentations.
- No new arguments may be presented in the rebuttal, but new evidence may be presented to support arguments made earlier.
- The negative team may not propose **a counter-plan**.
- In case of a tie, the negative will be awarded the decision.

## **PROCEDURES:**

- \* A judge who has a personal connection with any of the debaters that might influence the decision should immediately report to the coaches and request a substitute.
- \* A judge's primary task is to listen very carefully; do not talk to anyone during the debate.
- \* Under no circumstances are judges to talk to the debaters. If a debater addresses a judge, inform your coach as soon as possible.
- \* In completing the ballot, write the names of each debater in the appropriate box with your comments.
- \* If debaters inquire about the outcome of a debate, simply reply the "I am not at liberty to let you know who won."

- \* Judges should document penalties for time: one point to be assessed for every 30 seconds that a speaker is short in a speech.
- \* Always use a hard pen that will clearly mark all of the copies of the ballot.
- \* Double check the score for accuracy; do not use decimals, only whole numbers, and be certain to mark each column according to the maximum score for that category.
- \* Do not finish the ballot until the entire debate is completed.
- \* Make sure your descriptive adjectives in the comments match the score given to the debaters, i.e. 'good' = 7-8 points on a 10 point scale, 4 points on a 5-point scale.
- \* Be sure that team scores are also on the correct scale, i.e. a 10 point scale for constructive speeches, a 5 point scale for cross-x and rebuttals.
- \* Be judicious and conservative.
- \* Judges should report to their assigned room five minutes before the debate is to begin.
- \* The timekeeper at the start of each debate will give Judges an empty ballot.
- \* Upon the completion of the debate, the judge shall make sure that the ballot is thoroughly completed.
- \* The judge will give the completed ballot in the sealed envelope to the timekeeper who will bring it to the area designated by the coaches.
- \* The judge shall be certain to accurately fill in the names of the debaters and their school codes in the appropriate spaces on the ballot and shall also sign it at the end of the debate.
- \* Under no circumstances will the judge reveal his decision to the timekeeper or to the individual debaters at the end of the debate, or later in the day. The results will be publicly announced at the end of the tournament.

## **Information for Judges**

(Revised 9/97)

### **Points For Consideration**

- Each constructive speech will be five minutes. The first affirmative speech must contain 90 seconds of the plan. [Editor's note: This contradicts an earlier rule for 30 seconds of plan.]
- Both speakers of a team must engage in cross-questioning although in no set order.
- The floating time of three minutes for preparation is to be used at any time the debaters choose.
- The first affirmative speaker has two major responsibilities:
  - To establish contentions and needs
  - To give a brief outline of the plan (Essential details do not have to be given until the second affirmative speech.)

- During the cross-questioning of the first affirmative speaker, if the questioner asks for too many details of the plan, he/she can respond with "My partner will handle that".
- There has to be a clash: negative has to respond to what affirmative says.
- NO CLASH - NO DEBATE - Affirmative wins.
- The negative team is not required to defend the status quo.
- The negative team is not permitted to present a counterplan.
- Affirmative will be using previously prepared material: therefore, they will be judged on use of supporting evidence, persuasiveness, logic, and the ability to defend the positions that the team has established.
- In awarding points for constructive speeches, the total score should reflect the speech itself and its defense during cross-examination.
- Fiat power cannot be debated: neither team can argue whether or not Congress will pass a plan into law.
- No new arguments can be brought up during the rebuttals: new evidence that supports old arguments can be used.
- No visual aids can be used.

## **GUIDELINES FOR DEBATERS:**

- Debaters should not reveal the names of their schools.
- Both teams should write their names on the blackboard.
- The affirmative team should write the resolution on the blackboard.
- Debaters will not have computer assistance, dress in costume, use visual aids. To do so will result in the loss of the debate.
- Each debater is judged on the constructive speech, the defense under cross-examination, the cross-examination of the other team, and the rebuttal.
- Constructive speeches should be up to five minutes in duration. If the STOP card is held up, the speaker may finish the statement.
- Constructive speeches should be delivered without hesitation and in a pleasing and convincing manner. Debaters must state their cases clearly and aim to interest the class in attendance.
- Rapid-fire speech is discouraged.
- Rudeness and intimidation techniques should be avoided and will be penalized.
- Accumulating five penalty points will result in the suspension of the debater from one tournament.
- Cross-examination will be two minutes in duration.
- The cross-examiners should ask questions and not make statements.
- The speaker being questioned may expand beyond a 'yes' or 'no' answer.
- If a question is asked, and the STOP sign is raised, the speaker has the choice to answer or not.
- There will be a three-minute preparation period, followed by three-minute rebuttals, one by each team, with the negative going first. Either speaker may present the rebuttal for the team.
- There may be no new arguments presented in the rebuttals, but new evidence may be offered to support previously presented arguments.
- The first affirmative speaker must give an outline of the team's plan for at least 30 seconds.
- The negative team must show that there is a serious flaw in the affirmative plan. They may negate the affirmative team's arguments or attempt to prove that the stated need is exaggerated, and the plan is unnecessary.
- The negative team must make the judge doubt a significant part of the affirmative team's plan.

- Since the affirmative team sets the parameters of the debate, the negative team must provide a real clash with the affirmative case.
- To win, the negative team must show a serious drawback in the affirmative case, which the affirmative plan cannot readily overcome.
- In the event of a tie score, the negative team wins.

