



RuDI
RURAL DEBATE
INITIATIVE

Secondary School Introduction Deck

The Rural Debate Initiative
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Organization Overview

- The Rural Debate Initiative (“RuDI”) is a non-profit organization that seeks to expand access to competitive debate across secondary school students residing in rural areas

Debate Programs



Weekly coaching sessions with practice debates



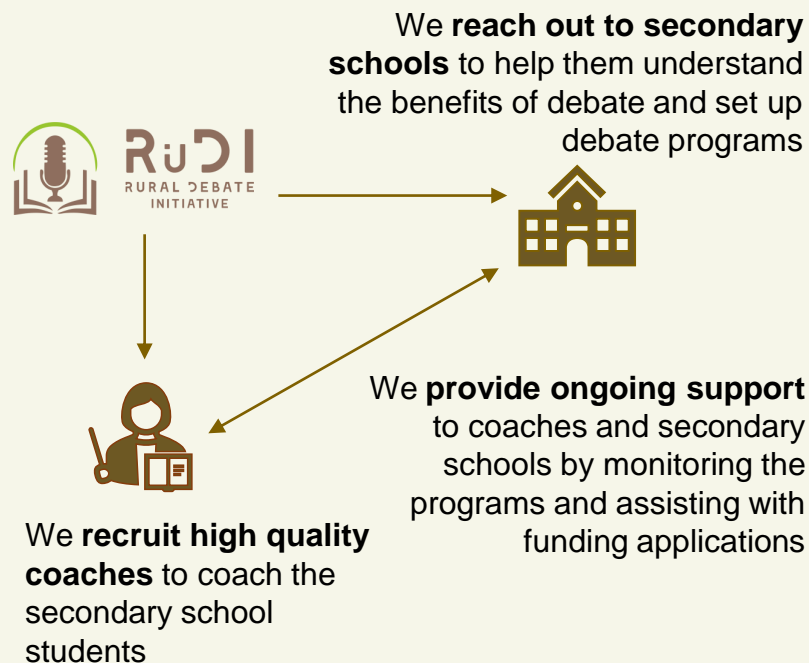
Internal **debate tournaments** with debaters from other regions and high schools covered by RuDI. We also assist with registering and paying for external tournaments that happen virtually



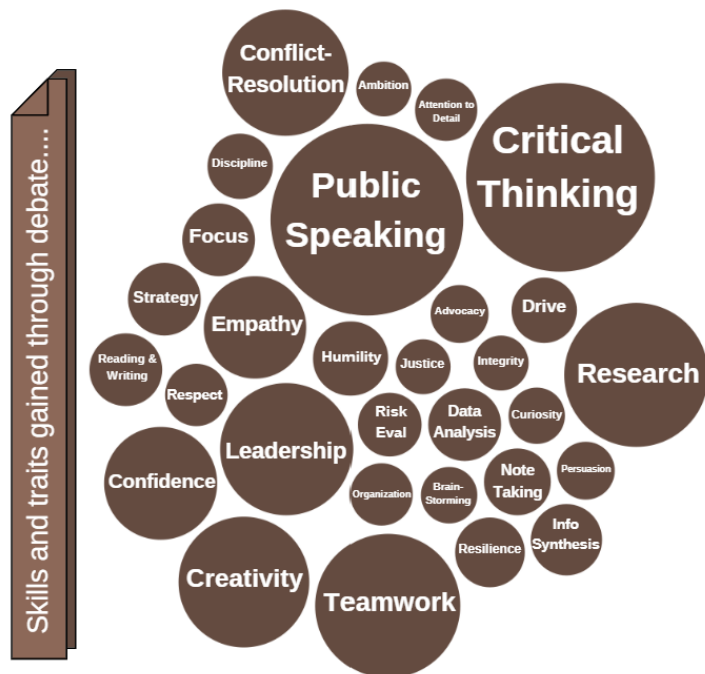
Intensive summer **debate camps**

- RuDI will offer the above debate programs in a virtual format at no cost to the students (no tournament entry fees and no debate camp tuition)

Our Role



Why Debate?



