



WESTFIELD ACADEMY

INAUGURAL VIRTUAL HIGH SCHOOL PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE TOURNAMENT

March 30, 2020

Dear Debaters and Coaches,

We are delighted to invite you to join us on Saturday and Sunday, April 18th-19th for Westfield Academy's Inaugural *Virtual* High School Parliamentary Debate Tournament. This competition is open to all interested high school debaters.

We know the idea of a virtual debate tournament is novel, but we find ourselves at a time when an in-person tournament has become an impossibility. We believe that this is the very time that students most need the opportunity to safely engage with a wider community and to continue doing what they love. We think it is also important to give graduating seniors the chance to finish their high school debating career on a positive note.

Westfield Academy has spent the past three weeks successfully running an in-house virtual tournament with over forty debaters. Although a virtual tournament cannot perfectly replicate or entirely replace an in-person one, we found the experience to be exciting and enriching for everyone involved. That being said, we fully expect to encounter some glitches as we scale up this model; we ask for everyone's patience and flexibility during the tournament as we work to do our best to quickly solve them.

Our tournament will have a strong educational focus with a particular emphasis on competent and transparent judging. All teams will be judged by experienced judges, who will disclose and explain their RFDs for the first 3 preliminary rounds and all outrounds. Judges will be required to attend a mandatory judge training. The majority of the Varsity judges will be current or former APDA collegiate debaters. Furthermore, after a motion is released, if a team is completely unfamiliar with a topic, the debaters will have the ability to ask one of our Chief Adjudicators for basic background information and definitions as part of their prep time. We appreciate this when we attend Canadian tournaments as it accomplishes the goal of allowing all teams to fully engage with each motion, producing better debates.

Jen Posner and Evan Streams will serve as our co-Tab Directors. Jen teaches and coaches at Westfield Academy. She is a Founder and President of the Connecticut Middle School Debate League and has tabbed many tournaments including all the tournaments for the Connecticut Middle School Debate League. Evan has administered more than a dozen debate tournaments since 2014. He has tabulated for the Connecticut Debate Association, the New York Middle School Debate League, the

Connecticut Middle School Debate League, and the National High School Debate League of China, including twice tabulating their national championship, which is the largest debate tournament in China. He also has ten years of experience as a judge and coach.

Knowing that many debate teams are unable to meet during these unsettled times, our intent is to make this tournament a more feasible proposition for debaters operating without the support of a team environment. Hybrid teams are allowed and debaters can even register as individuals. Although we cannot guarantee we can find them a partner, we will do our best. We have also removed the usual requirement of providing judges. Additionally, we hope that the virtual platform will make participation in our tournament a possibility for individuals and teams from other parts of the country or world who would not otherwise have the ability to travel to the East Coast for a debate competition. We know these are challenging economic times and that many people are struggling. If the fee presents a challenge for any debater, please let us know.

Although we consider it a high priority to run an efficient and timely tournament, we promise to do our best to never let this goal take precedence over the most important goals of education and inclusivity. In keeping with these guiding values, money raised by this tournament will be used to send students from underserved areas to debate camp this summer who could not otherwise afford to.

Finally, we are taking all possible steps to ensure that this virtual debate tournament is safe and secure. Please see below for a detailed explanation of our security measures.

If you have any further questions, please reach out to Ryan Lafferty at ryanlafferty15@gmail.com or Ann Walsh Henderson at AnnWalshHenderson@gmail.com. We are very excited to virtually host you on April 18th and 19th!

Sincerely,
Ann Walsh Henderson and Ryan Lafferty,
Co-Tournament Directors

WESTFIELD ACADEMY

INAUGURAL VIRTUAL HIGH SCHOOL PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE TOURNAMENT

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Note: It is very important that all debaters read through this invitation and the accompanying Technology Tournament Guide in its entirety. We hope they will answer the majority of your questions and help this virtual parliamentary debate tournament to run as smoothly as possible.

Debate Style & Virtual Platform

APDA Style

We will be using the APDA parliamentary debate style, with speaker times of 7-8-8-8-4-5. For in-depth information about this debate style, please visit [APDA's FAQ page](#). You can also find more helpful resources at [APDA's Novice Resources](#) page.

Technology

We will be using Zoom as the online forum for our debate rounds. Although it is quite an intuitive platform, there will be a thorough introduction to its use during both the judges training and the mandatory meeting on April 16th. You can also find an in-depth guide to using Zoom for our tournament in our Technology Tournament Guide [here](#).

