

I've tried to arrange this for simplicity.

First, there's a list of proposed standards. These standards are taken from all the responses to my original document, and I have distilled some material from LDEP as a preamble. Some of these standards are what I originally proposed; some have come from others. I don't necessarily agree or disagree with any of them; I present them as the sum of what we've got so far. If someone thinks something else should be added to the list, by all means, let's add it. I use the word standards because it seems to me that we are indeed attempting to establish standards for the activity based on our beliefs about education; enacting them into rules is a separate issue.

Second, there's a discussion of each of the standards. I've broken out the discussion because the standards, whatever they actually become, are derived from the discussion and the analysis, but are not necessarily a part of it. If we somehow establish these standards, clear, precise and terse wording will be extremely important, while the underlying discussion can be more complicated and open.

Third, there's a proposed plan of action. As I've said from the beginning, talking about this stuff will do absolutely nothing to affect change in the activity. Our actions, as well as our sense of urgency regarding those actions, will be perhaps more telling than the standards themselves.

Proposed Standards for Lincoln-Douglas Debate

Lincoln-Douglas debate is primarily an educational activity intended to prepare students for academic and personal success in their future lives. Therefore, the competitive incentives of LD should reward students who:

- research thoroughly and ethically
- reason logically
- write and speak clearly and eloquently
- develop direct resolutorial analysis
- explain arguments thoroughly rather than superficially
- conduct themselves professionally, courteously and respectfully

We recognize that students participate in debate from a legitimate variety of motives, including the joy of spirited competition. As teachers, it is our responsibility to ensure that successful debate is educationally constructive debate. In exercising that responsibility, the following standards are proposed to further the educational benefits of the activity.

1. Mutual Judge Preferences will not be offered at tournaments. Tournaments may offer a small number of judge strikes, if desired by the tournament directors.
2. Tournaments will not accept any team entries without an adult (over 21) chaperone.
3. Tournaments will not accept any team “unofficial” entries.
4. Judges may set a strict speaking speed limit; failure to adhere to this limit will result in a mandated limit on speaker points assigned in the round.
5. Acceptance of the invitation to debate at a tournament is a tacit agreement by the debaters that they will argue the resolution proposed by the tournament directors. While there are many reasonable differing interpretations of any resolution, cases that clearly critique the resolution on face, claiming that it is, for one reason or another, inarguable, are unacceptable. In other words, debaters may not argue in a round that the resolution does not make sense, that the resolution cannot be argued, that the “theory” of LD (or something else) makes the resolution invalid, or that the writings of any individual make the resolution immaterial. Students so doing would forfeit any round running those cases. This is not to be construed as a ban on any particular material, but a restriction of all materials to arguing the two sides of a resolution.
6. Competitors are not allowed to request a printed copy of an opponent’s case during a round.
7. Judges are not allowed to request a printed copy of either opponent’s case during a round.
8. Neither judges nor competitors are allowed to call for printed copy of evidence presented during a round, unless there is a question of misrepresentation of that evidence.
9. Coaches and teams are responsible for the training and development of their judges. Registering a judge for a tournament implicitly indicates that the team registering that judge has explained the rules of LD, discussed potential arguments, and generally prepared the judge for the experience.
10. Tournament directors will give clear directions to judges at the start of a tournament.
11. Judges at a tournament will make all due efforts to report possible conflicts to enable team blocks. Conflicts can result from school affiliations or work for hire with a school, including experience coaching a team at off-season workshops. Judges and students should use their best judgment to avoid even the appearance of impropriety.

12. All coaches will judge at tournaments they attend; hiring oneself out of rounds does not foster academic responsibility.

13. Judges should clearly communicate a paradigm, or lack thereof, prior to the tournament, including a meaningful assignment of speaker points. Judges will write ballots explaining their decisions for all preliminary rounds (and, if possible, elimination rounds), even if they have given an oral critique to the debaters.

14. Coaches will train their students to be effective and fair judges of underclassmen.

15. Coaches will insist that their own team adheres to these standards.

Discussion

1. Mutual Judge Preferences will not be offered at tournaments. Tournaments may offer a small number of judge strikes, if desired by the tournament directors.

Allowing students to select their adjudicators allows students with dubious materials or styles to find judges who prefer dubious materials or styles. More important in the long run, enhancing the skills of public speaking will not ensue if one gets to decide who the public is that one is speaking to. A good public speaker learns to understand the nature of the audience being addressed and to address that audience in such a way that the audience understands the speaker. Tim Averill's analogy is perfect: politicians running for office don't get to choose the voters. Daryn Pax adds that, even if MJP is offered at a venue, coaches should reject it. Others have concurred with this.