## **GUIDELINES FOR TIMERS:**

- Timekeeping is an integral part of any debate tournament. Coaches are advised to select students who have some debate experience and who have been properly trained. Timekeepers should:
  - Have a watch that reflects seconds. The failure of the debaters to utilize their time fully may result in penalties, which could affect the debate's outcome.
  - Pick up the ballot and time cards from the host coach before the first round of debate.
  - Proceed immediately to your assigned room.
  - Give the ballot to the judge.
  - Position yourself where both the debaters and the judge can easily see the cards.
  - Be certain the team codes and resolution have been written on the board.
  - Keep accurate time - apprising the judge of any discrepancies.
  - Collect the ballot from the judge at the end of the debate
  - Proceed immediately to the host coach with the envelope containing the ballot.
  - Wait for the next assignment.
  - **Do not** look at the ballot for the completed results.
  - **Do not take** the completed ballot to your next assignment.

## AMENDMENTS

### I. MINIMUM PARTICIPATION STANDARDS:

- A. All member schools shall, to the best of their ability, participate in **all** League events.
- B. To maintain full membership in good standing in the Bergen County Debate League, member schools must participate in at least 75% of all League events each academic year.
- C. League events include all of the following:
  - 1. Junior Varsity tournaments
  - 2. Varsity Tournaments
  - 3. Annual Judges Clinic
  - 4. Year End Awards Ceremony
  - 5. Annual Baylor Clinic
  - 6. Annual Varsity Invitational Tournament
  - 7. Annual Junior Varsity Invitational Tournament
- D. Member schools, which participate only at the junior varsity level of competition, should compete in at least five (5) JV tournaments.
- E. Member schools, which compete only at the junior varsity level, and yet fulfill the 75% participation requirement, shall be considered **Associate Members**.
- F. Any member school which does not fulfill the minimum participation requirement will have their membership status reviewed by the League president, two neutral coaches, and the coach of the school in question.
- G. Coaches will be asked to meet the minimum standards and may be Asked to withdraw from the League if those standards are not met.  
Adopted: 6/94

### II. DRESS CODE:

- A. Good judgement should be exercised by all debaters and judges at all debates, conscious that a presentable appearance is appropriate when representing one's school in public. Debaters are not permitted to wear jeans, sweatsuits or sweatshirts, and sneakers. Debaters and judges may never wear hats during a debate tournament.
- B. **For Varsity debates** it is recommended that debaters be encouraged to wear the following:
  - BOYS: suit or sport jacket, dress shirt, sport or dress trousers, Necktie, sport or dress shoes
  - GIRLS: appropriate dress, skirt, or suit
- C. For **Junior Varsity Debates** both Boys and Girls should wear "good" school Clothes, and appear as neat and presentable as possible.

D. **Judges** for both Varsity and **Junior Varsity Debates** should follow the guidelines in #1, and make a clean and neat appearance.

E. At **no time should debaters or judges wear** the following apparel:

- a. Sneakers
- b. Jeans
- c. Hats
- d. Sweatshirts or sweatpants of any kind

Adopted: 6/95

**III. OBNOXIOUS POINTS:**

**Debaters**, who accrue five "obnoxious points" **during a debate season, will be suspended from** the next tournament.

Adopted: 6/92

**IV.** If the **fifth obnoxious point** is earned in the last tournament of the year, the team's scores will be disallowed for the day, regardless of the grade level

Adopted: 3/19/96

**V. NOTIFICATION OF HOST SCHOOL:** The Coach of the **visiting** school must call the host school for any tournament - Novice, JV, or **Varsity** - at least one day prior to the debate with notification of the number of debaters and judges who will be in attendance.

On the day of each tournament, each coach must call the host coach with the exact numbers of debaters and judges so that scheduling may be completed.

Adopted: 5/31/98

**VI. JOKE DEBATES:** **Joke debates** of any kind are not permitted. The tournament results for a team that presents a joke debate will be disallowed.

A Joke Debate is defined as: "a frivolous presentation which does not seriously engage the opposing team in an intelligent clash of ideas related to the debate theme, and whose primary purpose is to entertain and/or play to the amusement of the classroom audience".

The judge is charged with the responsibility to bring a possible joke debate to the attention of the coaches present at the tournament. It is they who will make the determination whether the activity fits the above definition. For those who are judged to have participated in a joke debate, the penalties will be:

- a. An automatic loss of that round
- b. Disqualification of the team's school from any awards won at that tournament.
- c. Repercussions of a disciplinary nature imposed by the team's own school district

Adopted: 3/97 & 6/97

**VII.** English is the only language that may be used by a debater in a BCDL tournament.

Adopted 3/18/99

**VIII.** Concerning the availability of sources of quotations used by a debater in a BCDL tournament:

- The actual source or a photocopy must be in the possession of the debater at the time of use; such may NOT be in the form of a debater's notes.
- Any protests related to the misuse of sources must be stated immediately, or before the ballot is submitted by the judge for scoring. A team's intention to protest must also be noted on the ballot.
- The issue must be resolved during the lunch break, but no later than the presentation of awards. All decisions are to be made by a consensus of the coaches present.
- The penalty for the first offense is zero points, including speaker points for the team involved.
- A second offense will result in exclusion from the next tournament.

Adopted: 3/18/99