Research has proven debaters to have...

Higher **GPA** (0.66 points) (1)

Higher **Math SAT score** (52 points) (1)

Higher **High School Graduation Rate** (40%) (2)

Higher **College Readiness and Admission Rate** (1)

Higher **Reading and Writing SAT score** (57 points) (1)

Emotional and Academic Recovery

- COVID has had a negative impact on student connectedness and engagement level at school and led to significant learning loss
- Research has shown that debate improves interpersonal relationships and increases academic confidence
- Debate supports deeper relationships between students and their peers as well as students and their teachers because it is a competitive sport that requires a significant amount of collaboration

Analytical and Critical Thinking Skills

- Students are required to logically dissect the arguments of their opponents and think of real-life impact to support their own arguments
- Switch-side debating also allows students to explore alternative systems of belief and critically choose their stance

Public Speaking and Communication Skills

- Debate allows students to build strong presentation skills and the ability to think on their feet which is useful for any career
- Debate gives students confidence in their own voice and the worthiness of their opinion

On Policy Debate

What is Policy Debate?

- Policy debate consists of two teams of two. One team is the **affirmative** side and presents a plan or proposal to implement the resolution (typically pre-written or pre-prepared), and the other team is the **negative** side and argues against the implementation of the resolution
- Each year all the students debate a **common resolution**, or topic, issued by a central committee. For a list of past resolutions:

<https://www.nfhs.org/media/1018339/past-resolutions.pdf>

- Each person in the debate gets one constructive speech (8 minutes), one rebuttal speech (5 minutes) is cross-examined by the other side (3 minutes) and cross-examines the other side (3 minutes). The whole debate lasts approximately an hour and a half
- Policy debate is highly dependent on using evidence to defend an argument. Students share their evidence cards with opponents and the judge before their speech, and the outcome of the debate is largely dependent on which side can display the greatest impact

Why Policy Debate?

- Policy debate is the most accessible
 - Everyone debates a common topic
 - Plethora of materials on the topic, including a publicly issued novice evidence packet
- Policy debate also has the highest ceiling of achievement
 - The resolution can be debated from many different angles with different implications
 - Common topic means everyone has infinite time to prepare in a very targeted way
 - To excel as a policy debater, one needs to put in extra effort to research evidence and preempt potential counter-arguments
- The level of preparation needed for policy debate better prepares the student to compete in other forms of speech and debate
- Greatest number of scholarship opportunities offered at the college level
- Greatest number of qualified coaches

Why RuDI?



Our Philosophy:

We see opportunities where others see difficulties. We want to champion and leverage the assets unique to rural communities and rural individuals, such as their pride of place, sense of community, and a diverse set of practical skills. We have been extremely regionally-focused in our outreach and organizational efforts and we plan to continue to do so.

- We encourage our coaches to adopt place-based educational approaches and put local community issues at the center of pedagogy and inquiry
- We equip our students with real-life critical thinking skills through switch-side debating and evidence-based learning
- We connect rural students to their local community by partnering with regional organizations that offer additional resources and opportunities
- We give students the responsibility to run their own debate club and offer guidance and support in ways that develop valuable practical skills such as
 - Leadership and coordination skills
 - Fundraising, budgeting and book-keeping skills
 - Project management and independent trouble-shooting skills
- We offer rural teachers access to a diverse set of resources and free professional support and workshops
 - Expert sessions from top debate programs
 - Potential certifications, additional coursework and professional development opportunities
 - Access to a network of passionate rural educators that are here to support each other



Why RuDI?



