

Parent Judge's "Training" Notes

Agenda

- Parent Participation
- Training for Club
- Partnering

Parent Participation

Premise: Coach and the students need parent participation for several reasons:

- Encouragement... especially the novices
- Listening and talking through ideas at home
- In-club judging & critiquing

Caveat: This stuff is not rocket science! *Every parent has the knowledge & discernment to help these guys pursue excellence in debate!*

League Judging Philosophy

- Goal of 50/50 mix of Parent ("experienced") & Community ("inexperienced") Judges
 - Balance between knowledgeable judges and the "common man"
- Parents are always needed to help judge or time at tournaments
 - If you go to tournaments you will likely be asked to help judge.

League Judge Training

- All judges are "oriented" at tournaments
- Slide show is available from the NCFCA website

Note: *Community judges are given little to no guidance on debate theory... It's just not practical to try to instruct volunteers on the details of debate theory in a brief (10 to 15 minute) presentation*

- It is up to the debaters to explain content, terminology and theory as needed

As you help by watching and giving critiques in club you will learn quite a bit about debate. By the time you are asked to judge in a tournament, you will be experts!

Training for Club

Club Practice Debates

Debaters learn by debating and we will debate a lot

- 9 teams = 4 to 5 simultaneous debates in club
- **We will need 4 to 5 judges and the same number of timers** each week at club
- Alumni used now and then later on to judge rounds

Judging in Club

You are qualified to judge in club... even if you've never done it. → Recall 50/50 split on the judge pool! Starting next week we'll start giving feedback in club to team 1AC presentations.

General guideline for feedback:***We want to be direct in the feedback on content, clarity and style.***

If you hear anything that gives an opportunity for encouragement or improvement – speak up!

Note: *In-club rounds are judged “similar” to judging at a tournament except for the focus on feedback.*

Your feedback at tournaments is restricted to written form on the ballots you submit after the round.

Our feedback in club is verbal – unless you choose to follow up with an email... which is great if you have the time for it, but not required.

What does a round look like in club?

1. The debaters should setup quickly and pray together before the round
2. They need to introduce themselves to the judge
 - Practice shaking hands, good eye contact, smiles, etc.
 - They should ask your judging philosophy / experience (practice for both of you)
3. Organization & time management is important → the Aff team needs to start right away
 - The club environment is relaxed/safe, but encourage them to start quickly
4. Take notes (“flow”) during their speeches for two purposes:
 - Just like at a tournament → to reach a decision
 - But more importantly in club... so you can give feedback!
5. They need to shake hands w/ each other and you at the end of the round
- 6. Note: the round will last 75 minutes max**
7. Then you will provide feedback you have for them until you are done or we run out of time 😊
 - If there is time, others in the room can add their feedback
 - However, if you are the designated judge be sure to keep charge of the room because sometimes alumni or other spectators can try to “help” too much
 - Watch the time and watch that the debaters are not “fire hosed”

The range of what you cover can be broad.

Note: *You are not expected to be an expert on theory.*

- *If you know the theory, and see the debaters made a mistake – tell them!*
- *If you don't know the theory, don't sweat it. Defer the question to others.*

Areas of Feedback

There is no way you would (or should) cover all of this during a verbal critique, so **pick and choose what mattered to you as a judge.**

