

Why emphasize UIL academics?

Coaches' point of view

What are the benefits of building a competitive UIL academic program? We will allow successful coaches to answer that question.

UIL academics:

Enhance classroom learning and improve standardized test scores.

Prepare students for college and work.

Reflect every portion of the basic curriculum.

Develop self-esteem and self-confidence.

Challenge under-achieving students.

Teach important life lessons.

Help students grow as human beings.

UIL academic contestants learn:

The importance of hard work.

Poise, self-control, self-discipline and confidence.

The importance of teamwork.

That winning is more than placing first.

That learning is an endless and thrilling journey.

Through involvement in UIL, teachers become better educators.

By recognizing UIL academic contestants, schools reinforce the importance of learning.

Coach/Director Responses

- UIL academics are a very integral part of any school. UIL academics rest at the very foundation of secondary education, and the more students who get involved in these activities, the better the moral and overall effectiveness of a school.
- The goal is not always to win but to instill success in later life so that the students can learn beyond what was expected and for them to realize that persistence is the key to success in life. Our teachers and administrators accept UIL academics as extension of the classroom and credit such events with the academic achievement of the students as reflected in their grades and standardized exam scores. UIL is synonymous with achieving more success in the classroom through winning, losing, meeting or exceeding expectations, or simply making new relationships that will last a lifetime.

- Educational competition provides a perfect complement to the school's basic educational mission, which is to develop a well-prepared citizen for success in today's every more demanding society.
- It is a joy to encourage (UIL academic competition). It not only builds character and positive values, it also gives the school itself a wonderful focus and direction. Even students not involved in the contests feel the success that has brought honor to our school.
- UIL provides an extrinsic motivation for academic progress by allowing students to receive recognition for their accomplishments. It is one of the most rewarding parts of my job as an educator because it leads to real student growth.
- Our school's educational mission, "Committed to Excellence," goes hand in hand with my philosophy of competition. Academic excellence paired with contention unquestionably prepares our students for the competitive real world.
- Our school's mission statement is, "Building the Future...One Student At a Time." In order to accomplish this mission, "our school, parents and community will join together in partnership designed to produce a safe and orderly learning community within which academic excellence may flourish." I believe the UIL academic competition is the epitome of that academic excellence.

UIL academics enhance classroom learning and improve standardized test scores.

- Our school has received an exemplary accountability rating for four of the last five years, which indicates that our students are doing what it takes to become successful. We have also seen a direct correlation between students who have competed in UIL academics and those who score higher on college entrance exams. I believe that participating in UIL academics gives students the edge they need to be successful and productive citizens.
- I have had several of my UIL team members score perfect or near perfect scores on the math section of the SAT, the PSAT and the ACT. I believe their UIL experience contributed to their high scores. I have also had several former UIL contestants say they also are testing well at the college level, and that the UIL tests helped them be able to focus and work quickly.
- I have had students attend Princeton, Berkeley, Stanford, UT, MIT, Cornell and other universities across the nation. These students developed their talents in the classroom and on the stage at many UIL contests.

- In the events I coach, students have to stay attuned to what is going on in the world around them. This, of course, helps them in virtually every other aspect of their education and lives as well.
- The most important thing UIL competition does for my students is it makes them think. They must learn the ability to think through a problem. It forces them to consider a problem from every possible point of view and come up with a reasonable solution. This broadens their experiences and makes them better people and citizens.

UIL contests prepare students for college and work.

- It is when the students come back to see me, call me or email me after graduation and tell me how much their academic activities and competitions have helped them and are still helping them in their college work and/or career choices that I am encouraged to pack the bags and UIL cases and board the bus again.
- I have seen that students who participate in UIL do much better in their mathematics classes, on standardized tests, in improving their chances for receiving scholarships and being accepted into the best universities. UIL provides ongoing, intellectually-challenging exposure to higher order thinking skills, logic and thought processes that are necessary to apply concepts from Algebra I to Calculus.
- Competition is something that students will encounter in all areas of life. UIL academics provides students the intellectual tools that will lead them to success in school, in society and, ultimately, in life.

