



Eloquence Academy, Inc.

SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

1. Mission Statement

Founded in 2022, Eloquence Academy is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing equitable academic debate opportunities for rural and historically underserved students. Our signature programs include debate classes, tournaments, workshops, in-school programs, and online curricular resources. Our curriculum is active in 75 school districts, 35 states, and 17 countries. We aim to prepare students for college, career engagement, and community impact through the transferable skills gleaned from debate. Further details can be found on our website, eloquenceacademy.org.

2. Overview of School Partnerships

Eloquence Academy makes starting and maintaining a debate program easier for schools. Through our Debate-Inspired Classrooms program, we offer a combination of curriculum, tournament registration assistance, direct financial support through microgrants, teacher professional development, and most frequently, coaching both on-site at the school and online.

We support the specific funding or logistical needs of K-12, public, independent, magnet, charter, boarding, and homeschools. We recognize that each school has its own size, resources, and needs. There are no requirements or standards that a school must meet in order to participate. To this end, we work with each school to create a customized partnership charter. Each school will participate in a different number of programs and will have a different timeline of partnership.

However, regardless of the type, style, or length of a partnership with Eloquence Academy, there is/are:

- Absolutely no fees for teachers or students to participate
- Easy access to high-quality coaches and curriculum
- Ability to connect with debaters across the country via virtual platforms
- Opportunities for debate outside of the school day (field trips, tournaments, etc.)

Eloquence Academy is currently partnered with 100 primary and secondary schools across the nation, making it one of the largest nonprofit organizations that offers this program.

3. Overview of Rural School Partnerships

Beginning in 2023, Eloquence Academy launched a partnership with the Rural Debate Initiative (RuDI) to expand programmatic efforts to students and schools in geographically rural areas. Rural education is characterized by a significant gap in the attainment of a 4-year college education, vastly higher rates of childhood poverty, and much less funding than urban counterparts. Similarly, rural debate programs often lack monitorship, resources, and are geographically isolated, making it difficult to both create and maintain a competitive debate team and resulting in twice as many urban schools having debate. These challenges have been exacerbated by a lack of attention from lawmakers and legislators.

The primary recent development that has aided rural education is the introduction of digital learning as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The American Rescue Plan allocated a historic \$122 billion in funding that was used through Fall 2024. Additionally, the Federal Communications Commission invested an unprecedented \$20 billion to increase internet access in rural areas. We have already seen a 23% increase in students with a digital learning device and a higher percentage of rural areas with 25/3Mbps internet. Fortunately, these changes will allow rural schools to access a new workforce of virtual teachers and students to access high-quality virtual learning materials.

Working collaboratively with RuDI, Eloquence Academy now serves hundreds of students in geographically rural areas. In particular, 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 encourage our coaches to adapt our flagship curriculum — to adopt place-based educational approaches and put local community issues at the center of pedagogy and inquiry. We connect rural students to their local community by partnering with regional organizations that offer additional resources and opportunities.

4. Partnership Cost

We are happy to share that all partnerships are offered free of charge. In fact, we even offer microgrants to our partner schools. These decisions were made in alignment with our mission to foster equitable academic debate opportunities for all.

5. What is debate?

Debate is a popular extracurricular activity in secondary schools and colleges across the United States. Students and/or teams of students are asked to discuss the benefits and drawbacks of a given policy question. Students research the policy, analyze relevant current events, brainstorm arguments on both sides of the resolution, and orally present their arguments to a judge — normally a parent or debate coach they have never met. In doing so, students build literacy, critical thinking, public speaking, research, collaboration, and civic engagement. Students that participate in debate exhibit higher levels of college readiness and score higher on standardized tests.

Key benefits include:

- **Communication:** Debate encourages students to build strong presentation skills when articulating their arguments to opponents and judges.
- **Academics:** Preparing for a round requires writing and language arts skills, resulting in debaters averaging 107 points higher on the SAT, obtaining an 0.66 higher GPA, and having a 40% higher likelihood in US college attendance and graduation.
- **Critical Thinking:** Debate emphasizes critical thinking as students must think on their feet and respond on the fly during debate rounds. These transferable skills are useful in the workforce.
- **Research and Analytical Skills:** Students will learn more about world issues and are required to advocate for both sides of a resolution.