In order to effectively participate in this tournament, debaters will need access to a charged computer or device with video and audio capabilities and reliable, high speed internet for the entire length of the tournament. (Several companies are offering free or reduced cost access to their networks during this unprecedented time.) You cannot use your cell phone as your main device in this Tournament because it must be available as a back-up should you encounter a technological difficulty during a debate. Please be sure to have the ability to keep your laptop or device adequately charged for the duration of the Tournament.

For prepping, debaters will also need to be able to connect with their partners via phone; they will be muting the Zoom “room” with their opponents and judges to do so. (For further details on this, please see the Technology Tournament Guide [here](#).)

Motions

We will release one straight-link motion for each round, and teams will be assigned sides. Debaters will have 15 minutes before the start of debate to prepare cases. We hope and intend to provide debaters with motions that will stretch them and encourage their educational growth. After the motions are released, there will be an opportunity for debaters who feel they don’t understand the resolution to ask our chief adjudicators basic questions thereby ensuring they understand enough to have the confidence to debate important, real-world issues. This is intended to make this tournament as accessible as possible. Note, we will provide info slides about the motions if appropriate.

Evidence & Honor Code

This debate style is extemporaneous, which means that during their prep time and during the debate itself, debaters are not permitted to use any outside resources, including but not limited to briefs, prepared cases, research material, the internet or consultations with people other than their team member or a Chief Adjudicator. We know that debaters often have a wealth of knowledge. Debaters, of course, can cite facts or references during the debate that they know, if these facts are fully explained in the speech to both the other team and the judge so that they can be critically evaluated. Debates are not won based solely on which team knows the most; rather, it is the team that is best able to persuade the judge with reasoned and supported argumentation.

We recognize that all debaters will necessarily be on their computers and in their own space during prep time. Therefore, this tournament, even more so than other competitions, will rely on an honor code. We are a community and trust all of our participants to engage in the spirit of genuine fairness by not taking advantage of outside support.

Security Measures

We are taking all possible steps to ensure that the Zoom call used for the debate tournament is safe and secure. We are encrypting all audiovisual information processed by Zoom using an industry-standard Advanced Encryption Standard (AES) 256-bit algorithm. Additionally, as all participants are joining the call, they will be placed into a digital “waiting room,” where they must be admitted into the main Zoom call by the Tournament Directors. We are also tightly limiting access to the online code that will be used to join the Zoom meeting to only registered debaters, judges, and coaches. We have followed the security procedures established by other virtual debate tournaments and all security guidelines published by Zoom.

Judging

Good judging makes for a good tournament. We believe a well-trained judge can easily make the difference between a frustrating experience and a chance for growth. Therefore, we will require all judges to attend a substantive, in addition to a logistical, training before the start of the tournament.

No Judge Provision Requirement

We know that many debate teams and organizations are not able to meet during these unsettled times. So as not to place an undue burden on individuals and teams during this period, and in a further effort to make this tournament as accessible and inclusive as possible, we do **not** have a requirement to provide a judge.

Decision-Making Procedures

In order to maximize the educational value of each round, the first three rounds will be disclosed. After judges complete their ballots, debaters will be called back into the virtual room to receive ten to fifteen minutes of feedback from their judge(s). RFDs will be provided and explained for the first three preliminary rounds and all outrounds so that everyone involved can better understand the decision-making process and, therefore, learn from it.

For both Novice and Varsity outrounds, there will be a panel of three judges for each debate. The one exception is Varsity finals, which will have a panel of five judges.

Divisions

We plan to offer both Varsity and Novice divisions, with the goal being that the Varsity level should serve as a forum for experienced debaters to compete at a high level and the Novice level should primarily focus on providing a meaningful opportunity for growth of comparatively inexperienced debaters. We know that circumstances vary and hard and fast rules do not necessarily make for equitable outcomes. Consequently, we trust debaters to make the best decision in the spirit of making this the best possible educational experience for both themselves and their fellow debaters.

Here are some helpful guidelines for making this decision:

- Any student of high school age is free to compete in the Varsity division if they have significant experience.
- It is presumed that Novice is the appropriate choice for most First Years and Sophomores.
- Eighth graders will be allowed to compete in the Novice division.
- It is presumed that Seniors, even those who are inexperienced debaters, will debate in Varsity given their age and the fact that they will be competing in college next year.
- We will leave it to students who have never debated before and are in their Junior year to determine the placement they are most comfortable with.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to us if you have questions or are having a difficult time deciding what is the proper placement for you. You can contact us at: AnnWalshHenderson@gmail.com.

