

Why Debate: Nicole's Story



Nicole Cornish

Director of Curriculum &
Instruction

Athens ISD




Andrew Cornish
Director of Operations,
CHRISTUS Health Hospital
Tyler, Texas



Meredith McDonald Nelson

Professional Sales &
Fundraising



Lauren Green Vogel
Bronz Medalist, 2013
UIL Policy Debate

The right side of the image features a green background with a circular inset containing a smaller version of the portrait of Lauren Green Vogel. Below the portrait, her name and achievements are listed in a dark green font. At the bottom of the green area, there are faint white geometric line patterns.



Matthew Hernandez

2-Time UIL Policy Debate
Champion, Athens HS

Debate has done so much for me as a college student and into adulthood. As an undergrad, I was far ahead of my peers in critical thinking skills and knowledge of the world around me.

As a seminary student, the rhetorical skills I gained in debate have been formative in my own writing and public speaking.

Debate made me aware of the world around me. It helped me to see the problems that our culture and society faces and how to fix it.



True Head

2-Time UIL Policy Debate
Champion, Athens HS

Why Debate: Rich's Story



Rich Edwards,
Professor of Communication
Baylor University

Rich Edwards' high school coach was recently inducted into Newton Senior High School's Hall of Fame. Rich provided the following comment:

Frank Kruse is indeed a Hall of Fame teacher!! Other than my immediate family, he has had the greatest impact on my life.

I say this even though I experienced a large number of amazing teachers, but Frank Kruse stands above the rest as a mentor, motivator, coach, and friend. I followed into the debate coaching ranks because of his example, and I attribute any success that I have achieved to him.



Frank Kruse

Retired Debate Coach

Newton Senior High School

Newton, Iowa

Rich's Favorite Success Story:

Leonard Gray, a philosophy major, debated his senior year at Georgia State University, never above the junior varsity level.

Favorite Book (and there's a story):
Austin Freeley's *Argumentation and Debate*

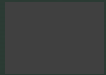


Leonard Gray

Attorney, JD, U. of Georgia
Law School

Senior Underwriting Counsel
in the Atlanta Agency office
of First American Title
Insurance Company

Why Debate: Other Stories





Oprah Winfrey

Nashville East High School

Commented about her high school debate background in her Supreme Court induction speech: “That was an experience that I can say without hesitation was the one activity that best prepared me for future success in law and in life”



Ketanji Brown Jackson
Supreme Court Justice
Miami Palmetto High
School Debater, 1988

My association with speech and debate spans 53 years, beginning in junior high school. I cannot imagine what my life would look like now had I not debated. Because of the valuable skills I learned from debate, I eventually became a prosecutor and trial attorney.

First, debate gave me the confidence to speak in front of other people you do not know and who do not know you.



Mark Frazier

U.S. Attorney

Western District of Texas

Second, cross examination forced me to learn to think quickly, enabling me answer leading questions designed to undermine my case in a way that supported the position I was taking on an issue.

Third, debate taught me how to construct and sequence arguments that would be persuasive to others.

Fourth, I learned how to choose among the arguments available to defend my position and to commit to and develop those choices.



Mark Frazier

U.S. Attorney

Western District of Texas

Fifth, I learned the art of evaluating your audience (the judge) and to make a presentation that was captivating and held their attention throughout the round.

Sixth, and most importantly, debate taught me how to think critically: to examine every side of any issue--to view it and embrace it just as my opponent would view and embrace it--so I could then see where the weaknesses lie in my opponent's arguments and prepare persuasive responses in defense of my own position.



Mark Frazier

U.S. Attorney

Western District of Texas

Debate taught me how to think, not what to think. These are all skills I still use every day in the courtroom.



Mark Frazier

U.S. Attorney

Western District of Texas

Academic Proof

Competitive debate programs exist across the globe, and participation in debate has been linked to improved critical thinking skills and academic performance.

Peer-reviewed study involving 1,145 debaters and 34,643 non-debaters

Debate participation was associated with 0.66 points higher GPA, 52.43 points higher SAT Math, and 57.05 points higher SAT Reading/Writing scores. Findings suggest that competitive debate is associated with better academic outcomes for students.

The study was conducted by Tomohiro M. Ko, MPH, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, and Briana Mezuk, PhD, Department of Epidemiology, School of Public Health, University of Michigan.

Researchers at the U. of Michigan, in partnership with NAUDL and the Houston Urban Debate League and funded by the Citi Foundation (2021)

DEBATE 

+0.66 HIGHER GPA

+52 MATH SAT SCORES

+57 READING SAT SCORES

GREATER LIKELIHOOD OF
MEETING COLLEGE
READINESS BENCHMARKS

Testimonials

Why Debate



TRANSFORMED
BY ACADEMIC
DISCOURSE



Shawn Briscoe

Experience: Coached at Ft. Walton Beach in Florida, South Anchorage High School, and the University of Alaska Anchorage. Became program director of the St. Louis Urban Debate League in 2013

Teamwork, critical thinking, interpreting data, and communication skills. These soft skills are increasingly part of the skills gap facing our nation's workforce.