Our Approach:

We are here to simplify the often costly and complicated process of starting and maintaining a competitive debate program. In addition to the cost of **hiring coaches** and **purchasing materials**, **competing at 1 major debate tournament for 1 team could mean:**

2 * \$150 (2 hotel rooms for 2 nights, one for the team one for the coach) + **\$100** (travel cost for 3) + **\$75** (tournament entry fee) + **\$400** (payment for coaches for 3 days of work) + **3 * \$100** (meal for 3 for 3 days)
= **\$1,175** for one in-state tournament within driving distance

Partnering with RuDI gives you the opportunity to develop and sustain a debate program with:

No fees for teachers or students to participate

Limited time commitment from high school teachers to support the coaching sessions

Easy access to coaches and quality training materials

No cost to participate in tournaments



Collaboration Models

- There are primarily **two different ways** for secondary schools to partner with RuDI. The model that RuDI institutes in partner secondary schools is largely dependent on the expectations and capacity of the secondary schools (whether they have secondary school teachers willing and available to be coached)

Coaches --> Students

In this first model, **coaches will coach the students directly** and judge at practice debates. Ideally, the same coach will be paired with specific schools and coach students from those schools for the entire season. Eventually, the students can coach the class beneath them (with additional help from outside coaches and RuDI if necessary) to create a sustainable cycle of self-teaching



Coaches --> Teachers

In this second model, **coaches will help the secondary school teachers develop into teacher coaches**, who will then coach the students on a day-to-day basis. The teachers will receive a training manual from RuDI that teaches them the basics of policy debate, and the outside coaches will monitor practice debates and answer any questions the teacher coaches might have. The teachers will organize coaching sessions with the students or develop a class as part of their curriculum and coach their students on an ongoing basis



Coaches → Students



Commitment:

- Assign at least one supervising teacher. The teacher will be responsible for
 - Promoting debate within the secondary school and keeping track of and encouraging student attendance
 - Occasionally monitoring coaching sessions
 - Aiding with the organization of fundraising or after-school/lunchtime events for the debate club

Note: this is a sample that serves to give a rough idea of the scope of commitment. There will be modifications depending on the capacity, resources, and locations of the secondary school



This model is great for ...

- Schools that do not currently have teachers with extra capacity to learn the materials and coach the students
- Schools that want to give the students more responsibility in running their own club and organizing their own after-school activities, which would be a great leadership experience



- RuDI will be in regular communication with the supervising teacher(s) to answer any questions and concerns
- RuDI will also assist with writing grant applications to any funding opportunities the teacher or the school might be eligible for

Coaches → Teachers



Commitment:

- Assign at least one supervising teacher. The teacher will be responsible for
 - Perusing and learning from the RuDI manual on policy debate
 - Attending workshops held by RuDI on how to teach policy debate
 - Hosting weekly training sessions with students, preferably in-person
 - Hosting practice debates with a RuDI coach present
 - Aiding with the organization of fundraising or after-school/lunchtime events for the debate club

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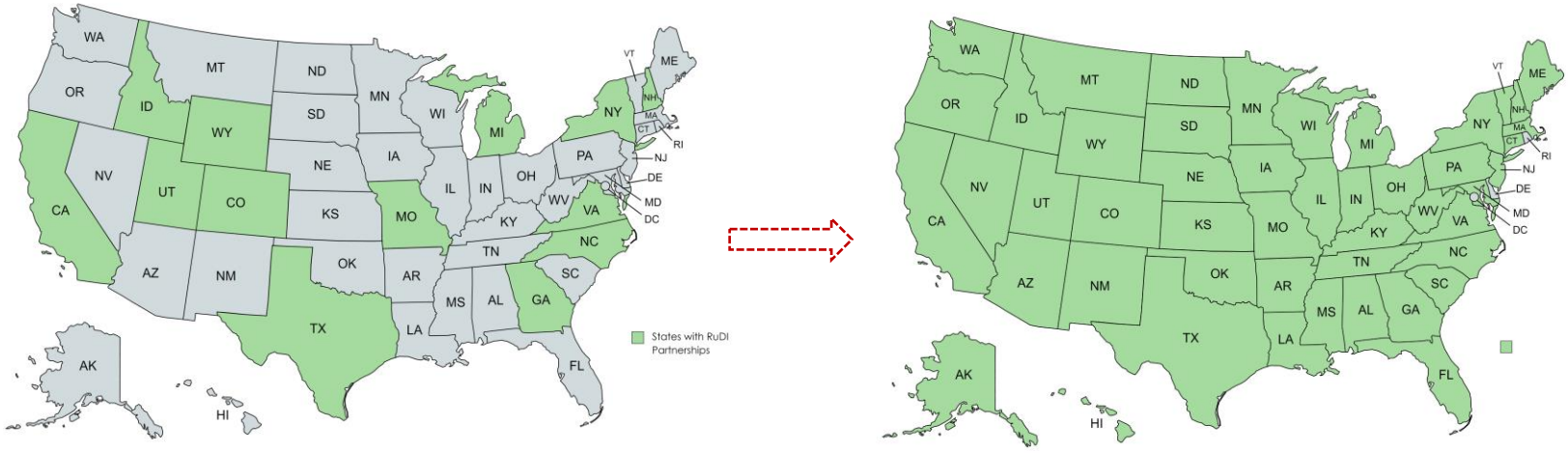
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This model will ...

