

# CHAPTER 12

## Wars of Words: Debates with Commentary



### Coming Up!

In this section, you'll see the tips and tricks discussed in previous chapters come together as full debates. The resolutions will be debated vigorously from both sides of the issue so that you can see how a debate unfolds. The commentary and flow sheets will help you understand the tools that the debaters are using. However, you're encouraged to make your own flow sheet as you read each debate.

## PARLIAMENTARY STYLE DEBATE: THIS HOUSE WOULD (THW) LOWER THE MINIMUM VOTING AGE.

### Debate

**Speaker:** I call this House to order. The Bill before us today is: This House would (THW) lower the minimum voting age. Representing the Government are the Prime Minister and the Minister of the Crown, and representing Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition are the Member of the Opposition and the Leader of the Opposition. I now call upon the Prime Minister to define the terms of the Bill and present the Government's case.

**Prime Minister:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Honorable members of the House, we are here today to debate whether this House should lower the minimum voting age. In order to focus the debate on nations with long-standing democratic traditions, we are referring to the 30 nations that are members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), largely North America and Western Europe. We define "lower the minimum voting age" as allowing citizens to vote in elections for public office beginning at the age of 16, compared to the current systems which typically have a minimum voting age of 18 years.

I will focus on the issue of rights—why it is that citizens as young as age 16 *deserve* to vote. My partner will focus on the benefits to society and to young people of lowering the voting age to 16.

The first point of the Government's case is that people as young as age 16 have adult and democratic responsibilities which should

### Commentary

*No need for a plan because the resolution is a single, simple decision.*

*Should state in proper resolution format.*

*Appropriate rationale and choice for geographic scope.*

*Good to be specific in this way.*

*Tells the judges exactly where the case is going.*

*Clear statement of the point being made.*

translate into the right to vote. The concept of rights and responsibilities are related. As someone's responsibilities to society increase, so should the constitutional rights they have to shape how society is run. For example, people as young as 16 pay sales taxes on their rapidly growing spending and income taxes on part-time employment income. They are held criminally responsible, commonly as adults, for actions that violate the law. Society expects these individuals to begin acting like adults, which is why people as young as 16 deserve the right to influence political decisions concerning, for instance, how their tax dollars are spent and a variety of other important issues.

*Leader of the Opposition:* "On that point" (Prime Minister accepts the Point of Information). "Would you not agree that a basic, easy to perform obligation such as paying taxes or behaving lawfully is fundamentally different than an important, complex choice like deciding on who should govern the country?"

*Prime Minister:* Firstly, paying taxes and lawful behavior are critically important to the functioning of society. Secondly, as I will discuss later, the premise of your question—voting is too difficult for young people to understand—is completely incorrect.

Now that we have established the issue of democratic rights, we will move on to our second point, which is how significantly political decisions impact young people. The concept of a democratic society is that the people who are impacted by political decisions should be able to determine who it is that makes these decisions. In this sense, we have government by consent of the people. For example, politi-

*Good connection between rights and responsibilities.*

*Example helps to clarify the point.*

*Started with a concluding line, but then moved needlessly back into specifics.*

*Good timing, as argument has just finished.*

*Strong contrast between circumstances.*

*Speaker foreshadows what's to come, allowing him to move on.*

*Clear, effective transition back to the speech and to the next point.*

*Appeal to a widely held belief.*

cians make decisions that impact the school system, policing of violence by young people, and access and affordability of college and university. Many youth are also impacted by issues such as poverty, health care, and social services. In order for politicians to have full legitimacy in making these decisions, the youth who are impacted by these choices should be part of the voting constituency that forms our governments.

Since we have now talked about the concept of responsibilities and the numerous political decisions that impact youth, we will now move on to the third and final area of rights, namely whether people as young as 16 have the capability to exercise this right well. The often stated reason for having age 18 as the minimum voting age is that it is at this stage in life that people have the capability to exercise their democratic rights appropriately. It is, of course, reasonable to limit rights to people so young that they cannot exercise them responsibly. However, this is not the case for students who are 16 years old. People at this age are learning about society and government at school, arguably giving them more recent knowledge about political issues than even many adults. In addition, they have had many years to learn about how society and the political system work. They are beginning to think about what they want to do after graduating from school, such as earning a living or pursuing college or university education. That is, they have the capability to think rationally and responsibly about how to exercise this important right.

*Member of the Opposition:* “Point of Information” (Prime Minister accepts). “Do you not think that people should finish learning all

*Examples provide context as to why the rights are important.*

*Links the initial concept of impact to the concept of legitimacy.*

*Signal that the speaker wants to debunk a common myth.*

*Why not go right into how voting at age 16 is okay?*

*Have most youth been paying attention for these “many years?”*

*Is there really a definite time when you have ‘learned’ the concepts of voting?*

of these important matters before they vote, as opposed to getting familiar with political decision *while* they are allowed to vote?”

**Prime Minister:** The right to vote has never required a sophisticated level of political knowledge. Rather, one must have merely enough information to make their preferred choice, and the Government believes that a 16 year old student’s school environment provides sufficient knowledge for a carefully considered voting decision.

I have told you firstly that the right to vote is a logical extension of the responsibilities placed on people as young as 16, secondly that political decisions have a strong impact on students of this age, and finally that they have the capability to exercise this right appropriately. Therefore, the Government has established the theme of rights, which is why this House should lower the minimum voting age to 16. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** I thank the Prime Minister for his remarks. I now call upon on the Member of the Opposition to deliver her speech.

**Member of the Opposition:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, the Government has presented a case based on the assumption that there is a democratic right to vote at the age of 16. After refuting the three arguments presented by the Prime Minister, I will talk about the idea of the ability to vote responsibly. My partner will talk about the concept of what influences a vote, and how this makes lowering the voting age a bad idea.

The first argument made by the Prime Minister was that young people have adult responsibilities, which means they should

*Good description of what the broader concept of voting rights means (and doesn’t mean).*

*Numbering the points helps the judges to remember them.*

*Clear tie-back to the main theme and case statement.*

*Immediately stakes out an approach to the refutation.*

*“Bad” is too elementary a term.*

*Tells the judges what’s being refuted.*

have the adult right to vote. In reality, however, society sets different age limits for different activities and responsibilities, depending on the circumstances. The reason why people pay sales taxes and income taxes at a younger age is that they have the ability to spend and earn income before they are 18 years old. On the other hand, the right to purchase alcohol or buy cigarettes is restricted to people who are several years older, because society does not believe that young people have enough knowledge or experience to make these decisions responsibly. Teenagers are often treated as adults by the criminal system because by the age of 16 society believes that they know the difference between right and wrong. However, it's wrong to equate each of these circumstances to the right to vote in how society at large operates. The Prime Minister has tried to draw parallels that have no direct relation to one another, which is why this first argument is invalid.

Then, the Prime Minister went on to talk about the political decisions impacting young people. If we extend this logic, then why would we not lower the voting age to people much younger than 16, who were also affected by a wide variety of public policy issues? The reason is that until the age of 18, we entrust parents or guardians to act on behalf of their children. Parents or guardians take the interests of their families into consideration when making political decisions, and are considered to be representatives of the entire family unit. This second argument, therefore, lacks both logical consistency and necessity.