- ✓ The basics
 - Correct **pronunciation**, sentence structure, proper verb usage, eye contact, filler words
 - “ums”, “like”, “you know”, or the more *advanced* “basically” and “essentially”
 - **Body language**: Are they nervous? Are they rocking or perhaps stiff as a board?
 - **Habits**... clicking pens, tapping the podium, chewing gum (*a big no-no – stop the round and have them toss it*), etc.
 - **Breathing**: Listen for high pitched tone, low volume or red face
 - **Volume, pace, articulation**...
- ✓ Style
 - Good use of **humor**? Correct condescending humor in an encouraging way
 - **Analogies**: It's great to use them – encourage this. But they need to make sense!
 - Tell them when they don't
 - Were they **persuasive**? What could they have done to better persuade you?
- ✓ Logical clarity: Not necessarily theory; this is from your perspective as their judge
 - Does what they say **make sense**?
 - Are their arguments **structured** reasonably?
- ✓ Overall presentation
 - What was your overall **impression** of how they presented their position?
 - Did they use **too much debate-speak** without explaining it?
 - Especially if you are a new judge and they know that!
 - Was each **speech coherent as a unit**? Does the speech flow as a unit?
 - Think of the speeches as essays... how would you grade them?
 - Are the debater's **subsequent speeches “linked?”**
 - Individually, did they build on what they said in a previous speech or Cross-Ex?
 - They need to see the big picture of the round as a conversation
- ✓ Teamwork
 - Do the **team's speeches seem to link together**? Are they telling a cohesive “story?”
 - **Table communication**
 - Are they communicating at all!? Often novices will not at first.
 - How are they using of **prep time**?
 - Are they **encouraging one another**? Encourage them to encourage each other... especially when mistakes are made.

- ✓ Character
 - **Cross examinations need to be firm, but not rude**
 - Are they **gracious to their opponents?**
 - In cross examination, but also as they listen
 - **"Table manners"**... whispering or otherwise disrupting the opponent's speech
 - They have to communicate, but encourage them to do it without disrupting the others
- ✓ Hygiene is fair game:
 - Hair uncombed or in eyes? (Be gracious in the feedback here.)
 - This feedback is often received more easily from adults other than their own parents. Right? 😊
 - Even better when it's on a ballot at a tournament
 - **Note:** Club attire is casual so save feedback on tournament attire for tournaments
- ✓ You can comment on the **speaker point categories** (much of the above relates to this already):
 - Delivery
 - Persuasiveness
 - Organization
 - Evidence
 - Cross-Examination
 - Refutation

Giving feedback

- Flow (take notes) as if you are judging the round to get to a decision
 - Giving a decision at the end of your feedback is optional
 - We'll not give win/loss results in club for the first month or so
 - When you do, always **give a specific "RFD" (Reason for Decision)**
- Take enough notes to can spend at least 5 to 10 minutes at the end of the round giving feedback
- Feedback should be **balanced & reasonable**
 - For each team and each debater:
 - Point out what was good; Point out what needs work
 - Be humorous when appropriate, but be careful... some take it well; others, not so much
 - This often helps take the pressure off during the critique
 - Suggestions are great!
 - Share ideas you have to make their case or arguments better
- **Beware of "fire hosing" the new debaters**
 - Learning to debate is a process that takes months and even years to "get." Be sensitive and do not overwhelm with feedback.
 - Information overload happens quickly! Give an achievable list of things to work on.

Note to Alumni: *You need to really be aware of this last "warning."*

Alumni tend to want to fix everything all at once. Careful. Watch for signs that information overload has struck the poor novice you are trying to help.

Again: Don't fire hose; give them an achievable list of things to work on.

Important: Be my eyes and ears.

Some of the debaters are really good at asking me questions or admitting to me they are just not getting something. This will take time for others to be comfortable doing.

Please make a note on any areas that a particular debater is really struggling with and let me know so we can address it.

Approach Guidelines

This may shift a bit as the year progresses, but "in general":

- **Varsity students**

- Remember that they need to be encouraged when they do well, and they will...
- However, these guys can take what you can dish out... and they want it!
 - They have higher expectations and really want your honest feedback to improve
- Call them on.

- **Novice students**

- Some will pick up the material quickly; some will not... it varies a lot based on where they are in age, development stage, and exposure to the material.
- It is okay to stop a speech mid way if they are really struggling
 - Just ask some questions to help them through it
 - This can be the merciful thing to do when they are getting started

Note: You CANNOT do this at a tournament unless it's a Round Robin AND the judge orientation person says it's okay!!!