In coaching UIL accounting, I believe I am preparing my students to think logically and independently, to believe in themselves, and to use their God-given abilities for the rest of their lives—and not just in accounting.

UIL academic contests reflect every portion of the basic curriculum.

- The superiority of the UIL organization is its diversity of programs. There's a UIL academic contest for just about any student—the gregarious performer, the quiet and thoughtful writer, the mathematician, the accountant. No other program provides as many avenues to success as UIL academics.
- I believe there is a UIL academic contest for every student who wants to participate. I not only preach this to my students but also to my son. I think that my son's admittance to A&M was enhanced by his list of UIL accomplishments.

- There is a contests that is compatible with almost every high school subject. The academic UIL program enriches the students lives on many levels. UIL advances students intellectually above their grade level. It encourages student to do their best and gives them wonderful opportunities to see success first hand. It encourages teamwork. It builds self-esteem. I feel there is no better companion to the classroom instruction than UIL academics.

UIL academics help young people develop self-esteem.

- A quality education involves not just the attainment of knowledge but also the opportunity to build character, realize potential and develop a sense of self-worth. I believe the UIL academic program at our school has been a core ingredient for enhancing what takes place in our classrooms. Within the past seven years, we have seen an increase in our school standards, and I believe UIL academics is the basis for that increase. After all, competition at its best makes us all achieve at higher levels.

- Not everyone steps off the bus with a trophy, but everyone steps off the bus a winner. Any person who has been involved in UIL as long as I have does it for one reason — the students. When you come from an economically disadvantaged community, that involvement often costs you more than the stipend you make. The results are well worth it. Students visit a college campus, eat in a restaurant with linen on the table, and stay in a hotel — many for the very first time. But most importantly, students develop a sense of belonging and accomplishment, and this is bigger than all of us.

- These competitions allow students to gain the much-needed self-confidence needed in the real world. They may not win the competition, but they will know they tried their hardest to do the best they could. What a valuable life lesson.

UIL academic contests challenge under-achieving students.

- We do not assume that low-performing students are incapable of meeting high standards. In fact, we enjoy proving just the opposite. We believe we can improve students' attitudes toward school by raising academic achievement in a warm, fun environment. We give kids a place to belong, therefore encouraging better attendance and classroom performance. We understand each child's need for recognition and advocate personal enrichment. UIL coaches foster positive self-images of students who might otherwise be left in the crowd.

- Some students tell us they cannot participate in UIL academics because they do not feel smart enough. We tell those students that they can participate and those are the students who end up gaining the most.

The gifted and talented students can find a challenging avenue for their creative minds. The “average” student can experience a challenge and be motivated in a unique way. Furthermore, the less motivated student often can find something in which he or she can be successful.

- I totally dismiss the notion that minority/low-income students can't or won't achieve. Set the bar high, challenge them, and they will meet it. I enter my students in every competition possible. If they don't try, they don't win. More times than not, they find they can win, and win up to the highest levels. When they don't win, they figure out why, and generally work harder until they do.

- UIL academic competition is valuable to many of those students who are disinterested for various reasons in school. The challenge to stay eligible so they can compete at the next UIL meet is the only incentive for some students to complete work in the regular classroom, which they see as otherwise irrelevant.

- I strongly believe UIL academics can benefit everyone—from the 4.0 GPA, outgoing student to the shy, underachieving student who feels he or she has nowhere to fit in. Competition allows all students to shine in one way or another. Although not every student is going to bring home a state championship medal, there are other more important self-esteem building issues addressed.

UIL academic contests teach important life lessons.

- So often in life, people become judgmental, suspicious and disapproving of individuals who are in some ways different from themselves. They tend to use their own values, morals and desires as a rule by which to measure others. I try to teach the value of appreciating fully the richness of life around us, how to redirect energies to understanding and appreciating the differences that exist in all types of people. UIL activities are the perfect vehicles for me to imprint my ideas and ideals on my students and to get those lessons in life across to our future leaders.

