

The Honor Code for the Newark Science Park High School Debater:

I. Philosophy

The Science Park High School debate team was founded in 1980 by an idealistic young teacher named Brent Farrand. The goal was to create a program that taught ethical communication skills to Newark students in a way that would make them competitive with anyone from any school in the United States. For over thirty years our program has produced educators, doctors, lawyers, accountants and, most importantly, leaders. We won well over twenty NJ State Championships and hundreds of other regional and national awards. We now have one of the oldest and most respected programs in the country. But what we are most proud of is the quality of leader we create. Graduates of the Science Park Debate Team have a high commitment to truth, personal honesty, and social justice. This is first seen in the quality of arguments that our students produce, and in the way our students carry themselves both in school and around the country. This is then seen in the decisions our graduates make once they leave our program. They become the type of leaders who are not afraid to make tough ethical and moral decisions. They are thoughtful, reflective, and have an unwavering commitment to justice. They are taught that the words they speak mean something and that they have the obligation to use their well trained voice to make positive changes in this world.

II. Introduction to the Honor Code

Debaters are afforded privileges and freedom that most students in the City of Newark do not have. Debaters receive thousands of extra dollars toward their education and students regularly travel across the country. They regularly sleep in hotels, ride buses, and visit schools in other cities and states.

In order for any successful team to function, debaters are given more freedom than in many other activities. From practice rounds judged by students to staying with one another inside of (same sex) hotel rooms, there can never be a teacher or coach watching at all times. There is supervision, but the supervision for debaters, by necessity, is not the same as in a classroom. This means that the character and behavioral expectations for debaters is much, much higher. The parent and guardian of each debater must attest that their child is able to handle the increased freedom afforded to members of the Science Park Debate Team.

III. Areas of Increased Freedom - We take the supervision of our students seriously, but for creative, intelligent students there will be ways that they can find to abuse these freedoms.

a. Travel – Students travel by bus, train, and plane to high school and university campuses across the United States. They walk to and from debate rounds in these places.

b. Practice Rounds / Argument Preparation – Part of the mentoring process in debate is that older students often judge practice rounds, argument drills, and engage in argument development with younger students. Our senior members of our squad are expected to demonstrate to our younger debaters how to behave both inside and outside of the debate rounds.

c. Independent Research – Debaters have access to college-level data bases both at home and in school. Loss of access to the Internet privileges will severely damage the ability to prepare. This means that while using the Internet at home or in school, students must not violate parental or school trust.

d. Adult Trust / Communicative Power - Adults are impressed by the way debaters communicate and the complex ideas we are able to simplify. Because of what we are able to do, adults both inside and outside of the school trust us more. Adults equate highly intelligent students with highly ethical and responsible students. Additionally, debaters are trained to read people and persuade them, using both verbal and non-verbal language. This is an ability that can be used for great good, or it can be used destructively, to manipulate or deceive. This is the most important reason why high ethical standards are so important for a debater. Our organization only wants to

train individuals who will use this power for good, to better their homes, this school (Science Park High School), their communities, and their own personal lives.

IV. Character Areas

There are four character areas of particular importance to a Science Park High School debater:

a. Truth – Debate is an academic activity. People have to trust that when you read evidence in a debate round that the evidence is not made up. Plagiarism is lying, and lying is antithetical to everything for which we stand. Debaters must tell the truth. Any debater caught lying to a coach or any adult will be either suspended from the team, or from school, or — depending on the seriousness of the offense — asked to leave the Science Park High School debate team. Debaters who cannot be trusted to tell the truth cannot be members of our squad. It is important to understand fully that lies of omission are also lies.

b. Peace – Violence is not a way to solve problems within our debate community. If you are unable to resolve a conflict with a peer, you are expected to go to a coach for resolution of the matter. Remember, you are debaters. Your voices are used to influence action. Furthermore, violence is only used against enemies, and you have no enemies on this team or in the larger debate community.

c. Honor – Students are to always be respectful of each other's space and persons. No student should ever be harassed sexually. Sexuality is extremely serious and must not be explored under the cover of either preparing for or going to debate tournaments. The same applies for illegal drug and alcohol use. No illegal substance will be taken or used by a Science Park High School Debater. Sexual contact or illegal drug use, either on school grounds or at a debate tournament, will result in either long-term suspension from the team, suspension from school, expulsion from the team, or, for more serious offenses, expulsion from Science Park High School.

d. Community – Although we are a highly competitive team, we are also a compassionate family. We are a large, multi-racial, multi-cultural program. We value our members. We also help each other with the problems we face, either through giving advice, or seeking aid from people who can help. The problems we try to solve are not just the ones in the debates, but the problems that we have in our own lives. Our debate community is nurturing, compassionate, understanding, and always willing to help make each other's lives better. We are always respectful of our members' lives, liberties, properties, and feelings.

We will also understand that the ideas we debate are not just on paper. They mean things to real people. There is a direct connection to the works we read about social justice and what goes on in our lives and the world. In our debate community we will always try to put the best of our ideas into practice.

We must also be respectful of the hierarchy of our debate community. Students must trust the coach and the coach's judgment, with faith that coaching decisions are made with only the best interest of the students involved. Students must not hesitate to let the coach know about problems on the team or with members on the team. Problems cannot be solved or managed if they are not voiced.

Communities can only be maintained through the vigilance of its members. This means that all debaters have the responsibility to do what is necessary to maintain the safe, clean, compassionate, highly intellectual environment that is the Science Park High School Debate Team.

V. The Sister Shirley Corbliss Oath of Integrity

I am a Science Park High School Debater. I pledge to uphold the highest standards of Truth, Peace, Honor and Community. My participation on this team will afford me greater freedom both inside and outside of the school. I will develop skills that will greatly enhance my powers of persuasion. I fully understand that with those greater

freedoms must come greater responsibility. I will uphold truth, because rational decisions cannot be made without it; because the people around me deserve it; because I am not a liar. I will uphold peace because violence will not solve my problems; because violence is demeaning; and because violence is done to enemies, and I have no enemies on this team, or in the larger debate community. I will uphold honor because I am an honorable person; because I value the safety and integrity of my teammates; and because I refuse to shame my family, my coaches, my community, and myself. I will uphold this community with my actions because I love the intellectual environment where I can explore ideas with other students who also love ideas; because I respect and value the beautiful places I have been given to work; because I value this warm, safe space where I can grow into an adult. Much is expected of me. To my family, my coaches, my community, I will make you proud.

signature

print name

I am the parent / guardian of _____ I can attest to
his / her ability to uphold these values.

signature

print name

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