*Prime Minister:* "On that point" (Member of the Opposition accepts). "Isn't it true that by age 16, a student has reached significant indepen-

*Effective explanations of the distinctions between the Prime Minister's examples.*

*Could have been a bit more concise, or cut out one example.*

*Why is it wrong?*

*Stretching the logic is a good way to show the point's flaws.*

*Do they look at what their children want, or just what they want for themselves?*

dence from his or her parents, particularly their views of society and the world?"

*Member of the Opposition:* Legally, we still consider a 16 year old to be under the care of his or her parents or guardians. Surely, they are developing independence, but they have not yet reached the stage of full independence required in order for them to make a fully independent voting choice

The Prime Minister's third point was that people as young as 16 have the capability to vote responsibly. However, even he himself acknowledged that young people are in the process of learning the required knowledge and are only *beginning* to think in the long-term about various matters concerning their lives. We can't equate this level of knowledge and experience to that of an adult.

This leads me very well into the theme of the constructive part of my speech, which is whether students as young as age 16 have the ability to exercise the voting right responsibly. As the Government has stated, we can only extend the right to vote to those who can exercise this important practice appropriately, and reasonable limits are certainly in order if they can't do so.

My first argument is that minors are not yet familiar with the complex decisions that are involved in independent living. They have not yet had to manage a household, as they are still generally under the care of their parents or guardians. They don't take care of maintaining the family residence, nor how the family spends its income. As a result, they don't have the experience in independent decision-making necessary to have the right to make decisions on the wide variety of issues that impact families.

*Independent thought being a central tenet of the right to vote.*

*But is legal custody the real issue here?*

*Using the Prime Minister's own words to attack the case.*

*Clash with this point was short, but to the point nonetheless.*

*Clear shift from clash to constructive.*

*Need to explain why experience living independently matters to the right to vote.*

*Rambling sentence.*

In addition to having insufficient experience, my second point is that they have insufficient engagement in the political process to vote wisely. Most youth are more interested in music, sports, and socializing than debating the public policy issues that impact society. In fact, even people several years over the age of 18 who are allowed to vote have shown substantial disengagement, considering that voter turnout at this age level is significantly lower than for older adults. It is only once people enter the ‘real world’ of work and post secondary education that they become more engaged in societal and political issues, rather than primarily entertainment and educational matters.

*Good transition from life experience to engagement.*

*Use of related facts as basis for an argument.*

Minister of the Crown: “Point of Information” (Member of the Opposition accepts). “So are you suggesting that retired seniors who are more concerned with relaxation and vacations should have their right to vote taken away because they are not in what you call the ‘real world’ of work?”

*Draws a parallel to an idea most would consider ridiculous, thereby implying a flaw in logic.*

Member of the Opposition: The Minister of the Crown makes a rather trivial comparison that has little impact on our argument. Senior citizens have already had extensive life experience and know what it means to exercise a democratic right to vote. The same cannot be said for someone who’s only 16 years old.

*Good contrast between seniors and students to answer the Point of Information.*

In my speech, I have shown you that the Prime Minister has not sufficiently proven his points about the democratic responsibilities and rights, the impact of political decisions, and the capability to exercise the voting right responsibly. I have presented a case based on the ability to vote, starting with the lack of familiarity with independent decision-making.

*Effective because it says specifically what has been refuted.*

ing, and continuing with how people as young as 16 years old have insufficient engagement in the political process to make informed voting choices. For these reasons, we proudly oppose this Bill.

*May be helpful to number the points.*

**Speaker:** I thank the Member of the Opposition. I now call upon the Minister of the Crown to continue the Government's case.

**Minister of the Crown:** Mr. Speaker, the Opposition has claimed that students under the age of 18 do not have the ability to make an informed decision, which I intend to refute in my speech. Once I have proven this theme to be incorrect, I will continue the Government's case by discussing three additional reasons for change centering on the idea of benefits to society, particularly young people.

*Good 'road map' for the speech.*

The first point made by the Member of the Opposition was that young people are not yet familiar with living on their own. This argument certainly doesn't demonstrate that students at least 16 years old would be incapable of making decisions that affect how people live. One does not necessarily have to be directly involved in making every decision to be able to understand decisions and their impact. In fact, senior citizens who are under the care of their children or a nursing home are certainly not forbidden from exercising their independent judgment. Similarly, we do not prevent people who are ill or hospitalized from exercising their democratic will. The Government only has to show that younger voters would be capable of understanding the choices that impact society, and their experience up to the age of 16 and their education on civic matters is, in our view, sufficient to be able to make an informed vote.

*Draws clear distinction between making and understanding decisions.*

*Example illustrates how custody or care doesn't necessarily impede judgment.*

*Clarifies the Government's responsibility.*

The Opposition's second point was that young people are insufficiently engaged to be able to make a wise choice. But perhaps, Mr. Speaker, the reason why many youth are not engaged is that their voices are not considered in the political dynamic. Of course, many adults are not engaged in the political system, but society certainly would not take away their right to vote based on a litmus test of their level of engagement. In reality, there are people at all age groups who are disinterested in the political system, and these individuals are unlikely to vote by their own choice. Therefore, the Opposition's point makes a sweeping generalization that doesn't stand up to logical examination.

Now that I have clashed with the Opposition's case, I would like to build on the Prime Minister's case by discussing the benefits of allowing younger people to vote. My first point is that allowing people to vote once they are 16 years old will force politicians to represent more actively the issues that affect this age demographic. Politicians are most responsive to the needs of their constituents when these constituents can determine whether or not they remain in office. Parents only consider youth issues as one of many issues, and students may have views that are indeed different than those of their parents. By lowering the voting age, politicians would have to consider, for example, the views of students on how to improve the education system or how to promote sports and fitness among young people. As a result, an underrepresented segment of society would have their issues advanced by elected officials.

*Member of the Opposition:* "On that point, sir" (Minister of the Crown accepts). "So, then, if

*Suggests the result is a symptom rather than proof of an argument.*

*Shows how the Opposition's logic could, if extended, lead to an unthinkable practice.*

*Clear statement of why the argument is incorrect.*

*Smart to go into why the principle matters.*

*Links motivations to behaviors.*

*Specific example of how the change would have an impact.*

16 year old voters want more days off from school, fewer classes each day, and longer breaks between each class, should politicians cater to this so grossly underrepresented segment of our society?"

*Uses the Minister of the Crown's own logic against her.*

*Minister of the Crown:* I think that the Member of the Opposition is trivializing and exaggerating how the system works. Politicians have to make reasonable decisions after listening carefully to all stakeholder groups, including students, teachers, parents, and administrators. There is no reason to believe that they would give in to unrealistic demands.

*Explains how multiple stakeholders are a 'check' on one having undue influence.*

In addition to having their issues better represented, my second point is that students will become more politically involved. Since students at this age are learning about civic engagement in their classes, they will have an opportunity to put what they have learned in practice as voters. If somebody knows that their views count and that their choices can have an impact on their lives, they are far more likely to take an interest in, and to become involved in, the political system that shapes these decisions. We contend that young people will spend more time debating and discussing among themselves and within their families the important issues that affect society, which is why we believe that lowering the voting age will promote positive democratic engagement.

