

# DEBATING EDGE

— PERSUASIVE SPEAKING ACADEMY —

## Canadian Parliamentary Debating Program

### COURSE OUTLINE

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#### **Ontario Language Curriculum Guidelines**

*Oral communication skills are fundamental to the development of literacy and essential for thinking and learning. Through talk, students not only communicate information but also explore and come to understand ideas and concepts; identify and solve problems; organize their experience and knowledge; and express and clarify their thoughts, feelings, and opinions. Listening and speaking skills are essential for social interaction at home, at school, and in the community. To develop their oral communication skills, students need numerous opportunities to listen and to talk about a range of subjects, including personal interests, school work, and current affairs.*

#### **About the Instructors**

*Tamer Higazi, B.Ed. (Level 1-3)* is a seasoned classroom English teacher and acclaimed debate coach. Tamer founded and coached the Pickering College competitive debate and public speaking team (Polikon Society), which enjoyed tremendous success on provincial, national and international stages. *Sterling Mancuso (Level 4)* is a debating prodigy. As 2-term Polikon captain, Sterling's resume includes: Gr. 12 Fulford Champion, Provincial Champion, Canadian Champion, World Individual Debating Finalist, Valedictorian. Megan Campbell (Level 4) has a debating resume that mirrors Sterling's, with a notable exception: she is none other than the 2018 World Speaking Champion!

#### **Course Description**

The *Debating Edge* program prepares students to use language with increasing fluency and accuracy, as a powerful tool of persuasion. Students will develop oral communication and writing skills required for success in all school subjects. They will improve listening and speaking skills through participation in open discussions, controlled debate and a wide variety of rhetorical activities. Indeed, debating helps students express themselves with confidence, but it also teaches them to think critically, to respond precisely and most importantly, to listen attentively. Every lesson, the students' toolboxes become increasingly filled with rhetorical devices, knowledge of current events and logical fallacies. If you aren't a critical thinker when you enter the program, it's only a matter of time before you become one. The final class of each session (i.e. Fall session) is an 'Open House', where students proudly demonstrate what they have learned in front of family and friends.

## **Level 1 Rhetorical Skills Training**

*Prerequisite: None*

### **Description**

If you asked a group of kids to play volleyball without any previous skills training, they wouldn't have much fun (or success). The same is true for debating. Level 1 is devoted to rhetorical skills training. Students get frequent opportunities to log 'time on their feet' with a plethora of chunked rhetorical activities, each designed to hone a specific area of debating. Students start to develop a spatial/time reference; speaking times range in length (30 seconds – 3 minutes). Students learn that 'debaters' are the polar opposite of 'arguers'. Whereas arguers are opinionated, debaters are insightful. Level 1 has a keen focus on insight development. Students learn to explore avenues of thought in order find insights, then to articulate them so that others can see their brilliance. Without the pressure of actual debating, students feel free to find their voice and explore their thinking at their own pace.

This is key to helping the shyer ones come out of their shell. Students are introduced to the concept of Logical Fallacies. They learn to question everything and watch out for flaws of logic when engaged in conversation. Students are kept up to date with current events and there is also an emphasis on vocabulary development (Tough Antonyms, Fancy Synonyms).

### **By the end of Level 1, students will:**

- understand the difference between a debater & and arguer
- be able to develop and articulate insights on any topic and to challenge the assumption
- learn to think things through from the perspective of someone who disagrees with them
- acquire thinking strategies and rhetorical techniques
- have the ability to speak coherently on random topics
- understand that listening is paramount to debating
- know how to give and take Points of Interest (POIs)
- increase their knowledge of current events

## **Level 2 Rules of Engagement**

*Prerequisite: Level 1*

### **Description**

Students enter Level 2 with a lot of new-found rhetorical skill and self-confidence from Level 1. Now it is time to start breaking down the format of Parliamentary Debate. Using training videos from the Ontario Fulford League of Debating, students learn about the role each debater plays during a formal debate. Starting with the Prime Minister's opening remarks, students learn about case construction. They apply the higher-level language and rhetorical skills learned in Level 1 to building and refuting arguments. They learn to work as a team, to go for clash, to sign post their strategy for the judges, and to always address the Speaker of the House (as opposed to their opponents). Level 2 continues to offer students ample 'time on their feet' speaking opportunities. They now understand the honour of receiving the spotlight, so they are held to a higher standard than Level 1 students.

### **By the end of Level 2, students will:**

- demonstrate an understanding of more complex spoken English on a variety of topics in interactive situations
- be fully aware of logical fallacies & other tools of persuasion
- be knowledgeable about the format and rules of Parliamentary Debate
- understand their job is not finished just because they have finished speaking
- learn to rely on their partners and respect their opponents

- be aware and well-versed in other speaking categories (i.e. Persuasive Speaking, Impromptu Speaking, Take Us There speeches)
- learn to not 'front-load' their debates
- have gathered the courage and self-confidence to fully participate in all classroom activities
- be able to clash with opponents; to demonstrate competency in handling questions (POIs)
- know how to both build and deconstruct arguments
- feel ready to enter the debating arena

### **Level 3 Let's Debate!**

*Prerequisite: Level 2*

#### **Description**

After completing Level 1 and Level 2, students are now intrigued by debating, and are eager to apply all the skills and knowledge they have learned. Such students see the value of debating in their lives and wish to put their acquired rhetorical skill to the test, but in a non-threatening environment. In Level 3, students engage in full-length debates every single lesson, each time with a different resolution. Each debate is judged by peers with official judging ballots, who offer up critical feedback at the end of every round. At first, the speaking order and roles are heavily scaffolded with projected slides. Gradually, the scaffolding is reduced, and by the end of Level 3, students are able to debate fluently regardless of subject matter.

#### **By the end of Level 3, students will:**

- be able to synthesize all skills/knowledge gained & fluently engage in informal debate
- be familiar with debating criteria on the judges' ballots
- receive a Debating Edge certificate of program completion; this impressive achievement allows students to proudly call themselves Canadian Parliamentary Debaters!

### **Level 4 Competitive (Tournament Style)**

*Prerequisite: Level 3*

#### **Description**

The competitive Level 4 stream is for students who wish to take their debating skills to the highest level. This level is not for the faint of heart; it's for debaters who are eager to put their intellect both on display and under fire. Level 4 is all about practice, practice, practice! Every lesson, students come prepared to engage in a full-length debate against other trained debaters, each time with a different resolution. In this level, we turn off the projector and re-create a tournament-style debating environment. Students will also learn new debating formats (i.e. cross-examination & British Parliamentary), as well as how to strike the 'content vs. style' balance. Both in class and for homework, students prepare their own argumentation, with a focus on 'depth of analysis'. Level 4 debaters will be paying close attention to the criteria on the judges' ballots. Some students may wish to engage in the competitive debate circuit (i.e. Thornhill Tournament, Queen's High School Debate Championship, Junior Nationals, Appleby Novice, Ontario Student Debate Union).

#### **By the end of Level 4, students will:**

- be able to fluently engage in formal debate
- receive high-level, post-debate feedback from both coach and fellow debaters
- use appropriately a variety of pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation patterns of spoken English to communicate meaning accurately
- use pauses, Ciceronian triplets and other rhetorical devices effectively
- understand how to use their debating skills to promote their personal agenda