6. Public Forum Debate

In all partnerships, Eloquence Academy will focus on Public Forum (PF) Debate, the most popular format of middle and high school competitive debate in the United States. With resolutions centered on current events, PF relies on logic, clear communication, and well-sourced evidence with a preference for reliability and recency. Recent PF topics have tackled single-use plastics, surveillance infrastructure on the United States Southern border, and federal student debt cancellation. Teams of two advocate the benefits and drawbacks of each proposal.

Schools can seek to integrate as much PF as they wish. Some will focus more on public speaking, research, and argumentation, only touching upon PF lightly, as necessary, and to frame the aforementioned concepts. Others hope for students to gain mastery of PF technicalities and compete at national debate tournaments. These choices will affect the charter and determination of partnership length.

7. School Charters

All schools will work to craft a charter that guides their partnership. It will consist of a collaborative Google Document between Eloquence Academy and the school. The charter will include a stated purpose of the partnership, the preliminary timeframe of partnership, an agreed schedule for coachings (if necessary), and the match between coach to school. Schools are encouraged to bring specific questions or considerations as we construct the charter. While charters can be edited, it is ideal to create as strong and detailed a charter as possible to begin with.

8. Partnership Options

School partners may take advantage of any combination of the following opportunities:

1. **Curriculum & resources integration:** At 8am on each Monday of the school year, a debate curriculum package will be emailed to school administrator(s) and teacher(s). The package will include a full copy of powerpoint slides, any accompanying materials (worksheets, videos, graphic organizers, etc.), suggested models for integration, and instructional advice. We will also share our exclusive newsletter curated on a weekly basis to include the most relevant current events and academic research on a given debate topic. Teachers are welcomed to reach out and meet with Eloquence Academy ambassadors if they have any questions about the curriculum or newsletter materials. Please note that this model does not involve synchronous instruction from an Eloquence Academy faculty member.
2. **Microgrants:** Each year, Eloquence Academy partner schools are welcomed to apply for a microgrant of anywhere between \$100-\$1000. The funding can be used for a variety of purposes, including National Speech & Debate Association (NSDA) membership fees, tournament fees, materials, supplies, clothing, or anything else that is debate-related. We typically prefer schools that fund tangible objects or items (clothing, supplies, etc.) which extend beyond one-time use, as opposed to an online resource about a specific debate topic that is only relevant for a month. The microgrant application period opens on September 1. We budget a fixed amount of \$35,000 each year and distribute accordingly; applications remain open and are accepted on a rolling basis until all funding is distributed. Applicants are asked to provide background information about their school and a compelling reason as to why funding is necessary.

3. **Tournament Registration Assistance:** Eloquence Academy recognizes that registering for debate tournaments can be a confusing and tiresome process, whether it be coordinating judges, paying entry fees, or entering student information. At any point in their partnership, schools may ask to register their students under the "Eloquence Academy" name for an online debate tournament. While we will directly pass on the registration fees and judging obligations to the partner school, we will assist with all other registration processes and not surcharge or profit off sending students to tournaments.
4. **Coaching:** Eloquence Academy faculty members provide synchronous debate coaching either during the school day (elective) or afterschool (club). Coaching is offered in a virtual or in-person format, and at any frequency (weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, etc.). If virtual, a videoconferencing link will be provided by Eloquence Academy. Our team members are happy to assist with technology issues on both ends. Schools are generally expected to coordinate the time at which their students will receive the coaching, and ensure that all students can join on a personal device or shared camera at the front of the classroom. Please note that our coaches will use the same materials as in the "curriculum & resource integration" partnership, but may have more extensive experience in delivery.