*Connects with a point made by the Prime Minister.*

*Provides insight into human motivations.*

Finally, the third argument under this benefits theme is that allowing people to vote at a young age will create not only short-term, but more importantly, long-term participation in the democratic process. We all know that people tend to form habits, likes, and dislikes relatively early on in life. If young people become engaged before they even finish

*Reminds judges of the theme being discussed.*

*Could political parties make promises that entice them into long-term loyalty when they're at an impressionable age?*

school, they are far more likely to participate in the electoral system as voters, volunteers, and activists later on in life. Overall, this creates a more politically aware society in which more citizens are continually interested in the issues that affect them and are willing to hold politicians to account.

I want to come back to the Member of the Opposition's refutation and defend some of the arguments that the Prime Minister made. To the Prime Minister's first point about rights and responsibilities, the Member of the Opposition admitted that students age 16 or over are expected to know right from wrong in terms of criminal behavior, so why would they be any less capable of judging right from wrong in terms of decisions that others, such as politicians, make? Regarding the Prime Minister's second point about political decisions directly impacting young people, the Opposition stated that parents should have exclusive right to judge what is best for people under 18 years old. However, at 16 years old, in individual exercises a significant degree of independence in his or her daily life, as parental influence gets weaker over time. On the Prime Minister's final point about the capability to exercise the democratic rights appropriately, the Opposition argued that people are only learning about several important decisions at age 16. However, society does not require adult voters to be fully informed, and indeed many of them are also learning at the same time. In fact, it is a good thing that students would be learning about political decisions at the same time as having to make the voting choice, which makes the decision more engaged and more informed.

In my speech, I have talked to you about the benefits of politicians representing youth

*Discussing impact on society as a whole strengthens the claim of benefits.*

*Draws a parallel.*

*This line of defense has already been discussed in the debate.*

*In general, these points of defense are quite brief and don't add significant value.*

*The only really 'new' claim made in this paragraph.*

issues, students becoming more politically involved, and creating long-term habits of political engagement. Then, I showed you why the Opposition's points regarding the ability to make decisions are incorrect, and why the Opposition's refutation of the Prime Minister's points concerning the right to vote did not weaken the case. Therefore, we stand proudly for this Bill.

*Number the points to make it clearer for the judges.*

**Speaker:** I thank the Minister the Crown for her remarks, and I now call upon the Leader of the Opposition to complete the constructive part of the Opposition's case and to deliver the Opposition's rebuttal.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to begin my address by presenting the final two points of the Opposition's case, after which I will refute the Government's new points and tell you why we have won this debate. Our new constructive arguments focus on the theme of what influences a young person's vote, and why these influences would have a negative impact should people be allowed to vote at the age of 16.

*Shows how the Leader of the Opposition is going to add value to the case.*

Firstly, media and political pressures, that is, external influences, have a greater impact on a minor than on an adult. The younger we are, the less experienced we are in seeing through some of the rhetoric that is presented to us by commentators and politicians. Students are less likely to have significant experience analyzing media stories and deciding what they believe to be true and what is false or exaggerated. Therefore, a vote by someone under age 18 would be less independent given these external influences.

*Good discussion of human psychology.*

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, there are also personal influences that can significantly impact

*Backs up theoretical claims with the experience factor.*

the students vote. When they are under the age of 18, individuals are guided to a large extent by teachers and parents. A student can easily be swayed by the class discussion or by a teacher's natural, unintentional biases in formal and informal instruction on politics and government. Additionally, a parent has significant influence on how their children think about many issues, shaped in part by their discussions at the dinner table, for example. For these reasons, the full independence of the voting decision would be compromised by these significant personal influences.

*Prime Minister:* "Point of Information!" (Leader of the Opposition accepts). "Since when do 16 year old students simply parrot whatever their parents do and think? In fact, aren't they at an age when they actively try to be more independent from their parents?"

*Leader of the Opposition:* While they are certainly in the process of becoming more independent, their parents have had and continue to have significant influence over a child's views, in large part because of how much time a family spends together.

I now want to go into the new points brought up by the Minister of the Crown. His first point was that politicians will be more likely to represent youth issues, but that could simply lead to politicians making unrealistic promises to this voting group. Since minors are much less involved in the broader issues that affect society at large than adults, they would be making their decisions on a more narrow set of interests.

The second point was that students will become more politically involved. It seems like the Government wants to have it both

*But aren't schools meant to teach students how to think critically?*

*Links back to the central concept of a vote needing to be independent.*

*Cites a commonly held belief, probably understood by many in the room.*

*Uses a careful concession to explain difference between partial and full independence.*

*Explains why this is a narrow voting block.*

ways, saying on the one hand that they are informed enough to make good decisions, and saying on the other hand that they need to become more involved in order to make good decisions. Addressing this point directly, however, a youth who is interested in political issues certainly has an incentive to become informed knowing that they will be able to vote in only a few years. In fact, many young people get involved in areas other than voting, such as volunteering on election campaigns, writing letters to the editor, or talking to their family and friends about their views on different issues.

So, Mr. Speaker, what have we heard in today's debate, and what has this debate come down to? The first competing theme of this debate was the idea of rights versus the ability to exercise these rights responsibly. The Government based its case on the logic that just because people under the age of 18 have other rights and responsibilities, they should necessarily have the voting right, whereas we have talked about why the right to vote in elections requires a level of knowledge and experience that is different from other areas. Elections are about much more than individual behavior, as they shape our entire economy, society, and culture. The Government has staked their claim on the idea that simply being in the process of learning something is sufficient to make an informed choice, while we've argued that knowledge and experience are prerequisites to having the right to make this important choice. The Government would have you believe that voting is just another part of a teenager's learning experience. We believe that voting is so important to our society that we cannot simply allow it to be just another learning process.

*Points out an apparent inconsistency in the Government's case.*

*Would more people want to participate in these activities if they could vote?*

*Signals a transition into the rebuttal portion of the speech.*

*Draws a contrast between how the theme was discussed by the respective sides.*

*Continues to draw good distinctions between approaches, tilting them in a pro-Opposition way.*

The Government's case regarding benefits to society is based on the notion that creating another narrow interest group makes our democratic system work better. The fundamental reason why parents still guide their kids until the age of 18 is that society does not want people to be getting their way on every issue before this age, but politicians would have to give in to the will of people as young as age 16 if they are given the right to vote. This may not serve the interests of families and society as a whole, which is what adults are better able to judge who should be in power. We talked about how influences from the media, politicians, parents, and teachers could distort voting choices that are supposed to be independent. An independent choice is the basis of a truly democratic society, a choice that must be fully informed and based on sound judgment.

Mr. Speaker, what does the Prime Minister have to do in his rebuttal? Firstly, he has to show you how somebody at the age of 16 who is still in school and still under the guidance of his or her parents somehow has the independent life experience necessary to judge wider societal issues. Secondly, he has to show you how people at such a young age are possibly able to know as much about the complex and wide variety of political issues, such as international trade and taxation policy, as adults who have many more years of knowledge and experience regarding these matters. Thirdly, he must be able to show you how exactly a teenager's vote could be as independent as an adult's vote, considering the range of influences that shape a person's mind and behavior at this stage in their lives. We are confident that we have shown you why the Government has not sufficiently proven its case on these three

*Shift to the next theme, but it could be made clearer that this is the case.*

*But, then, wouldn't politicians consider the views of everyone else who supposedly doesn't want minors to get their way on everything?*

*Ties the refutation back to this key principle of the case.*

*Frames the debate and possibly throws off the Prime Minister.*

*Opposition using this criterion because it feels it has prevailed on the issue.*

*Criterion implies why the Prime Minister can't win on this dimension.*

*In general, an attempt to place the burden squarely on the Government.*

core issues, which is why we oppose this Bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** I thank the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition first constructed speech and rebuttal, and now call upon the Prime Minister to conclude today's debate.