- I hold strong convictions that UIL competition is preparing our students to be flexible and withstand the inevitable trials of adulthood because OAP is so subjective—so is life. Sometimes, OAP judges almost seem arbitrary—life appears capricious too. I stress that students must find rewards other than the judge's approval: the time spent working on a common goal, the love of learning, and the satisfaction of personal growth.

- Students who compete develop a taste for success, and they quickly learn that this success only comes from their hard work and responsible use of precious time. This lesson is one we try to teach every day in the classroom, but the practical application of competition is a more powerful instructor than all the pontifications uttered by the classroom teacher.

UIL academics help students grow as human beings.

- Watching my students become adults even with only a small glimpse of their God-given talents keeps my heart young and hopeful. It has been my greatest pleasure to see so many one-time shy or, conversely, rambunctious people learn to work hard in a competitive team environment and go on to very productive careers in society.

Students learn the importance of hard work.

- UIL competition helps students set goals and work to achieve those goals. It helps them to determine what preparation is required and what obstacles may be in the way of achieving those goals. It teaches them how to work effectively in pressure situation, and it develops their composure and self-esteem.
- My desire is to help students realize what they can accomplish through hard work and discipline. While I push very hard, students learn to prioritize and manage time and resources. This corresponds with our school's mission statement, "excelling now for the future." We endeavor to work together to enable students to be prepared adults. This is also a summation of how we approach our UIL endeavors.
- My ultimate goal for my students is to be successful in life. I believe the UIL activities in which we take part prepare our students for this. They learn that through hard work, practice, dedication and commitment, anything is possible.
- UIL competition teaches students discipline, organizational skills and higher-order thinking skills, and results in giving them an opportunity to test their preparedness against students who have followed the same rigorous methods of achievement.
- Through academic competition, students are provided the knowledge and tools necessary to meet the future challenges of ever-increasing academic, social and career competitiveness with confidence, leadership and creativity.
- Students discover that working hard pays off, and when it doesn't, they learn to accept it graciously and work even harder the next time.

Students learn poise, self-control, self-discipline and confidence.

- As they compete and win, students gain not only a legitimate sense of accomplishment and self-worth that encourages them to achieve in all areas of study, but they also gain a sense of pride in their contribution to their school community.

- UIL academic competition foster a sense of pride and accomplishment that helps establish a more level playing field as our students graduate from a rural 2A school and go on to compete at college and in the workplace with graduates of larger districts.
- The arts instill self-discipline. This is truly one of the real-world lessons the one-act play experience teaches. One must be punctual, perform various tasks, execute them to the best of their ability, and reassess after evaluation. The “real world” job market requires no less. UIL competition may be likened to today’s increasingly competitive job market, and skills learned transferable into real world success.

Students learn the importance of teamwork.

- Students must learn to manage their time well. They develop a sense of responsibility to their teammates. Everyone must work together to create files for the team in extemp, and those who compete in CX debate must depend on their teammates in every round they compete. All competitive events provide students with these same opportunities for learning, and students who have developed discipline, responsibility and a sense of teamwork will grow into adults who are much more productive members of society.

Students learn to compete, but also learn that winning is more than placing first.

- Although I am proud of our many awards, I also try to instill in our students the great value of effort as opposed to “mere winning.” Healthy competition teaches us about ourselves regardless of the outcome. I know this for a fact. So many of my former students who never even made the district team have thanked me for making them try. They realize that knowledge is gained in a variety of ways, and that true winning is often a subjective victory.
- Since our society is based on the competitive spirit, UIL academic contests give all students a better understanding of this aspect of our country. Normally, people who learn to be competitive, hard workers and team players will become more successful in society.
- I view UIL contests as an enhanced extension of the teaching and learning process at the heart of all true educational experience. As a child of first generation immigrants from Mexico, I can remember entering elementary school with language skills limited only to Spanish. Later, as a member of the first generation to attend college, I have the deepest faith in public education and such entities as UIL as vehicles for realizing the American dream.
- I stress doing well rather than being first. You can control how well you do but have no control over how well the competition does. If you do well, you will be satisfied with yourself whether you win or not.