2. Tournaments will not accept any team entries without an adult (over 21) chaperone.

This makes sense if for no other reason than the liability for the safety of minors, which must default to the tournament venue in the absence of a team chaperone, and which would therefore be an unbearable burden. I have previously offered other reasons, which while important to the content of LD, are pretty much trumped by the liability issue.

3. Tournaments will not accept any team "unofficial" entries.

Again, liability issues preclude considering teams that are not representing their schools. While it is unfortunate that some schools do not provide support to their debaters, my opinion is that this problem cannot be solved by our accepting their students into our tournaments, and may in fact exacerbate the situation, which needs to be addressed at the administrative level.

Daryn Pax offers the following, in disagreement: "I do not, however, agree that independent entries should be banned. There is a big distinction in my experience between educators and school administrators. Many students cannot travel under their school's name because their schools do not wish to fund a team or to assign a faculty member to help them. Other students can only travel to a certain number of tournaments or tournaments within their state, so if they truly love debating and want to do it, they only have the option of independent travel. Moreover, I think assuming that indie students are the problem with debate is a broad and erroneous assumption. Of the five or six most offensive students that I have seen debating, they ALL travel(ed) under their school names. Some of these students even have coaches I otherwise like and respect. On the other hand, the students that I have seen who travel independently have been among the most hard working, the most dedicated, and the most interested in teaching others the skills of debate."

4. Judges may set a strict speaking speed limit; failure to adhere to this limit will result in a mandated limit on speaker points assigned in the round.

The reason for this is that it does benefit a speaker to know that the person being spoken to understands what is being said. In practice, a judge would certainly discuss in advance of a round any speed issues he or she might have, and a good competitor would comply. However, sometimes one person's blazing speed is another person's lumbering gait. So, a judge may call simply "Speed!" when a debater is talking too fast. No penalty, and the debater should slow down. A second "Speed!" can be called if the debater doesn't comply with the initial request. Still no penalty. A third call of "Speed!" mandates that the debater receive no more than 25 speaker points out of 30 (or 45 out of 50). The debater will have had 2 chances to put on the brakes. Refusing to do so will and should result in guaranteed low points. A judge can, at his or her own discretion, give the debater a loss entirely based on speed, if desired.

Note, however, the word "may." If everyone in the room wants to go lickety-split, including the judge, there is nothing in this standard to stop them.

5. Acceptance of the invitation to debate at a tournament is a tacit agreement by the debaters that they will argue the resolution proposed by the tournament directors. While there are many reasonable differing interpretations of any resolution, cases that clearly critique the resolution on face, claiming that it is, for one reason or another, inarguable, are unacceptable. In other words, debaters may not argue in a round that the resolution does not make sense, that the resolution cannot be argued, that the “theory” of LD (or something else) makes the resolution invalid, or that the writings of any individual make the resolution immaterial. Students so doing would forfeit any round running those cases. This is not to be construed as a ban on any particular material, but a restriction of all materials to arguing the two sides of a resolution.

The most controversial of the standards, but perhaps the most important. It must be the clearest.

The reasons behind this standard are simple. It is not intended to stifle creativity, nor is it intended to bar certain lines of analysis from the competitive arena. But it does force the debaters to actually discuss the resolution at hand. It is a given from the educational viewpoint that a resolution is chosen because studying its content has educational merit; while some resolutions may ultimately fail in that goal, it is not acceptable to argue the resolution’s success or failure within a round. As an analogy, if you do not like science fiction films, you should not attend science fiction films. Going to a science fiction film and loudly airing your negative opinion of science fiction films in general, or this film in particular, is not acceptable behavior, nor will it have any effect on science fiction film production in the future. Your paying admission to a film is license only to watch the film; your paying admission to a debate tournament is license only to debate the resolution at that tournament.

The question has been raised, how do we adjudicate close calls? Well, as it has been pointed out, we trust the judges one hundred percent already; we should continue to do so. Nonetheless, our wording of this standard needs to be absolutely clear. It will be troublesome, but if we don’t want to address the troublesome issues...

It should be noted that this is not an indictment of any particular arguments or source materials. A debater should feel free to run whatever arguments, evidence and authorities he or she feels supports the debater’s side of the resolution. A source need not be famous, or traditional. Arguments, evidence and authority are valid on their own merits. Provided a debater is addressing the content of the resolution, no judge can dismiss an argument because of its source any more than a judge would accept an argument because of its source. It is the argument itself that matters, not its provenance. DP puts it well: “Be open-minded. If we care about education, then we need to care about education, and that means supporting education of things we may not necessarily like (like postmodern theory, which has gotten a bad rep lately). By painting all of critical theory, or all of debate theory, with the same brush of ‘badness,’ we risk alienating a lot of coaches and judges who would otherwise be conducive to our goals. I spoke recently with someone who said she would not join the LDEP so long as their mission statement condemned critical literature. She, like many in the activity, feel that critical arguments have the potential to be educational and interesting, but have been co-opted and abused by students looking for competitive gain. The solution here is not to condemn the tools that the students use, because then they will just find other tools. The solution is to keep students from being able to use ANY tool to win ballots to the exclusion of education. Just as we fought for years to keep LD from being dueling oratories -- because pretty speech alone should not win a ballot -- we must also now fight to keep LD from being dueling non-responsive blipsreads. But the problem is the style and the competition and the QUALITY of the content they are using, not the fact that it is critical or postmodern. If we can make that distinction paramount, then believe me, there are few coaches or even judges who would disagree, and we have a greater potential to change and eliminate the invasive problems. If we continue to demonize critical literature in and of itself, I think it will be an uphill battle to gain supporters and really make a change for the better.”