**Prime Minister:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me get right to the heart of what this debate is *really* about. Can a right as fundamental and beneficial as the right to vote be arbitrarily taken away on the basis that someone is not completely self-sufficient and has not learned about the complexities of every political issue? The right to vote is not based on the idea that someone has to be perfectly informed about every issue, and restricting this right is only justified if granting it would be harmful or completely unjustified.

What the Opposition has told us today is that perhaps young people need a little bit more living experience, a little bit more engagement, and a little bit less influence by other people. One could argue that these very same desires hold true for so many people in the current voting population. Of course, we would not take away the central right to vote because an adult has not fully met all of the desirable criteria of a completely informed voter. The heart of a democratic system is that the voter is always right and that nobody else can pass judgment on a voter's ability to make sound judgments.

We have shown you that because young people have many of the same responsibilities as adults and are affected by the decisions that politicians make, granting them the right to vote would be entirely appropriate. We have shown you that 16 year olds

*Prime Minister is trying to seize back the agenda, not going to play into the Opposition's trap.*

*Good choice to describe it as a single, central issue, even if it combines several themes.*

*Describes how the Opposition made weak distinctions.*

*More effective to rework the previous sentence than to be defensive like this.*

*Saying "the heart" suggest that this is a central factor.*

*Good use of parallel language with "We have shown you."*

have sufficient knowledge through their education to be able to exercise this right appropriately. And we have shown you today that the benefits of giving younger citizens this fundamental democratic right will encourage elected politicians to represent their issues well, and that it will encourage young people to become more engaged in the political system now and in the long-term. Therefore, we stand proudly for this Bill.

*Sentence is slightly too drawn out.*

**Speaker:** I thank all of the debaters for their remarks. This House is now adjourned.

## COMMENTARY ON “VOTING AGE” DEBATE

Both teams presented well-organized cases that were easy to follow. Examples were used heavily to support claims. However, in some places, broad generalizations were made without sufficient explanation or proof. The Points of Information added character to the debate, as did the direct, point by point clash from both sides.

### What did the Government do well?

- *Analysis of roles and responsibilities.* The Prime Minister, in particular, was effective in examining the nature of citizen's place in society at the age of 16, citing examples such as criminal and financial responsibilities. The discussion of capability to exercise this democratic right added weight to the underlying claim.
- *Discussion of results and outcomes.* After the Prime Minister had explained why lowering the voting age was the 'right' decision, the Minister of the Crown explained why it matters. This discussion of impact added depth by showing that the Government case was about more than only theoretical, principles-based arguments. It showed that there was a practical dimension as well.
- *Structure. Structure. Structure.* Both speakers made it absolutely clear where they were going and what they had accomplished, including introductions, conclusions, and transitions. This level of organization

took the judges on a well-defined ‘path’ and made it easy to grasp all of the important concepts.

- *Seizing back the agenda in the rebuttal.* The Leader of the Opposition did an effective job at trying to frame the debate, but the Prime Minister didn’t get side-tracked. In the Government’s rebuttal, there was a clear, to the point articulation of the key themes and why the Government had come out ahead of these fronts.

### **What could the Government have improved?**

- *Why age 16? Why not 17, or 15 for that matter?* Granted, this is a difficult distinction to make, and the Government did its best with it. But further explanation or evidence as to why this was the ‘magic’ number would have helped.

- *Defense of previous arguments.* The Minister of the Crown’s attempted defense of the Prime Minister’s points seemed scattered at times. In many cases, the defense did not add any significant value or depth to the previous arguments. It would have been advantageous to focus on one area where significant damage was done and to present a more thorough defense.

### **What did the Opposition do well?**

- *Discussion of exceptions and nuances.* The Government tried to use examples outside of the core issue of the debate as support for lowering the voting age, which the Opposition dealt with head-on. Both speakers explained how these instances were often generalizations and did not show specifically why allowing 16 year olds to vote would be the right decision to make.

- *Examination of central tenets of democracy.* The Opposition looked at how the independence and solid foundation for a vote was imperative in order for the democratic system to have full legitimacy. Distinctions were drawn to show how not all of the key criteria for a sound vote are fulfilled for a 16 year old.

- *Framing the debate in the rebuttal.* The Leader of the Opposition was very clear and decisive in arguing what the key issues were. Particu-

larly at the end, telling the Prime Minister what the Government's rebuttal must do was a bold, but carefully executed method.

### **What could the Opposition have improved?**

- *Relevance of certain details.* For example, talking about legal custody and its implications for voting decisions, or citing how people under the age of 18 can get involved in other ways were not central to the fundamental question of the right to vote. It's essential that every point ties directly into the case theme.
- *Generalizations and assumptions.* In particular, the Leader of the Opposition's point about parents and teachers influencing students could have included more concrete and specific analysis. Also, when the Member of the Opposition talked about the negative impact of a lack of independent living, there wasn't sufficient analysis to show why specifically this assumption was correct in the context of the debate on lowering the voting age.

## VOTING AGE DEBATE: FLOW SHEET

### GOVERNMENT

#### Prime Minister (#1)

Definition: Age 16, OECD nations

1. Age 16 have adult responsibilities
2. Impact of political decisions
3. Capability to exercise right

#### Minister of the Crown (#3)

Clash 1: Does not show incapability  
Clash 2: Sweeping generalization

4. Politicians forced to represent
5. More politically involved
6. Long-term participation

Defense 1: Know right from wrong  
Defense 2: Significant independence  
Defense 3: Okay to be learning

#### Prime Minister (#5)

Central issue: Can the right to vote be taken away arbitrarily on the dimensions discussed in the debate?

Opposition: Youth need a bit more experience, a bit more engagement, and a bit less influence by others

Government: Many of the same responsibilities, affected by decisions, sufficient knowledge, and benefits to democratic system

### OPPOSITION

#### Member of the Opposition (#2)

Clash 1: Depends on circumstances  
Clash 2: Illogical and unnecessary  
Clash 3: Do not have full knowledge

1. Inexperience in complex decisions
2. Insufficient political engagement

#### Leader of the Opposition (#4)

Clash 4: Narrow set of interests  
Clash 5: Contradicts Point 3  
Clash 6: Speculative at best

4. Media and political pressures
5. Personal influences on youth

Criteria 1: Sufficient experience?  
Criteria 2: Knowledge of issues?  
Criteria 3: Independent choice?

Theme 1: Rights vs. ability to exercise the rights responsibly

Theme 2: Impact on how the democratic system operates

## CROSS-EXAMINATION STYLE DEBATE: BE IT RESOLVED THAT (BIRT) THE CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP OF OUR SCHOOLS IS HARMFUL.

### Debate

**Chairperson:** I call this debate to order. The topic of debate today is: Be it resolved that (BIRT) the corporate sponsorship of our schools is harmful. I would like to welcome the first Affirmative speaker and the second Affirmative speaker, who will support the resolution, and the first Negative speaker and the second Negative speaker, who will oppose the resolution. I now call upon the first speaker of the Affirmative team to define the terms of the resolution and to introduce the Affirmative's case.