Throughout the year, we plan intermittent debate-inspired professional development workshops for teachers. We also host monthly interschool events for students, including virtual game nights, intramural tournaments, and complimentary college admissions webinars. These opportunities are exciting as they unite our national community and connect our rural communities to our urban ones. They are optional, but highly recommended. All partner schools receive a calendar invite and communication for these opportunities.

9. Coaching Structure

Eloquence Academy faculty assist students at all times.

The safety and security of students, even if they are not directly enrolled under Eloquence Academy but rather at a partner school, remains our utmost priority. All faculty and staff members undergo a rigorous hiring process, which includes an interview and typically a background check. Upon joining our team, all faculty and staff members participate in training and are held to the highest possible standards. They learn about how to support students, spot potential violations to student conduct, and basic safety/security procedures in both an online and in-person setting.

Our instructors have extensive experience in both debate and coaching. Many were competitive high school and college debaters themselves. A vast majority ranked in the top 1% of the nation. However, we recognize that a strong debate resume may not always translate to effective teaching. To that end, we partnered with the Mary Lou Fulton College for Teaching and Learning Innovation at Arizona State University (ASU). All faculty complete micro-credentials and professional development classes from ASU to acquire mastery in pedagogy.

Our curriculum has been developed and refined over numerous years in partnership with teachers, education specialists, debate coaches, and other institutions nationwide, including ASU, the University of Chicago, the University of Tennessee, and Middlebury College. To view a sample of our flagship debate curriculum, please explore our [debate resources hub](#).

10. Timeframe

Eloquence Academy defines a school year as beginning as early as September 1 and ending as late as June 30. Eloquence Academy will abide by that standard school calendar with no sessions during any federal holidays, Election Day, and a week-long break over Thanksgiving and Christmas. Additionally, due to the large number of school partners and for ease of scheduling, there are no “make-up” lessons offered on a week in which a federal holiday created a cancelled class. Over the course of the year, the number of holidays usually balances such that the class sections meeting on each different weekday will have met the same number of times total.

The aforementioned is meant to serve as a guideline, but we recognize that there are variations to the school calendar based on district. We are flexible in accommodating those dates. We will work with schools to determine the timeframe while crafting the charter. A partnership can start and end at any point based on the school’s needs and interests. For example, with some schools, we have pioneered a one-week, condensed elective program for students. With other schools, we extend our partnership beyond one year. Schools may also choose to end a partnership earlier than the scheduled end date, or determine an end date based on the first several coachings. We encourage schools to be as communicative as possible as we craft the timeframe.

Absent a written agreement to the contrary, all partnerships are scheduled to conclude by June 30. Schools may begin partnerships during the middle of the year. However, even if a school starts later than September 1, the partnership will still end by June 30.

If a school wishes to renew and create a multi-year partnership, they will be asked to confirm in writing to administration by June 15. If they do not reach out by that point, they will automatically be offboarded from the internal system and have to externally relaunch a partnership during the following year.

11. Process

The goal when connecting is to find consensus, identifying needs and capacity on both ends. We will likely want to meet 3-4 times before launching the partnership. The charter will be drafted during and between meetings.

You can start the connection with Eloquence Academy in one of three ways:

- Shoot us an inquiry email at finance@eloquenceacademy.org.
- Fill out the “let’s work together” [form](#) on our webpage.
- Find a time to speak with us for 30 minutes via our [calendar](#).

Even if you are not sure that working with Eloquence Academy will be entirely feasible, we encourage you to reach out. We are always happy to answer questions and/or explore the options with you. Should our program not be a good fit, we are happy to provide recommendations to external organizations and debate leagues with similar opportunities. Historically, we have had school administrators reach out, unknowing if their students would participate in public speaking, and evolve into multi-year debate programs with hundreds of participants.

Your submission of the form is nonbinding and does not obligate you to partner with us. We will proceed to reach out to you with more information so you can review all pertinent details. After reviewing the materials, you can finalize your intent to partner.

We welcome inquiries from any individual employed or contracted by a school, whether it be a superintendent, administrator, faculty member, or associate. Please note that we may ask to have conversations with additional individuals beyond who initially reaches out.