Breaks & Awards

Novices will break to semifinals and Varsity will break to quarter finals. Spectators are warmly invited to watch these outrounds virtually. Specific details about how to do so will be shared in GA during the break announcements.

Speaker awards will be given for the top speakers in both divisions. In keeping with the spirit of this tournament (and the ongoing social distancing guidelines), rather than providing physical trophies, we will be sending virtual certificates to all winners at the email they register with. These certificates will feature some dope original artwork by Westfield's own Emily Falkowski. Additionally, the four finalists and the top speaker in both divisions will each receive a one-hundred dollar scholarship to the Westfield Academy Debate and Model United Nations Summer Camp.

Registration & Fees

How to Register:

As a school:

1. Register teams on TabRoom at [WestfieldParli.TabRoom.com](https://www.tabroom.com/WestfieldParli).
2. After receiving confirmation that your team or teams have been taken off the waitlist, visit [this link](#) and pay the required registration fees.

We will have an initial cap of 4 teams per school, but there is a strong possibility we will be able to accomodate more. Please register all your interested teams on TabRoom, but wait for any given team to be taken off the waitlist before paying that team's fee.

As a team from a school but registering independently or as a hybrid team:

(Please note that teams registering independently and hybrids must use a separate form because Tabroom does not allow individuals to enter their registrations themselves.)

1. Register your team at: <https://forms.gle/GXqyN4gX2nuLHT6EA>
2. After receiving confirmation that your team has been taken off the waitlist, visit [this link](#) and pay the registration fee for both individuals or each individual can pay separately.

As an individual:

(Please note that we are registering individuals on a separate form because Tabroom does not allow individuals to enter their registrations themselves.)

1. Register your team at: <https://forms.gle/CSxf7Ms6HbcqXvFg9> and indicate interest in finding a team member.
2. ONLY AFTER RECEIVING CONFIRMATION THAT A TEAM MEMBER HAS BEEN FOUND, proceed to the [payment link](#) to pay individual registration fee.

IMPORTANT

1. **Please note that all teams will be automatically waitlisted. When, and only when, your team or teams are taken off the waitlist, please go to the payment link and pay your registration fee.**
2. **You will not be considered registered until you have both registered (either through the Tabroom (for schools) or at the link (for teams from a school registering independently, hybrid teams or individuals)) and paid your fee.**
3. **We will do our absolute best to find partners for all singletons but cannot guarantee one will be available. We encourage debaters to try to find interested partners themselves.**

Fees

\$65 per individual participant (nonrefundable). Whereas you would usually be responsible for providing a judge, our fee covers the cost of hiring judges.

Deadlines

We will stop accepting registrations on April 14th at 6 pm. If you've registered and cannot attend for any reason, please let us know before April 15th at the absolute latest. In the case of illness, please let us know as soon as possible so we have sufficient time to adjust the teams.

Procedures for Timeliness

Every debater has the responsibility, prior to the start of the tournament, to ensure that their audio and video equipment is ready and functioning properly *and* to attend the mandatory technology check-in on Friday, April 17th at 6:00 pm. They also have the responsibility to open a Zoom account and be familiar with how Zoom works. Again, please see our [Technology Tournament Guide](#) for a detailed explanation.

If the start of a round is delayed more than 15 minutes due to failure of one or more debaters to show up ready to virtually debate in a timely fashion, the tardy team will take a loss for that round. Our goal is not to penalize any team but to ensure that the tournament runs as timely as possible.

Please note that any team with any technological concerns can attend the optional meeting on Thursday, April 16th, for help in resolving them. Furthermore, our Technological Director, Ryan Lafferty, will be available from the start of registration throughout the entirety of the tournament to help any team resolve problems.

Equity

Our highest priority is ensuring that every debater feels welcome and safe participating in our tournament—only if this is true is it possible for a genuine educational experience to occur. Consequently, we hope to run a tournament that is free from harassment on the grounds of race, gender, sexual orientation, disability or any other factor. To help make this a reality, we have appointed Anana Turner and Emily Falkowski as our Equity Officers (EOFs).