**First Affirmative:** Thank you, Madame Chairperson. The resolution before us today is: Be it resolved that the corporate sponsorship of our schools is harmful. We would like to begin by defining the terms of this resolution. We define "corporate sponsorship" as advertising, direct marketing, exclusive agreements, incentive programs, and event and facility naming rights. We defined "our schools" as all of the public schools in the Freedonia school district. Finally, we define "harmful" as negatively impacting the operation of schools and the education of students. I will tell you why school administration is hurt by corporate sponsorship, and the second Affirmative speaker will tell you why students are harmed by this practice.

Our first contention is that corporate sponsorship focuses school administrators

### Commentary

*Clearly a values, 'right or wrong' type of resolution.*

*Broad but clear definition of corporate sponsorship.*

*Reasonable limitation, does not change the principles involved.*

*A sound split between school impact and student impact.*

on interests other than what should be the only focus: the best interests of students. With corporate sponsorship, school managers must consider what will yield the maximum revenues, even if that means students may be unfavorably affected by the outcome. So, if a soft drink company is willing to pay for the exclusive right to put vending machines in the school, the school principal may be inclined to accept the offer of funding, even if it harms student health. Schools are including activities and exercises about a product, sponsored by the producer. The “calculate the number of chocolate chips in a bag of 15 cookies” math activity is really marketing for a company. This practice compromises the objectivity of the school curriculum, and encourages educators to consider factors other than what makes for the best learning material. Therefore, the conflict of interest between student learning and corporate interests is unwelcome and harmful.

In addition to placing school administrators in a conflict of interest position, corporate sponsorship also impacts the relationship between the government and our school district. That is, the rise in corporate sponsorship of schools sends a signal to the government that schools have another source that they can turn to in the event that public funding is inadequate. As a result, it essentially lets governments ‘off the hook’ when it comes to providing sufficient funding for our schools. Last year, the Department of Education declined our district’s request to increase funding, stating that schools had to explore other sources of revenue. We contend that public funding, which does not come with strings attached, is superior to corporate funding, which allows them influence inside the school.

*Good statement of guiding principal for schools.*

*How do we know they “must” consider maximum revenues?*

*Need a transition phrase, such as “Another area of concern is that ...”*

*In the first sentence, say, in general, how it has an impact.*

*Explain how it sends such a signal to the government.*

*Could it just be that they didn’t have enough money, and were simply suggesting a solution?*

*Was this the key idea?*

Today, I have told you firstly that corporate sponsorship encourages administrators to consider corporate interest even at the expense of student interest, and I have told you secondly that it has a negative impact on government support for public education. Therefore, we stand proudly in favor of the resolution that corporate sponsorship harms our public education system. I now stand open for cross-examination.

*Clear statement of what's been discussed.*

*Second Negative:* Do you agree that a principal is responsible first and foremost for ensuring that students learn well?

*Shifting the focus away from budget responsibilities.*

*First Affirmative:* Yes, of course, nothing else should provide a conflicting interest.

*Implies corporate interests are conflicting.*

*Second Negative:* Would you also agree that parents and school board official judge a principal's effectiveness by how strong of a learning environment he or she creates?

*Reinforces the thrust of the first question.*

*First Affirmative:* Yes, but a principal also faces pressure to balance a budget and will certainly pursue whatever means are available to increase revenues.

*Strong qualification, evokes what was said in speech.*

*Second Negative:* Is it not true that a principal has a choice to accept or reject corporate sponsorships on a case by case basis?

*Leading into key cross-examination goal.*

*First Affirmative:* Yes, although there is always financial pressure on a school to accept corporate sponsorships.

*Senses the attack, clearly defends the presence of a conflict.*

*Second Negative:* So, if they are responsible primarily for learning, are evaluated on this basis, and have full authority to make sponsorship agreements, would principals ever

*Ties the full line of questioning together to get at the main point.*

make an agreement that has an overall negative impact on the school?

*First Affirmative:* Well, it's clear that they now have to consider multiple interests, and sometimes financial pressures will undoubtedly lead to a negative impact on the school.

*Standing firm.*

*Is it "sometimes" or "undoubtedly?"*

*Second Negative:* Thank you, our time is up.

**Chairperson:** Thank you. I now call upon the first speaker of the Negative team to introduce its case and, if desired, to contest any of the Affirmative's definitions.

**First Negative:** Thank you, Madame Chairperson. Ladies and gentlemen, before I introduce our team's case, I would like to take a few minutes to clash with the two points made by the first speaker of the Affirmative team.

*A bit too general for the introduction, but does get right into the refutation.*

The Affirmative started by talking about how administrators will be placed in a conflict of interest position. However, as brought up in the cross-examination, administrators do not have a mandate to advance corporate interests, nor are they judged in this regard. They are judged by how well students in their school perform and how well they manage the operations of the school. Likewise, curriculum developers are judged by how well educational materials help students learn important concepts, not by how well they promote corporations. Administrators, of course, take into consideration the impact of a variety of corporate sponsorships may have on student learning. If they come to the sound judgment that the benefits of corporate sponsorship, such as funding for important extra-curricular activities, are significant and that the corporate advertising would not actually

*Reinforces the questions asked in the cross-examination.*

*Clearly opposes the Affirmative's interpretations of administrator responsibilities.*

*Sets up the criteria for decision-making based on the principle mentioned above.*

harm students, they are perfectly justified in making this choice.

Then, the second Affirmative point was that the government may feel that it has less of an obligation to fund public education. Actually, quite the opposite is true. Schools do not justify corporate sponsorships to parents by saying how it helps pay for basic education materials. Rather, they show how corporate sponsorships help pay for some of the enhancements to education, such as recreational activities and field trips. The government is accountable to the electorate to provide what is necessary for quality student learning, especially for those schools that may not have succeeded in attracting large corporate sponsorships. Indeed, as the government continues to increase funding for education, it ultimately comes out of other valuable programs or results in higher taxes on parents. Instead, corporate sponsorship simply means an additional revenue source without giving up another program or greater part of family income, which makes the Affirmative's argument irrelevant and incorrect.

Now that I have shown you why the way the Affirmative arguments are incorrect, I want to introduce the Negative case by talking about the benefits of corporate sponsorship to schools. My first point, which I have introduced briefly in my clash, is that corporate sponsorship provides valuable funding to schools. Rather than being entirely dependent on what the government provides on a year to year basis, corporate sponsorship allows schools to be proactive in finding the funding to meet their specific needs. For example, if the school wants to host a particular event, it can seek a corporate sponsorship of the event to ensure that it takes place. Or, if

*But what if there are budget pressures?*

*They say it's not the reason, but does that mean it isn't?*

*Could be argued that these are really a core part of the education.*

*So if a school falls short, the government just makes up for the difference? Then what's the incentive? And isn't that harmful because it affects other programs and taxes?*

*Clear statement of the speech's theme.*

*Should be more specific as to what the point is, "valuable funding" is the whole point of the case.*

*"Allows?" Or forces?*

*Good matching of situations and solution.*

a school wants to undertake an expansion of its library, it can partner with a company in a shopping incentive program to provide the necessary funding. Therefore, corporate sponsorship can be an important source of funding for enhancements to a school.

