



SPEECH AND DEBATE UNLEASHES STUDENT POTENTIAL.

At its best, speech and debate equips students with the tools they need to skillfully navigate increasingly complex spaces with people holding different core beliefs. Speech and debate prepares students to be culturally humble and to change their world for the better, but only if it:

- **promotes exploration of new ideas;**
- **supports intellectual interaction; and**
- **encourages critical self-reflection.**

Because of their speech and debate experiences, students will be prepared to effectively negotiate the inevitable conflicts that come when we share spaces and resources with people who hold different values and perspectives. Students will have the skills to work through these conflicts and find innovative ways to improve their worlds.

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Topic Rubric Questions

In order to do our best to provide students with these skills, one essential step is to **CONDUCT AN INTENTIONAL AND ONGOING EVALUATION OF THE TOPICS** we are encouraging students to explore. As such, we offer the following set of questions to evaluate each topic.

<p>1. Language</p> <p>Does the wording of the topic discriminate or unequally value others? Is the topic clear, as well as free of any cultural idioms that may disadvantage some participants?</p>	<p>2. Advocacy</p> <p>Does the topic enable students to actively theorize and address ethical, social, political, and economic barriers that perpetuate inequalities by advocating for changes to policies and practices?</p>	<p>3. Awareness</p> <p>Analyzing the topic from the perspective of many diverse student groups, does researching and theorizing about this topic promote awareness of specific experiences related to oppression and/or larger systemic issues?</p>
<p>4. Openness</p> <p>Does the topic promote research and theorizing that challenges students to critically think about their world and consider different perspectives and experiences?</p>	<p>5. Literature Base</p> <p>In order to be competitive, does the topic compel students to research and present arguments that would stigmatize, discriminate against, or exclude a traditionally marginalized and disenfranchised community?</p>	<p>6. Accessibility</p> <p>In order to attract and sustain participation, does the topic facilitate an exploration of ideas related to established intellectual, social, or cultural interests? Considering the present moment, will theorizing and researching the topic encourage supportive social, emotional, and intellectual interactions amongst the intended participants?</p>

Furthermore, when creating an array of topics, you will also want to consider whether a significant portion of your topics reflect these questions. These questions are meant to be considered in addition to the above 6.

<p>7. Intentional Inclusion</p> <p>The topic <i>compels</i> students to explore ethical, social, political, and economic issues in a way that features the <i>experiences and perspectives</i> of traditionally marginalized and disenfranchised communities.</p>	<p>8. Justice</p> <p>The topic provides opportunities to explore how we should define and live out social justice.</p>	<p>9. Power</p> <p>The topic promotes a deeper understanding of power imbalances.</p>
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