Throughout, or even before the tournament, please reach out to Anana or Emily with any questions or concerns you might have. If at any point you are made to feel uncomfortable or harassed or if you witness this happening to someone else, they are your go-to resources.

Here are the ways to reach out to them before or during the tournament:

Anana	(860) 713 - 4797	turneranana@gmail.com
Emily	(860) 614-7532	americia.falkowski@gmail.com
Submit an anonymous complaint through this Google Form		

Equity Procedure

Any complaint or concern registered with the EOF will be investigated by Anana and Emily and potentially by other tournament officials. If the EOF feels a violation has occurred, there are a range of responses that they might deem appropriate, including initiation of a conversation among debaters, judges or the tournament community as a whole; a verbal or written warning; a required apology; or expulsion from the GA or the tournament. We will do our best to take into consideration the wishes of the person who registered the complaint before taking any action.

Our approach in deciding responses will not be geared towards punishment; instead, we hope to continue with the spirit of this tournament as a learning experience for everyone involved. Although our first thought will be to see to the needs of the person who was made to feel uncomfortable, we also hope to make room for the person against whom the complaint was lodged to grow.

Schedule

Note, we tried to set the times to maximize the ability of debaters in different time zones to be able to participate. All times listed in EST.

Prep Meetings			
OPTIONAL	Thursday, April 16th	7:00 pm	Help session for any technology questions or issues
MANDATORY	Friday, April 17th	6:00 pm	Check-in to test Zoom audio and video

Tournament Schedule	
Day One <i>Saturday, April 18th</i>	
8:30	Rolling Check-in (teams will be assigned check-in times; teams from later time zones will be assigned later times)

10:00	Virtual GA Announcements
11:00	Round One
1:15	Virtual GA Check-in: <i>Everyone return to GA</i>
1:30	Round Two
3:45	Virtual GA Check-in: <i>Everyone return to GA</i>
4:00	Round Three
6:15	Virtual GA Check-in: <i>Everyone return to GA</i>
6:30	Round Four
8:30	Virtual GA Check-in: <i>Everyone return to GA</i>
<p style="text-align: center;">Day Two <i>Sunday, April 19th</i></p>	
8:30	Check-in Rolling Check-in (teams will be assigned check-in times; teams from later time zones will be assigned later times)
10:00	Virtual GA Announcements
10:30	Round Five
1:30	Announce Break in Virtual GA
1:45	Varsity Quarterfinals and Novice Semifinals
3:30	Announce Teams Moving Forward in Virtual GA
3:45	Varsity Semifinals and Novice Finals
5:30	Announce Teams Moving Forward in Virtual GA
5:45	Varsity Finals
7:45	Awards in Virtual GA

Who to Ask What

We hope that this invitation has answered the majority of your questions, but if you are still unsure about something, please reach out to the appropriate person(s) (listed below) to get your question answered.

Registration & Technology Questions	Ryan Lafferty, <i>Co-Tournament Director</i>	(860) 985-6749	ryanlafferty15@gmail.com or admin@westfieldacademy.net
Tab Questions	Jen Posner, <i>Co-Tab Director</i>	(203) 984-4902	jenposner2@gmail.com
	Evan Streams, <i>Co-Tab Director</i>	(203) 810-7112	epstreams@gmail.com
Adjudication Core	Max Ferguson Neuman, <i>Chief Adjudicator</i>	(917) 797-8137	maxfn2113@columbia.edu
	Benjamin Mione, <i>Chief Adjudicator</i>	(860) 378-5105	mione.benjamin@gmail.com
	Patrick Henderson, <i>Chief Adjudicator</i>	(413) 275-3855	phenderson@watkinson.org
	Eliza Posner, <i>Chief Adjudicator</i>	(203) 945-8922	elizaposner@me.com
Equity Questions	Anana Turner, <i>Equity Officer</i>	(860) 713-4797	turneranana@gmail.com
	Emily Falkowski, <i>Equity Officer</i>	(860) 614-7532	americia.falkowski@gmail.com
General Questions	Ryan Lafferty, <i>Co-Tournament Director</i>	(860) 985-6749	ryanlafferty15@gmail.com
	Ann Walsh Henderson, <i>Co-Tournament Director</i>	(860) 869-0513	admin@westfieldacademy.net or AnnWalshHenderson@gmail.com

We can't wait to welcome you to the Westfield Academy Inaugural Virtual High School Parliamentary Debate Tournament!