Secondly, corporate sponsorship of schools allows educators to have some influence over corporate activities that impact children. If corporations are dependent on schools for some of their marketing efforts, they are far more likely to pay attention to what educators want to see in terms of their practices. For instance, many schools in our district have been demanding that soft drink companies provide healthier alternatives, such as juice and water, in their vending machines. In turn, we have seen healthier alternatives in many of the vending machines in this district's public schools. In one case, a school in our district partnered with an energy company on an environmental initiative, which served the desire of educators to promote environmental awareness and good corporate citizenship. Undoubtedly, corporate sponsorship can provide a win-win situation that allows schools to impact positively the activities of corporations.

In my speech, I have told you why corporate sponsorship does not place school administrators in an unhealthy conflict of interest and that it does not compromise government funding for core programs. I have also told you in our constructive matter that schools benefit from valuable corporate funding and their ability to impact the actions of corporations. For these reasons, we stand proudly in opposition to this resolution, and I am now ready to be cross-examined.

*Or perhaps educators now have to pay even more attention to corporations.*

*Strong example of challenge and result.*

*First example school-specific, appropriate move into wider benefits to society.*

*Perhaps say "firstly" and "secondly."*

First Affirmative: Is it fair to say that a teacher's main responsibility is, logically, to teach?	<i>Seems a touch too basic, but lays down a key assumption.</i>
First Negative: Yes, obviously.	
First Affirmative: And is it also fair to say that a principal's main role is to run the school?	
First Negative: Yes, but I really don't see what the point is here.	<i>Let the cross-examiner say what the point is.</i>
First Affirmative: Okay, so you acknowledge that neither teachers nor principals are concerned to a significant extent with trying to change corporations?	<i>Starting to make more sense what the objective is.</i>
First Negative: No, no. In addition to their primary duties, they also want to make sure the overall learning environment is positive.	<i>Establishes that there is a relevant secondary duty as well.</i>
First Affirmative: But would you not agree that given the choice between funding for what they feel they need to do for their students and some desire to change corporations, they would much rather take care of what they need to do?	
First Negative: Well, I think in reality they consider all of the factors.	<i>Explain further.</i>
First Affirmative: So, when considering all of the factors, if principals really wanted to get money for more field trips, they might very well leave their desires to be social activists for other occasions?	<i>Example makes the point more concrete.</i>
First Negative: All I am saying is that within a school environment, at least teachers and administrators have a greater ability to generate a positive impact on corporate activities.	<i>Does ability translate into action?</i>

*First Affirmative:* Okay, thank you.

*Clear that point can't be taken any further.*

**Chairperson:** I thank the first speaker of the Negative team for her remarks, and I now call upon the second speaker of the Affirmative team to continue the debate.

**Second Affirmative:** Thank you. Fellow debaters, judges, audience members, and chairperson, my partner started this debate by talking about the negative influence of corporate sponsorship on school administration. Now I want to extend our case by talking about the direct and negative impact of corporate sponsorship on students.

*Shorten the use of titles.*

*Helpful link back to what has been accomplished already.*

The third argument of the Affirmative case is that kids are far more vulnerable to the effects of advertising. At a young age, people are less able to make informed, critical, and rational decisions about corporate claims. Kids are more likely to believe what a company has to say about its product. Corporate sponsorship of schools allows companies easy access to this vulnerable population, well out of the protective reach of parents. For example, when a textbook contains examples about corporations that were sponsored by corporations, a student sees this information as true. In addition, the fact that the information was provided in an educational setting makes it far less likely that the student is going to question its validity. Also, when students see television advertisements as part of a sponsored daily news program, they often view corporate claims as correct, especially since it's part of their school program. We believe strongly that advertising to an impressionable student population is harmful.

*Personalizes the issue of debate more than first speech did.*

*An easy to understand description of a child's thinking.*

*The point being, parents and not schools should be the 'gatekeepers'.*

*Explanation of why information can be harmful.*

*Would they really accept it any more than an advertisement they see at home?*

Finally, our fourth argument is that corporate sponsorship distracts attention away

from learning. It goes without saying that students go to school to learn, not to be hit with corporate messages. In fact, a school is supposed to provide a learning environment for students entirely different than the commercial world around them. If every extracurricular event is sponsored by a company, and if they see corporations trying to sell them products daily within the school, it almost makes schools an extension of the shopping mall as opposed to solely a place to learn. We argue that this makes corporate sponsorship a distraction for students, which makes them focus less on the learning that they are supposed to be focusing on exclusively.

So what about the arguments made by the first speaker of the Negative team? Her first point was that corporate sponsorship provides valuable funding for programs, which is obviously the basic element of a sponsorship agreement. But the issue here is really what corporate sponsorship costs the school in terms of its independence and its learning. Every minute that students spend reading poster advertisements or viewing television commercials takes away from time spent on learning. Society places an economic value on this learning time. Also, shopping incentive programs encourage students and parents to buy more, which ends up costing families significantly just to provide a small amount of extra funding to a school program. The question of this debate is whether schools should be giving up part of their core mandate to provide a strong learning environment in exchange for a few nonessential corporate sponsorship dollars each year.

Her second argument was that schools can somehow influence corporate activities if there is a sponsorship partnership. This begs

*Fits into theme of harming students.*

*Strong distinction helps to illustrate the argument.*

*Somewhat of a stretch, but does illustrate the point being made.*

*Concludes quickly, need to develop more.*

*Clear transition into refutation.*

*Implying the point was more common sense than insight.*

*Attempt to frame the point of contention.*

*Suggests that every minute must be put to maximum use.*

*This isn't the point.*

*Too early to go into the general "question of this debate."*

*Are they always nonessential?*

the question, who has more power in the relationship? A school which is doing whatever it takes to get more funding, or a large, powerful corporation which is marketing to a wide variety of students by dangling financial benefits to schools? Of course, it's obvious that corporations have far more influence on the habits and behaviors of students in schools could possibly have on how self-interested corporations run. Anyways, social activism is not what teachers are or necessarily should be focused on, which counters the Negative's argument that teachers are focused on promoting corporate social responsibility.

For these reasons, we stand proudly in favor of this important resolution, and I would be pleased to answer any questions or criticism in the cross-examination.

*First Negative:* Let's talk about the concept of program funding. Would it be fair to say that the more money a school has, the more able it is to provide enhancing activities, such as field trips and special events?

*Second Affirmative:* Well, yes, but not if it negatively impacts the school environment.

*First Negative:* Is it also fair to say that every school has different needs in this regard?

*Second Affirmative:* Yes.

*First Negative:* So, if a school wants to pursue a unique activity, would corporate sponsorships not help them achieve this goal?

*Second Affirmative:* Perhaps, but don't forget the significant harm it imposes on the school learning environment.

*Rhetorical questions that imply the answer.*

*But perhaps some power to influence is superior to having no power at all.*

*If teachers want to help children and society beyond academics, what exactly is wrong with that?*

*Clear 'signpost' of the cross-examiner's purpose.*

*Links back to the 'yardstick' to measure suitability.*

*Obvious answer to obvious question.*

*Speaker refusing to play into the cross-examiner's hands.*

*First Negative:* I see. So you are admitting, then, that without the sponsorship, the school may not be able to pursue these value-added initiatives?

