

# Clash Coaching Philosophy: What Makes Us Unique

Clash emphasizes parental involvement instead of relying on one especially qualified coach.

Here's why.

## **Produces more well-rounded adults.**

We believe our approach results in a more well-rounded debater and adult. All Stoa debate clubs seek to help develop young people to make an impact for Christ and His Kingdom. At Clash, we think that end result is achieved better through multiple guides and mentors instead of just one. This is more like life itself. We want our young people to interact with and receive input from many adults who themselves have many varied and diverse backgrounds. Every parent has something meaningful to offer and we want to take advantage of these varied gifts.

## **Avoids potential unhealthy emphasis on techniques and fads.**

Another advantage of this philosophy is that it avoids some of the weaknesses which can happen when you only have one main coach. That scenario can (not necessarily) lead to an unhealthy emphasis on debate techniques and fads. Such techniques and fads can help win rounds for a while, but others will eventually “catch on” and develop counter strategies to defeat the technique or fad. And worse, much worse, is that an

emphasis on techniques and fads detracts from the effort of building life skills to study and think deeply about the issue itself and then to engage and influence others regarding the topic itself. We want to train our young people to pursue truth and righteousness without any gimmicks. It's not that having a specialized head coach would necessarily lead that way, but that detrimental outcome can develop more easily under that other philosophy. Thus, Clash has intentionally chosen our philosophy in large part to avoid that possibility.

### **Compels students to dig deeper into the topic themselves.**

Having one coach can tend to create an environment where the coach teaches on the topic and steers the club toward a particular kind of case. This could potentially discourage ideological variations. In Clash, we believe the debaters learn more by researching their own case and discovering for themselves the nuances of the resolution. It does require more research on the part of the debater, but this will produce more educated debaters.

### **Prepares better debaters for tournaments and better communicators for life.**

Competitive debate is simply a forum to achieve a vastly more important purpose. Competitive debate is a tool to equip our young people to be effective communicators – to become better speakers, researchers and thinkers - in service to our Lord Jesus Christ. A major part of this endeavor is adult judges, of which there are two broad categories. One group has extensive experience (long-time debate parents, coaches or alumni) and one group has little to no experience (new debate parents, parents of speech students and Community Judges). We believe a club led by one experienced coach will tend to develop communicators who are technical and academic at the

possible (though not necessary) expense of simplicity, clarity and conciseness. Debaters from a coach-led club may fare better with some technically-minded, experienced judges, but may tend to communicate poorly with relatively inexperienced judges.

On the other hand, we believe a club led by parents with the full range of debate experience will tend to develop communicators with a more healthy balance of technical expertise and simplicity, clarity and conciseness. The result is that such debaters will communicate more effectively with the full range of judges in our league.

More importantly, in addition to this consideration about the limited world of debate, we believe a parent-led club equips young people to be more effective communicators for all of life. Having all our parents engaged on a weekly basis gives our young people a much broader sampling of the kinds of adults with whom they will interact the rest of their lives, not just a few years of debate. Therefore, when they graduate from debate, they will be more effective communicators in adulthood.

We believe the overwhelming success of Clash in its 20-plus-year history validates our philosophy. A parent-led club prepares better debaters for tournaments and better communicators for life.

## **Perpetuates Clash and Stoa.**

The last significant advantage of our philosophy is that heavy parental involvement greatly assists in perpetuating the legacy of Clash. We are not dependent on one or two leaders whose resignation would potentially lead to the demise of our club. Furthermore, our league depends on parents who are invested in this activity to perpetuate Stoa and pave the way for future generations of debaters. All Stoa Board members do have or have had children involved in this activity.