These important skills can be found in an extracurricular activity that supports the standard curriculum and the students it serves. Policy debate alumni learn these foundational skills needed in our modern workforce, creating opportunities to meet the needs of industry and help students succeed in the modern economy.



Ryan Davis

President, Washington State
Workforce Education
Council

Debate has played a major role in shaping my ability to do my job today. Enabling me with critical thinking skills, debate has been instrumental to overcoming challenges on my path to the boardroom. . . .

Debate started me down a path of listening to what was being said in a room and formulating what I was going to say. . . .

Debate made me think not only on my feet, but also made me think more quickly.



Luke Savoie

CEO, Elbit Systems of America

A Fort Worth-based company with 3,600 employees, 70+ research labs, focusing on cutting edge technological development

One of the greatest skills I learned through debate was how to research effectively and read articles for evidence.

Effective research and the ability to outline my argument, bolstered by evidence were the cornerstones to my first professional job: grant writing.

In addition to all the other debate skills that I have applied to my professional career, perhaps one of the most important in being a fundraiser is emotional resilience. Just like in debate, you lose before you win.



Amy Cram Helwich

Nonprofit Fundraiser
Director, Minnesota Urban
Debate League

M.A. in Public
Administration, University of
Pittsburgh

B.S., Political Science,
University of Wyoming

”Debate forged the courage that I have today. Prior to debate, I was a very shy, fearful, and socially anxious person. My anxiety hindered my ability to speak clearly. . . .

I also credit my analytical abilities to debate. I often have to address unique problems, based on the fact that no two clients are the same, and no two lives are the same. . . .

I would never have gotten this far without debate.”



Jonathon Sanchez, Attorney,
Rosette LLP

Graduate of Sandra Day
O’Conner School of Law at
Arizona State University with
a practice focusing on the
rights of indigenous peoples

It has been twenty years since I participated in or witnessed a debate match, but there was a time in my life when I ate, slept, and breathed this activity. I loved the fast-paced, think-on-your-feet, adrenaline rush of tracking and defeating your opponent's arguments. I remember the focused concentration it took to remain calm, confident, and level-headed as you were cross-examined.

My experiences in high school debate helped give me the confidence, presence and poise to walk into battles on behalf of my patients and other kids like them.



Sarah Garwood, MD

Professor in the Pediatrics
Division of the Washington
University School of
Medicine in St. Louis

The parallels between debate and software development run a lot deeper than the mere mechanics of research. There is an extensive amount of analysis that goes on behind the scenes in these two fields that draw from very similar skill sets. Ultimately both debate and software development hinge on the ability to take a large complex issue and break it down into its component pieces and understand how they relate to one another. The practical skills debaters learn, as well as their philosophical approaches towards conflict and decision-making prepare debaters for immense success in any field.



Marshall McMullen

Software Developer &
Principal Engineer at
NetApp SolidFire

Competitive forensics has had a profound impact on my life in so many ways that it is a challenge to focus on one long enough to compose a coherent piece of writing about it.

Thanks to my time as a debater, I am capable of having civil discussions with people who disagree with me on a very fundamental level on hot-button topics.

In short, debate taught me how to be an informed and engaged member of the voting populace, something that I consider to be the most basic responsibility of adulthood.

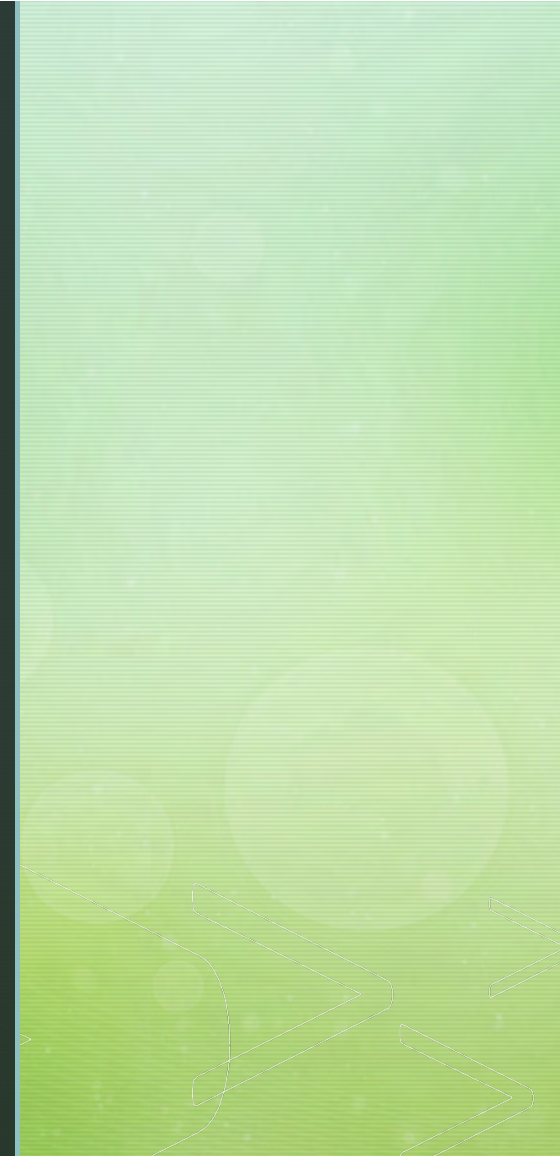


Katy Bishoff

Elementary Educator

High School debater at
Cheyenne East High School

UIL Debate Champions: Where Are They Now?