*Trying again a second time, good to persist this way.*

*Second Affirmative:* No, not at all. There are other ways to raise funds, such as involving parents and students, or seeking grants from the government or non-profit groups.

*Standing firm, and enhancing the previous answer.*

*First Affirmative:* Thank you, it seems that our time has expired.

**Chairperson:** I thank the second speaker of the Affirmative, and now call upon the second speaker of the Negative to conclude the constructive part of the debate.

**Second Negative:** Ladies and gentlemen, let me get right into the new constructive arguments brought up by the second speaker of the Affirmative team. He started by talking about how kids are vulnerable to advertisements. Ultimately, though, it is the responsibility of parents to teach their kids about making responsible choices. As I will tell you about later, corporations will find a way to reach kids anyway. This debate is not about whether corporate advertising to students is good or bad. It is about whether schools specifically are harmed by this practice. Certainly, this point would be interesting in the context of a wider debate about advertising to children, but it does not show you that advertising in a school environment creates additional harms. We believe that a student certainly knows the difference between an advertisement and a learning point.

*Quite general, but perhaps there's no time to waste here.*

*Clear distinction, but are parents around to help during the day?*

*Explains effectively what the real issue is.*

*Can a young student make such a distinction so easily?*

Next, the second Affirmative speaker claimed that corporate sponsorship distracts away from learning. The reality, however, is that the vast majority of corporate sponsorship takes place outside of a class. It is tough to make the argument that a gymnasium named after a company, a poster on a wall, or the products in a vending machine distracts from what students learn in their courses. Even though the primary purpose of a school is learning, during breaks, at lunch, and before and after school, learning is clearly not the focus of attention. As for classroom activities, is there anything essentially wrong with the product being promoted, so long as the students are learning an important concept at the same time?

At this point, we would like to introduce the final two points of the Negative case. These arguments focus on the idea that advertising within a school is a beneficial advantage over the advertising that would take place outside of the school. Our third point is that if corporations are going to spend money advertising to kids anyways, at least having a company sponsoring school provides some benefit to society. In the process of meeting its commercial objectives, a business is also improving the education of students through its funding. Alternatively, it would have simply spent these advertising dollars by paying, for example, television companies. Therefore, there is more value created to society through this win-win arrangement.

Our fourth and final point is that advertising within a school takes place within a filtered, sheltered environment. The Affirmative has talked about how advertising in schools makes it more difficult for parents to raise their kids as they wish. In reality, stu-

*A well-stated point that most people would agree is true.*

*But isn't the environment still important?*

*A risky statement, probably best to explain further.*

*Clear statement of overall theme.*

*Spin-off benefits of the inevitable.*

*Opposes directly the Affirmative's concept of value.*

dents see advertisements in many places, from billboards and posters to television and radio commercials, almost completely unfiltered by parents. At least in a school, officials have the ability to screen out advertisements and sponsorships that they believe are inappropriate. Additionally, it's more likely that there will be a fair critique and evaluation of advertisements by teachers and students within the school. Clearly, a school provides a less harmful environment for corporate sponsorship than in the world outside of school.

These two points, combined with my partner's points about funding for programs and the influence that schools can have on corporate activities, provide a solid case in favor of corporate sponsorship in schools. I have shown you that the Affirmative's third and fourth points about the vulnerability of kids and the distraction to learning do not support their side of this round's resolution. Therefore, this resolution must fall, and I now stand open for cross-examination.

*Second Affirmative:* I want to talk about your idea of a school as some type of filtered environment. If a company was helping pay for new music equipment, do you agree that a school would be less likely to screen out the sponsor's advertisement?

*Second Negative:* Well, at least the school can make an informed choice over who should sponsor the purchases and what the corporation is allowed to do in exchange.

*Second Affirmative:* But this sponsoring company, couldn't it simply go to another school if this particular school decides to be picky?

*So why should we accept even more advertising?*

*If a company is paying money, what interest is there to screen? Who would critique them, and why would they bother?*

*Good wrap-up of the speech and the case, lays the ground for the rebuttal.*

*Statement of purpose.*

*Specific example makes the concept more tangible.*

*What does "informed choice" mean in terms of outcomes?*

*Suggests how the company has more power than the school*

*Second Negative:* I suppose so, yes.

*Qualify this answer.*

*Second Affirmative:* So then the school would be without any additional funding support for its music program?

*Statement of harms.*

*Second Negative:* No, it would simply have to look elsewhere for a sponsor that did not compromise the learning environment.

*Good answer, rejects harms and supports an important pillar of the Negative's case.*

*Second Affirmative:* You also mentioned critiquing and evaluating sponsorships and advertisements. So, if a company has its name placed over the school gymnasium, do you see students and teachers walking by and saying to each other, "Let's do an analysis of this company's intent and practices?"

*Is this a new issue or a continuation of the existing one?*

*This scenario helps to illustrate.*

*Second Negative:* I think you're trivializing the issue. At least when a company makes a questionable claim, a school is a place where debate takes place. Certainly more so than when someone is driving by a billboard or watching television.

*It would be tough to answer the question directly in this case.*

*Second Affirmative:* Thank you, our cross-examination time has finished.

**Chairperson:** I thank the second speaker of the Negative for her remarks. We now move into the rebuttal phase. I would like to remind the debaters that no new contentions can be made during this time. I now call upon the first speaker of the Negative team to deliver the Negative rebuttal.

**First Negative:** Today's debate has centered on two competing themes. The first theme was the impact of corporate sponsorship on the operation of schools. The second theme,

*Good idea to state the central themes from the outset.*

discussed mainly by the second speaker of each team, was about the impact of corporate sponsorship in schools on students. In my rebuttal, I will show you why the Negative team has prevailed on both of these core themes.

The Affirmative's case on the school operation theme made a number of unfounded assumptions. It assumed that corporate sponsorship compromises the objective of administrators to consider the best interest of students, when in fact the mandate and evaluation of schools is based on the overall quality of student education. It also falsely assumed that corporate sponsorship necessarily meant less government funding, when in fact the accountability of the government to provide quality education and basic funding for core programs demonstrates the flaws in this argument. We showed you how corporate sponsorship actually benefits schools, both in terms of funding for value added programs and the ability of schools to influence corporate activities that relate to their objectives. The Affirmative failed to show you what would make up for these benefits if not for corporate sponsorship.

The Affirmative case on the student impact theme also rested on several unproven assumptions. It assumed that schools can somehow decrease the vulnerability of students to corporate influence, when in reality students are influenced by advertising anywhere they see it and ultimately, parents are responsible for teaching their kids how to make good choices. It assumed that corporate sponsorship distracts attention away from learning, when in reality it typically takes place outside of the classroom or does not take away from the learning experience. We showed you that if corporations are go-

*Helps the judges to see the 'big picture' of the debate and how it fits with the structure.*

*Outlines the way in which the Affirmative's case is flawed.*

*Refutes while raising a constructive point.*

*A second instance of an assumption, strengthens the claim.*

*Draws a contrast, "We showed you" vs. "The Affirmative failed."*

*Continues with false assumptions method.*

*A fairly long-winded passage.*

*Would be helpful to clarify or explain this concept further.*

ing to advertise to kids anyways, doing so in a school has a positive spin-off for education and takes place in a more filtered environment. The Affirmative essentially focused on corporate advertising in general, as opposed to why it would be any worse in schools.