- Give teachers access to the network and resources of RuDI
 - Coaching development workshops from well-known institutions
 - Professional development opportunities with our partner organizations
 - Materials on policy debate and on incorporation of debate into the curriculum
 - Support network of other rural teachers who are also passionate about expanding debate and improving rural education
- Give teachers the opportunity to facilitate off-line events such as in-person meetings which helps to create a sense of debate community that helps with student motivation and retention

Projected Strategy



We are ambitious. Not only do we want to cover as many states as possible, we want to cover them in as much depth as possible. There is also more to debate than debate. We want to....



Offer college and scholarship application support



Offer career-related development and mentorship opportunities



Help students understand key financial literacy concepts and help them make critical financial decisions



Help teachers incorporate debate and public speaking into their curriculum



Create a network of rural debaters across America through an online forum

Our Debate Stories...



Grant Zhang, Executive Chairman

- “I was an avid policy debater in high school and served as an assistant coach for a high school while in college. Debate was the activity that transformed my life and opened so many doors for me, and I want to give back to the community and help expand debate to students that could use the activity to help unlock their inner potential.”
- “Debate is an activity that requires a significant amount of resources. In high school, I had to transfer schools because my original high school did not have much institutional support for policy debate, and at my new school, I had to fund a significant amount of tournament travel expenses out of pocket. After speaking to friends that debated out of rural high schools, I've learned that the difficulties that I encountered are even more exacerbated in those regions. Moreover, unlike urban areas which are covered by the extensive Urban Debate League, rural schools have no network supporting the development of debate, which sparked my interest in creating RuDI.”
- Grant is currently an associate at H.I.G. Capital, a private equity investment firm where he specializes in investing in, professionalizing and supporting the growth of emerging businesses
- Grant started off as a debater at Foothill High School in Henderson, NV and then transferred to Green Valley High School in Henderson, NV. At Green Valley, Grant qualified to the Tournament of Champions and was ranked as one of the top 25 teams in the country in the HS Impact Coaches Poll



Kelly Mu, President

- “Compared to others, I started debate relatively late. I joined when I was a freshman in College, and was immediately attracted but also intimidated by the practice debate that was held by the seniors. I started practicing extensively and devoting large amounts of time to debate, often sacrificing my weekends to compete.”
- “Because a majority of the tournaments were on the East Coast and I went to school in the Midwest, I caught a lot of 4am Spirit airline flights just for a chance to compete. Of course, I was lucky to even get a chance to compete. When COVID came and debates started moving online, I really saw this as a great opportunity to democratize the activity and wanted to use this chance to expand debate to areas the activity has not travelled to before.”
- Kelly has extensive non-profit building experience. During college, Kelly worked for Shakti, a non-profit providing information and resources to survivors of domestic violence in India through chatbots. She worked to aid the development and expansion of the organization, assisted with budget allocation, executed growth strategies and helped to secure funding through grant applications. She is currently working full-time for RuDI
- Kelly participated in British Parliamentary style in College, receiving various national and regional successes, and qualified for the World University Debate Championship of 2021