The unique part of debate preparation is the research that is conducted on both sides of the argument. That is a life skill that few people fully appreciate. The ability to think and reason for the other side of a point helps to win an argument, and I also think it helps to develop a broader understanding of topics.

So why should you debate? I think it teaches great lessons in competition, preparation, communication, emotional intelligence, and teamwork. Is that why I did it? No, not really. I debated because it was fun.



Dave "Seymour" Haworth

2-Time State UIL Debate
Champion for West Orange
Stark (1989-90)

Member of the Thunderbirds



Shawn Achor is a two-time State Debate Champion from Waco Midway (1995-96)

He is considered one of the world's leading experts on the connection between happiness and success. His research on mindset made the cover of Harvard Business Review, his TED talk is one of the most popular of all time with over 25 million views, and his lecture airing on PBS has been seen by millions. He one of only two speakers to ever be invited to speak to the White House staff at Camp David



Shawn Achor

Harvard-Trained
Psychologist

Researcher and author of
The Happiness Advantage

Has a top-ten TED Talk of all
time

Matthew Murrell won the UIL State Debate Championship for Lindsay High School in 1996.

He was a successful debate coach for a number of years, ultimately attending and Georgetown Law School.

He has argued cases before the U.S. Supreme Court and is currently a professor at the University of Texas Law School



Matthew Murrell

Law Professor

U. of Texas Law School

Reasoner grew up on a small farm five miles outside of San Marcos.

He wrote that “I was too small to do any good at football. So I took up debate and was lucky enough have a great debate coach.”

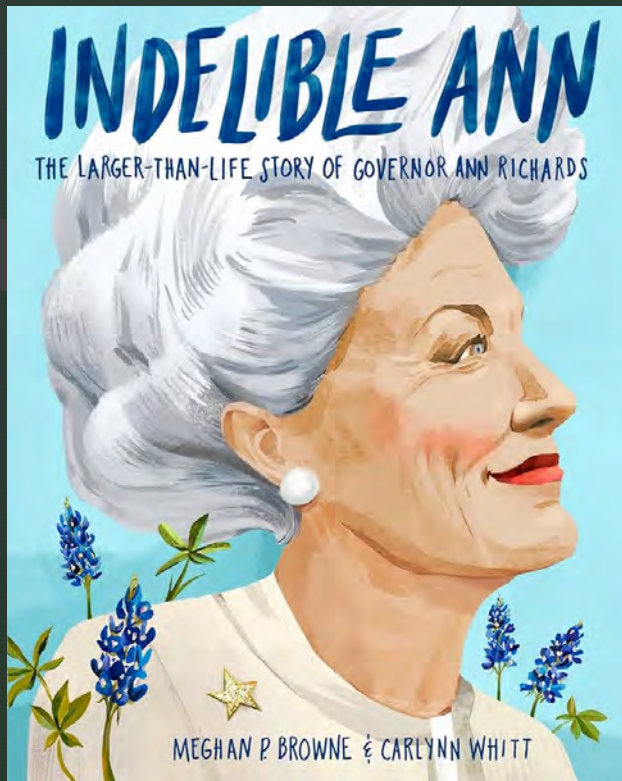
In 1956, he won the UIL State Debate Championship for San Marcos High School



Harry Reasoner

Called a “Billion-Dollar Lawyer,” he clerked for Judge Thurgood Marshall. He made a massive impact on anti-trust, energy, and commercial law in Texas and throughout the U.S.

Ann Willis won the UIL State Debate
Championship for Waco High School in
1950.



Ann (Willis) Richards

Governor of the State of
Texas, 1991-1995

Amy Blankson won the UIL State Debate Championship in 1996 for Waco Midway High School

Amy is a member of the UN Global Happiness Council, and is the only person to have ever received a Point of Light Award from two U.S. Presidents

She serves on Harvard University's Artificial Intelligence for Human Flourishing Council.



Amy Blankson

Co-Founder of the Digital Wellness Institute and author of the best-selling book, *The Future of Happiness*

Schell was a UIL State Debate
Champion for Waco High School in
1957.

He went on to debate at Baylor, winning
the top speaker award at the national
tournament in 1960, beating out
Laurence Tribe from Harvard who was
second speaker that year



George Schell

Successful prosecuting
attorney for the city of Los
Angeles in the 1970s and
1980s

Zarefsky won the UIL State Debate
Championship for Bellaire High School
in 1964

“A teacher’s recommendation that I
become involved on the debate team in
high school proved transformative. Not
only did I thoroughly enjoy the
experience (and discovered that I was
fairly good at it) but I learned that there
was an academic discipline of rhetoric
and argumentation theory that underlay
my experience.”



David Zarefsky

Dean of the School of
Communication,
Northwestern University

Former President, National
Communication Association