Since we have clearly demonstrated how the Negative has won the debate on the school operations theme and the student impact theme, we rest our case.

**Chairperson:** I would now like to call upon the first speaker of the Affirmative team to conclude today's debate.

**First Affirmative:** In deciding which team won the debate, we argue that there are two central questions: what is the purpose of a school, and does corporate sponsorship fit within this purpose? Today, we have demonstrated that corporate sponsorship and the objectives of a school are fundamentally incompatible.

Let me begin by talking about the purpose of a school. We have talked about how administrators should focus solely on the interests of students. We have also discussed how students should be in school to focus on learning. A school, in our view, is essentially different than the world around it, and that it is supposed to present an environment suitable for student development.

Now, let me explore whether corporate advertising fits within this mandate. We have demonstrated how administrators have to balance student interests with corporate interests when sponsorships are taking place. The Negative naïvely and incorrectly argued that schools will supposedly influence corporations and effectively screen advertisements. This, however, is neither the goal,

*Claims why the Affirmative's approach was flawed.*

*Brings back and reinforces the themes one more time.*

*Phrasing the issues as questions encourages the judges to see them as the key criteria.*

*Summary of underlying points of the Affirmative's case.*

*But where is the refutation?*

*Explain how it's been demonstrated.*

nor the core capability of a school. We have shown you how corporate sponsorship in schools exploits the vulnerability of kids and distracts them away from learning. The Negative would have you believe that this is somehow better than in the outside world. We could not disagree more. Leave corporate advertising, which has nothing to do with the education of children, to the outside world.

We have proven on every dimension of this debate that corporate sponsorship is completely out of place when it comes to school objectives and student learning. Therefore, the corporate sponsorship of schools does far more harm than any good. Thank you.

*Clear rejection of the Negative's claims.*

*Draws a contrast.*

*Concludes the rebuttal fairly quickly, more depth would have been helpful.*

**Chairperson:** I now declare that this debate has concluded. I invite the debaters to cross the floor and to shake hands.

## COMMENTARY ON "SPONSORSHIP" DEBATE

The debate has clear-cut, contentious issues, and both teams articulated a number of relevant points on these issues. In some cases, the explanations and support for these points could have gone further. The cross-examination periods were lively, with the questioners asking tough, targeted questions.

### What did the Affirmative do well?

- *Perspectives on the role of a school.* The Affirmative made the principle of a school being exclusively for learning a central part of its case. This principle was used effectively to suggest how corporate sponsorships violate this principle.
- *Discussion of impact on decision-makers.* Both speakers did a good job of explaining how corporate sponsorship places administrators and teachers in a conflict of interest situation, having to balance student learning with financial matters. This practical analysis added to the principle of what a school should and should not be.

- *Analysis of a child's vulnerability.* The examination of how a child's mind operates was important in backing up the Affirmative's claim that the advertising had a negative influence. Many debaters could have complicated this type of analysis, whereas the Affirmative team made it easy to understand.

### **What could the Affirmative have improved?**

- *Impact of lost revenues on schools.* Since it's widely accepted that less funding for schools isn't desirable, the Affirmative team should have explained further how the benefits of stopping corporate sponsorship clearly outweighed the costs. Would certain program have to be stopped and, if so, was it worthwhile considering the stated improvements to the school?
- *Rebuttal had insufficient explanation and depth.* While the speaker did frame the key issues effectively, the discussion that followed wasn't thorough enough to demonstrate clearly how the Affirmative came ahead on the criteria presented. On a number of points, there was no refutation of the Negative's points, only a broad summary of the Affirmative's arguments.

### **What did the Negative do well?**

- *Comments on positive impact of corporate sponsorships.* While the argument that additional funding is helpful may seem like an obvious one, the Negative team explained specifically how it benefits the schools. The discussion on enhancements to schools, such as field trips and music programs, illustrated what they stand to lose if there are no corporate sponsorships.
- *Opposition to the harms presented by the Affirmative.* Although it was tough to refute this point in every respect, the Negative did explain how in many cases corporate sponsorship doesn't necessarily have a negative impact. For example, the naming of a school gymnasium was cited appropriately as a win-win arrangement.
- *Attack of the Affirmative's case in the rebuttal.* The first Negative speaker's rebuttal was highly structured around core themes, and on each theme there was clear and direct refutation of the Affirmative's argu-

ments and assumptions. The comparisons made with the Negative's case enhanced the refutation.

### **What could the Negative have improved?**

- *Argument on comparative advantages of school advertising.* The second Negative speaker wasn't entirely convincing in arguing that schools could "filter" advertisements and that the supposedly "sheltered" environment made sponsorships acceptable. It wasn't clear how this would happen, or why the school environment would make the advertising any less influential on children.
- *Answers to cross-examination questions.* The first Negative speaker should have been more thorough and direct in answering the cross-examiner's questions. Several of the answers were more quips aimed at quickly rebuffing the cross-examiner, rather than more thorough defenses of the Negative's case.

## SPONSORSHIP DEBATE: FLOW SHEET

### AFFIRMATIVE

#### 1st Affirmative (#1)

Definition: Any marketing in schools, Freedonia School District

1. Administrator conflict of interest
2. Relationship with government

#### 2nd Affirmative (#3)

Clash 1: Costs to learning outweigh  
Clash 2: Greater corporate influence

3. Kids are vulnerable to advertising
4. Distracts attention from learning

#### 1st Affirmative (#6)

Question 1: What is the purpose of a school? Interests of students and their learning comes first, an environment that is a departure from the outside world.

Question 2: Does corporate sponsorship fit within this purpose? Takes away from student learning environment, let advertising stay in the outside world.

### NEGATIVE

#### 1st Negative (#2)

Clash 1: Primary focus is learning  
Clash 2: Only for enhancement

1. Valuable funding to schools
2. Some impact on corporations

#### 2nd Negative (#4)

Clash 3: Parent responsibility  
Clash 4: Usually not in class

3. Win-win arrangement for society
4. Filtered, sheltered environment

#### 1st Negative (#5)

Theme 1: Impact of corporate sponsorship on administration of schools. Affirmative made unfounded assumptions, Negative showed how there are benefits.

Theme 2: Impact of corporate sponsorship on students. Affirmative made unfounded assumptions, Negative proved that there are positive spin-offs.

## Chapter 12: Keys to Success



✓ **Notice how a speaker identifies specifically which point he or she is refuting.** This makes it much easier for the judges to keep track of how well you are clashing. Either in their minds or on paper, they can 'check off' each point as it is opposed.

✓ **Observe how the strongest debaters had a clear overall speech structure.** They told the audience exactly where they were going, they followed this road map, and they finished by reminding everyone about what they have said. This served to reinforce the key messages.

✓ **Take note of the importance that persistence plays in a cross-examination.** The cross-examiner stuck to a particular line of questioning, rather than being side-tracked by the responses. But the person answering the questions was sure to explain the answers to avoid seeming weakened and to prevent the cross-examiner from extracting the desired answers.

✓ **Recognize how the rebuttal speakers brought the debate down to one or two issues.** You didn't see minor arguments or evidence brought up in the rebuttals. For the Negative or Opposition, it was helpful to put the opponent on the defensive by stating clearly what the main questions or themes were.