6. Competitors are not allowed to request a printed copy of an opponent’s case during a round.

If LD is to remain an activity of oral presentation, it becomes a necessity that materials can only be presented orally.

7. Judges are not allowed to request a printed copy of either opponent's case during a round.

Same as #6. Perhaps 6 and 7 can be combined?

8. Neither judges nor competitors are allowed to call for printed copy of evidence presented during a round, unless there is a question of misrepresentation of that evidence.

This is in keeping with #6 and #7. If for some reason an opponent or judge misses some piece of what is presented as evidence, there is a question whether that is the fault of the speaker or the auditor. It will be the judge's job to decide which.

Obviously this forces people to present meaningful evidence in a way we can understand what it is. On top of that, I've seen very few LDers who have their evidence on a card like a policy debater, which inevitably means not only the handing over of a case, but a possibility that the evidence in-case is already tampered with.

9. Coaches and teams are responsible for the training and development of their judges. Registering a judge for a tournament implicitly indicates that the team registering that judge has explained the rules of LD, discussed potential arguments, and generally prepared the judge for the experience.

It is not acceptable that a team register a judge unable to do the job, nor is it too much to expect that a team adequately prepare that judge. In aid of this, judge training materials are readily available at a variety of websites (we'll need to give examples) to help out.

10. Tournament directors will give clear directions to judges at the start of a tournament.

While I feel it is not the directors' job to train judges in the first place, directors should include clear judging instructions either in their registration packet or presented orally prior to the opening round, especially since each tournament, even if they are all following these standards here, has its own style (flights, prep time, etc.). It is especially important, if we are insisting on adult chaperones who will, of necessity, usually be parents, that these parents are comfortable doing the job of judging. And, of course, parent judging assures that the activity not limit its skill set to presentation to a select, elite judging pool.

Daryn again, in support, although I think he goes too far in his expectations of what a director can do on the ground: "Stand behind your judges. We cannot tell judges to be educators and then, when the tournament is in progress, abandon them. Directors need to be supportive of their judging pool and the decisions made by them. Moreover, directors should attempt to maintain diversity for all styles and types of debate (even the fast, kritiky kinds) so that students must learn adaptation to all critics. Directors should also make it a point to educate parent and community judges before the tournament -- and not just fifteen minutes before. When I was in high school (in the Mesozoic Era), our director brought in all the judges to a briefing the Tuesday night before the tournament and explained all the rules and regulations. Another option, that I tried to do as a fundraiser (and this could be a very good fundraising project for the LDEP) would be to create a simple, hour long video explaining how to judge debate round. A tournament director could just pop that in and not have to stress out, and team coaches could pass the video among their parents to ensure the judges they bring would always be informed."

I have a problem with some of this, in that my judges come from far and wide and I have no access to them aside from at the tournament. Still, I like the idea of a video. We can post all sorts of stuff on the internet easily enough now. Why not a visual how-to, a movie file that we give away?

11. Judges at a tournament will make all due efforts to report possible conflicts to enable team blocks. Conflicts can result from school affiliations or work for hire with a school,

including experience coaching a team at off-season workshops. Judges and students should use their best judgment to avoid even the appearance of impropriety.

Eric's list seems unnecessarily long and detailed to me. #8, for instance, would virtually ban people from sitting at the same table together at a tournament to chat about the weather. I would prefer to fall back on personal responsibility of the judges themselves to claim if a relationship is beyond the norm.

12. All coaches will judge at tournaments they attend; hiring oneself out of rounds does not foster academic responsibility.

A couple of people brought this up, and it's important. Aside from reasons of health, or if you're in the tab room running things, there's no good reason why a coach shouldn't be at the back of the room, upholding the beliefs we are propounding here. And as Phyllis says, even if you're in the tab room you can get out once in a while and see what's happening in the real world (I'm a terrible offender in this myself, and I'm trying to mend my ways).

13. Judges should clearly communicate a paradigm, or lack thereof, prior to the tournament, including a meaningful assignment of speaker points. Judges will write ballots explaining their decisions for all preliminary rounds (and, if possible, elimination rounds), even if they have given an oral critique to the debaters.