- I always tell my students before any competition that the true measure of their success comes from knowing that they have done their best to prepare and have performed to the best of their abilities. If my students can walk away from a competition (with or without an award) knowing they have exhibited a desire and thirst for knowledge and were willing to exhibit their efforts in a competitive situation, they are winners. As the folks at the UIL are so fond of saying, “In UIL competitions, there are no losers.”

- True, all students cannot win gold medals, and so very many students who devote their time and energies do not place at all. However, trophies, medals and ribbons do not make winners. Through preparation for and participation in UIL events, students learn so much more than the contest and focus of their individual events. They do gain “knowledge and skills.” However, they gain so much more. They gain self-esteem by meeting their challenges while overcoming anxieties and fears. They stand a little taller, even after experiencing disappointments. They learn how to improve for their next competition. They learn to be a part of a team. They learn to budget their time. They meet and interact with students from other schools. They even develop friendships with their toughest competitors. How many times have UIL coordinators and coaches discovered hidden jewels among our UIL students?

- If you ask my kids if we’ve ever lost, they’ll answer, “No!” We always win, although we don’t always advance, but we do learn, share and grow.

Students discover that learning is an endless and thrilling journey.

- I want my students to learn to like learning and to enjoy being challenged. I want students to experience the joy of problem solving and to appreciate the mental discipline inherent in mathematics.

- UIL academic competition complements the basic education goals of our school by teaching students how to learn and that learning is a lifetime project. In my opinion, participating in academic competition prepares a student for life.

- Competition encourages students to learn. No coach can “teach” by rote all the different things that appear on the tests. Successful competitors learn to “dig in” and figure out the knowledge needed. Learning becomes a means to an end. Learning therefore becomes fun.

- Competition allows us to raise our personal standards, to compare our expectations to those of others schools, to be adjudicated and critiqued by professionals in our field, to constantly learn and grow as actors, designers and directors, to have our reach exceed our grasp as every year we attempt another UIL play that can be as perfect as we can make it.

- Like all good things, education will not come without effort and difficulty. These difficulties challenge our skills in learning, challenge our prejudices, our opinions and help us develop our critical faculties. This in turn can open our hearts and minds to great adventures of the spirit. C. S. Lewis wrote, “In reading literature, I become a thousand men and yet remain myself. Like the night sky in the Greek poem, I see with a myriad eyes, but it is still I who see. Here, as in worship, in love, in moral action, and in knowing, I transcend myself and am never more myself than when I do.” This is what we aim for, the spiritual, intellectual and aesthetic journey of the human heart and soul.

- The most important thing that I teach the students to do is to “Have fun” because having fun is what it is all about. I do not tell students “Good Luck.” I tell students “Have fun” at all contests.

Through involvement in UIL, teachers become better educators.

- In addition to the positive effects on a student’s educational and psychological development, sponsors and coaches become better teachers with the interaction they get with other coaches and sponsors.

- My UIL participation mainly as a sponsor and more recently as a coordinator has compelled me to enhance the computer science program here. In the past three years, I have successfully added computer science III and computer science IV-independent study, in part for various computer science contests, including UIL.

- Getting to know these students, watching them grow and mature as they prepare to head off for college has been one of the greatest rewards of teaching.

By recognizing UIL academic contestants, schools reinforce the importance of learning.

- In some schools, only the athletes or the musicians are recognized as being important. At our school, students who compete in UIL academics are given a chance to “walk tall” through the halls, knowing their team won district for their school. They can earn letter jackets, trophies, pictures in the yearbook. Their achievements are recognized. They reflect a sense of school pride and provide them a real sense of belonging.

“If you’re in education, chances are you decided to become a teacher because you wanted an opportunity to work with and mentor the kinds of young people who compete in UIL academics. As one coach said, ‘In short, UIL is about students.’ ” — Bobby Hawthorne, UIL academic director.