- Sometimes new debaters will only use a fraction of their speeches
 - Encourage them to use more time... ultimately the goal is to fill all the speech time
 - For these first few weeks and months, it is okay to stop the round, talk it through with them and have them give the speech again, but be sensitive to time

It bears repeating.... If the debaters talk theory without explaining in this first month, stop the round and ask them to explain it to you – even the varsity debaters. They should know better, but will sometimes slip.

- It helps you to learn it, and it really helps them to solidify the concepts by explaining them to you
- Hint: When they ask you for a judging philosophy you can remind them to explain any theory!

Caveat: If you know the theory and let them know that in the judge's philosophy, then they can make assumptions and not spend time on explaining it.

Quick warning to parents of novice debaters!

- It is really easy to fall into the trap of making comparisons – restrain yourselves!
 - Every student is at a different level of experience and ability (novice & varsity)
 - Some students come in with more related experience or natural abilities
 - Some students will learn faster than others
- It is also easy for the students to fall into comparisons – remind them to restrain themselves!
- You will not judge rounds with your own child (ideally)
 - Speaking from experience as a parent who has done this all too often... if you are watching an in-club round with your student try to resist giving a bunch of feedback right after the round
 - It overwhelms and embarrasses them in front their peers and believe me, at that point they will already have enough feedback
 - Now... the car trip home after club is another matter ;)
- Do watch for areas where you can encourage your children at home, but keep in mind the general feedback guidelines... balance it and do not give too much to work on at once
- You will see progress and be amazed over the coming months!

Partnering

- **The Process is not Formulaic and is Imperfect**
 - The challenge is to get the best possible pairings across the board
 - Many trade-offs and considerations
- **Several of the Pairings Will be a Surprise**
 - That is always the case
 - Just no way to take this many kids and give everybody what they want
 - And often what they want isn't necessarily best!
- **There's always a LOT of Emotion / Anticipation**
 - Partnerships are important!
 - These relationships do have a big impact on the year...
- **Some will be Ecstatic, Others will say "Hmm..."**
- **There are Some Young Teams**
 - But they should not feel alone in this... everyone gets the help they need

Encouragement is Key

- **As Parents You Can/Should Encourage Them**
 - Your own child as well as their partner
- **Speak to What God is Doing Here**
 - Be on the lookout for this and talk about it
 - Again, this is not just about debate
- **Be a Facilitator**
 - Facilitate time for them to work together
 - Get the kids together outside of debate
 - Varsity families, host group research sessions and invite the less experience teams!
- **You Can do a Lot to Foster a Great Year!**

Communication is Key

- **Debaters Will (Should!) Talk About:**
- **Source books → More than Blue Book?**
 - Be sure to discuss cost sharing
- **Time Commitment**
 - Working individually
 - Working together...
 - Meeting face-to-face
 - Recommended, but doesn't have to be weekly
 - Talking by phone
 - Using email and instant messaging is pretty important
 - School/work commitment

Communication (2)

- **Tournament Participation**
 - **Talk about expectations and specific tournaments**
 - This was considered during partnering
 - Still talk it over because schedules change
 - Travel
 - Talk about this well ahead of time
 - Are both families going? Just one? Or?
 - Figure out housing early... crisis planning is horrible
 - **Wardrobe**
 - This sorts itself out with the young ladies
 - The guys often don't care... they need to care!

A Word about Conflict

- **Don't be surprised if there is conflict**
- **Partnerships are often a new experience**
 - Might be the first time they have the "opportunity" to be forced to work through issues with someone outside of your family
- **This is iron-on-iron as they sort out how to work together & how best to run arguments**
 - Bless your debaters by encouraging them through the process
- **Remind the kids to take the attitude that if there is a problem, look in the mirror first!**
- **They will learn a ton from this experience; about life, not just debate!**