**Professionalism Reading Handout 1**

**Professionalism**

At tournaments, debaters should behave the same way they would in front of potential employers and college inter- viewers. Competitors should avoid being excessively loud, using vulgarities, and horsing around with teammates and other competitors. These types of behavior have a tendency to annoy or offend those in the surrounding area. If a debater acts inappropriately, chances are someone will see it; this person could very well be that student’s judge in the next round. Out-of-round behavior can affect in-round results. Judges who have already formed an unfavorable opinion of a competitor are unlikely to rate him or her highly in the round. Therefore, in addition to being the right and courteous thing to do, behaving with respect is in the best interests of all competitors.

Competitors should also treat the building they are in with respect. Often debaters must move materials in a classroom to accommodate a round. Consequently, they should make sure that the room is exactly as they found it when they leave. If desks were moved, they should be put back in their original position. Any trash generated during the round should be picked up and thrown away. Additionally, altering the electronic devices in a classroom is incredibly discourteous; teachers rely on these for their classes. In sum, debaters should make an effort to change as little as possible in the classrooms in which they are competing.

Respect for fellow competitors is crucial. In the round, debaters should not talk in a condescending or scornful tone when addressing competitors. In questioning periods, the speakers should always use a respectful tone, even as they attempt to poke holes in their opponents’ arguments. Judges will never vote down a debater for being too courteous; many times, however, they have rated competitors poorly for being disrespectful to their opponents. This advice extends to out-of-round behavior as well. Debaters should not say negative things about their fellow competitors while at a debate tournament. This behavior is disrespectful and rude. Additionally, competitors never know whose coaches or parents are sitting next to them; students can offend someone without knowing it.

Respect is especially important when the tournament releases postings for elimination rounds. Whether or not a debater advances, she should always remember to be courteous to her fellow competitors. If a competitor is fortunate enough to move on to the next stage of the competition, he should not celebrate in a way that will embarrass those who did not advance; similarly, if a debater did not advance, he should not express his disappointment in a way that detracts from the accomplishments of others. Above all, debaters should remember to act with respect for those around them.

If competitors follow all of the steps above, they will be respectful throughout the tournament. The importance of respect in this activity cannot be overstated. Because this is an activity designed to facilitate argument, it is often easy to not be civil to opponents. Students cannot let the ease with which incivility comes overwhelm them. All competitors must make an effort to be courteous to their fellow students, to their judges, and to all involved in the activity. If they do, then debate is an activity that will be enjoyed by many for years to come.

**Dress**

Dress for debate is business casual. Debaters should dress the same way they would in a professional setting or for a college interview. Males should wear a suit if possible. The suit should be a conservative color, such as black, gray, or navy blue; brown, white, and seersucker suits are typically not appropriate attire. Pinstripe suits are acceptable as long as the pinstripes are not too bright and obtrusive. Either a two-piece suit or a three-piece suit is acceptable.

If a student does not own a suit, he should wear a black, gray, or blue blazer and khakis or dress pants. Male stu- dents should wear a conservative colored dress shirt, such as blue or white, with a tie. The tie can be any range of colors, but should look professional and coordinate with the suit and shirt. Dark dress socks and dress shoes should be worn with all outfits.

Women should wear either a skirt suit or a pants suit. Female competitors have considerably more leeway in terms of appropriate colors and looks but should still dress conservatively. Either a blouse with buttons or a shell is acceptable. Dress shoes should be worn. Heels are accept- able, but not required; if a debater chooses to wear heels, she should make sure that she is able to move easily during her speeches. She should not wear shoes that prevent her from realizing her full stylistic potential by limiting the range of movements she can make.

Ultimately, these suggestions are just that: suggestions. Debaters should dress professionally, conservatively, and within their means. The goal is to build credibility through appearance and to avoid making stylistic choices that will negatively affect the debater’s chances in competition.

**KEY CONCEPTS**

When at a tournament, debaters should behave professionally at all times.

Most tournaments have preliminary rounds, which every debater participates in, followed by elimination rounds, for which only certain debaters qualify.

Final elimination rounds in Congressional Debate are often called “Super Sessions” and may involve a scenario.

Debaters should always behave with respect: respect for their opponents, for the judges, and for the tour- nament host.

Debaters should limit their interactions with judges when not in rounds and should always assume that a potential judge is nearby.

Debaters should engage in healthy behaviors while at tournaments: get enough sleep, stay hydrated, and eat regularly.

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Debaters should warm up before the start of competition of the day.

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