I've tried to put together a few ideas here, mostly suggested by DP, to which I've added the filled-in ballot. I understand that there are some folks who are, in fact, anti-paradigm, and to be honest, few of the most paradigm-minded in fact really follow it all that closely. But still, I see no reason why a speaker shouldn't have a general idea of what the auditor is like, and a simple paradigm and a general sense of how a judge rates a round is not asking too much. After all, most public speakers do have a general sense of their audiences, and there's nothing in LD's academic benefits that arise from speaking to a black box. Ultimately, this is asking judges to do a responsible job, without getting too carried away about it. Needless to say, thanks to Victory Briefs, posting a paradigm is hardly much of a chore.

DP: "Have a speaker point paradigm as well as a decision matrix, and inform the students of what that is BEFORE the debate round. Try to use the full range of at least 20-30 with 25 as average to help keep deviation in the pool. Use speaker points as a punishment or reward for anything outside the actual decision of the round so that the entire round is reflected by your ballot and not just the winning of key arguments. Clarity issues, research issues, rudeness, bullying in cross ex, all of these things may not decide who won the resolution, but they certainly should be noted and have some kind of impact on the debater. Speaker points give judges a huge amount of flexibility in deciding rounds, so we should use them to their fullest."

As for paradigms, DP says: "Make sure it is posted on the NDCA. [But I've heard they're not as active as they used to be? JM] It is easier for students to adapt when they know what to adapt to. Again, this is something that I myself really need to work on. I find it hard to articulate a representative paradigm five minutes before a round starts. This is an area that I think the LDEP's expertise would be very useful for. How can we create meaningful paradigms and make sure that they are distributed fairly to all competitors? I think this will also help to alleviate some of the fears that students have over our judging. They have a tendency to assume our paradigms, and lump us in together as 'older' or 'traditional' or 'slow.' Most of the people that I know on the LDEP have very distinct paradigms from mine, and none of them can be simplified the way that many students think they can. If we are able to show that our paradigms are more inclusive and flexible than students believe, I think they will find it less daunting to be judged by us."

14. Coaches will train their students to be effective and fair judges of underclassmen.

Next to parent judging, which I think must be fostered to keep LD alive (especially as nowadays all the parents are being shuttled off into PF rounds if the tab room gets their hands on them), student judging is absolutely essential to the activity, if for no other reason than it educates the student about the whole as compared to his or her own part in it.

Phyllis Hirth says: "We can start teaching students to be good judges from the very beginning of their debate career. Particularly with novice tournaments. If we had one more copy of the ballot to be given to the coach of student judges. We always get copies for our debater, but often have no idea how our students are judging rounds. This would be a good way to teach them how to balance arguments within the round, where their strengths are and what they need to work on. I would rather they learn from coaches than from students and competitors. Jim is right. The kids want to win and have fun with some weird arguments. We let them learn how to judge by the seat of their pants and then wonder where they got their debate values from. Maintaining the educational value of this activity is our job."

I would certainly make every effort to get these copies of ballots to the coaches in the future.

15. Coaches will insist that their own team adheres to these standards.

DP: "Know your students. Know who else they are listening to, know where they went to camp, know who their friends are, know how they are debating! We can't preach about how bad the status of debate is and then shrug our shoulders about our own Johnny Badattitude. If Johnny doesn't listen, kick him off the team. Period. Don't travel students who don't deserve to go. Mr. Menick is correct that students will listen to their coaches only insofar as it benefits them -- so we have to be very firm and very clear that the incentive to listen to their coach is that they get to debate. Responsibility has to start at home."

Action points

By putting all this together I do not mean to step on anyone's toes. After all, I am merely a member of the group at large, and I have no idea what else might be going on among the directors or the membership. But as a member, I can't say I've seen much happening, and there is a possibility that we simply don't have the time left to do anything but act with all the force we can muster. Here's what I'm suggesting.

First, we agree on which points to adopt. I suggest we do this by, a) another week of discussion, adding any points I may have missed, and b) voting. A simple majority rules. Discussion ends on 2/10, voting by the end of 2/14 (which gives us something romantic to do on Valentine's Day.)

Second, we agree on the wording. I don't think we should get too hung up on this before agreeing on the points we like. I would volunteer to collect and process any suggestions for wording. Due March 1.

Third, we enlist support from our localities. I would guess that we all have local networks we can send this to for discussion and support in March. At that time I would suggest that we have those in favor of the standards sign up as members of the LDEP. Numbers may be important to us as we move forward.

Fourth, we agree among ourselves to that all LDEP members adopt the standards at all the tournaments they run or attend.

Fifth, we go to the directors of TOC, CFL and NFL. (Some of these are us.) We do our best to get these bodies to adopt the standards as well. We disseminate the standards to the general community of tournament directors at the same time for their adoption.